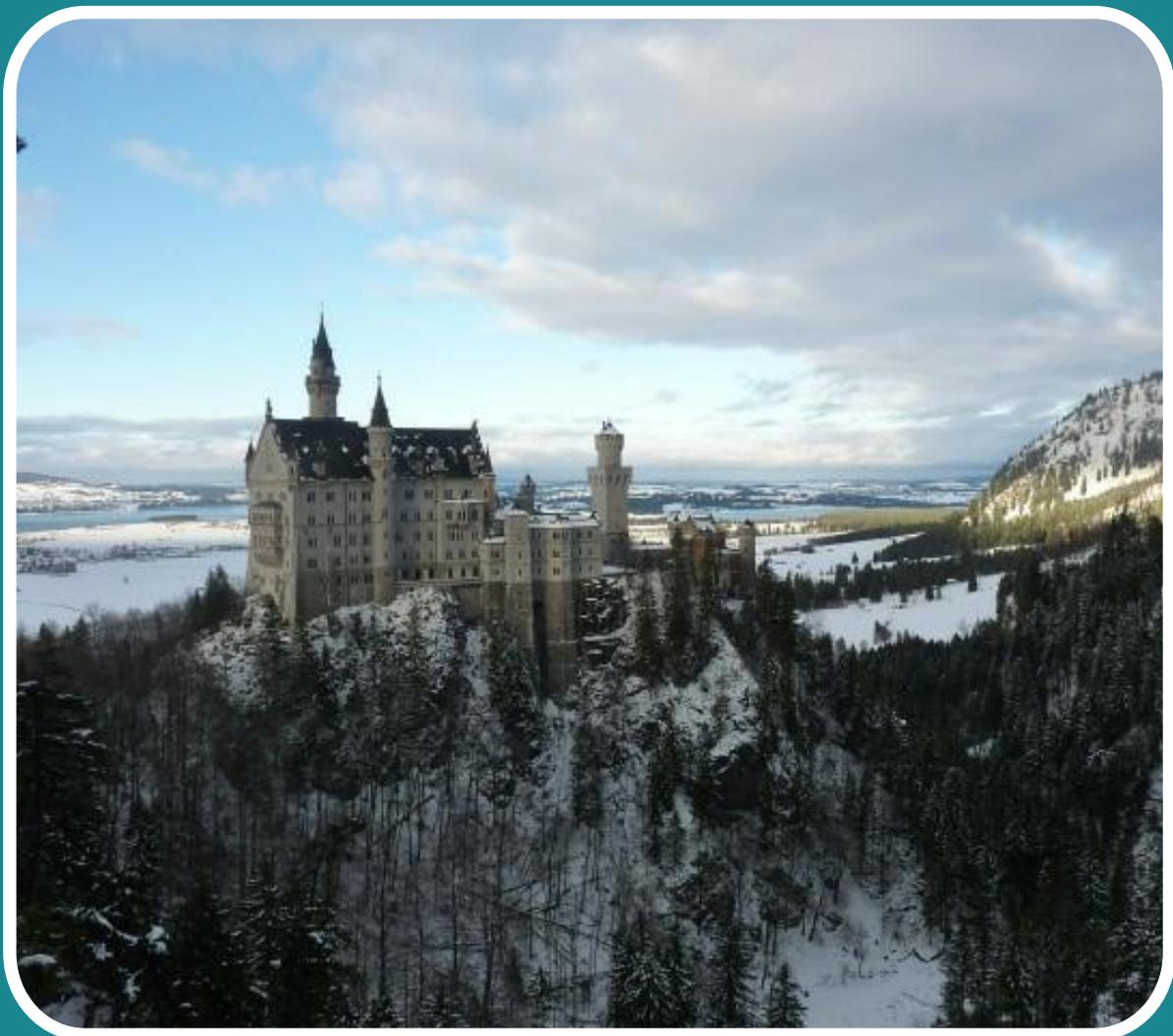


# THRESHOLD

The Mystara Magazine

## Exploring Norwold



The seventh issue of Mystara's premier magazine continues our journey into the frozen reaches of Norwold, detailing its region from Leeha to the Skaufskogr!

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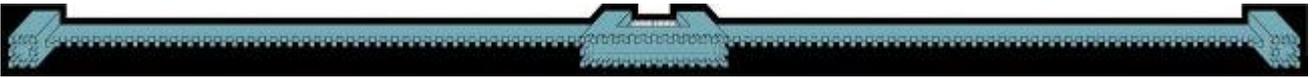
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# THRESHOLD

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*THRESHOLD* logo designed by Thorf

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Robin Dijkema

Thanks To: The Mystara Community, for your support, hard work, and dedication to Mystara.

### The aims of *Threshold* magazine:

- to provide a venue for community members to present material
- to promote the Vaults of Pandius and the material there
- to increase the exposure of existing and new articles
- to encourage authors to revisit and revitalise existing articles
- to motivate interest in Mystara in general



Issues #1 to #6 of THRESHOLD - the Mystara Magazine, is available for download from the [Vaults of Pandius website](#).

Also available at the same location are higher resolution versions of the maps that were included in the issue's PDF, allowing greater detail to be viewed.

# *Midway through the North*

The North is vast and full of secrets, but you will be able to glimpse at many of them in this issue of Threshold magazine, where you will find indeed the most detailed description of Norwold ever written, in which Zendrolion will take us in a great exploration of the realm's weather, history people and regions, from Heldland to Frosthaven!

Another massive article by Zendrolion details the Great Land Rush of Norwold and the existing barons, a perfect companion for the CM1 module that will be completed by in depth descriptions of the claimants to the new lands in the next issue of the magazine.

In this issue you will also find another part of the F-Gaz "The Open Arms of Leeha" describing, after the history of the northern hin published in issue 6, the land and the people that inhabits it.

Another Norwold region on which you will have even more details is the Skaufskogr, the once mysterious region, but not anymore, between Landfall and Oceansend, inhabited by many proud people, humans and not. In this same region of Norwold you will also

have the opportunity to challenge the Heldannic invasion, rushing to retrieve a dangerous artifact stolen from the Dragon Kingdom of Wyrksteeth.

To complete this massive amount of material, and the longest issue of Threshold published so far, you will also find a chronicle of the devastating Flood of Grouzhina, in the far away Midlands of Brun. Also, one more level of the mega dungeon of Koskatap, in this issue describing the ancient city of Ieronyx, where the powerful Lord Keiros once ruled in the name of the Queen of the Night and now undead orcs wait for their next prey!

But our exploration of Norwold and the Northlands isn't finished yet. In the next issue you will discover even more secrets of the North, provided you did not fall prey of the many terrors that dwell in the cold dark winter nights.

*Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)*  
Editor-in-chief, Threshold Issue #7

***Special thanks this issue to:***

Shawn Stanley (stanles),  
Angel Tarragon (The Angelic Dragon),  
John Calvin (Chimpman),  
Giampaolo Agosta (agathokles) and  
Simone Neri (Zendrolion)  
for helping with editing and proofreading!

## This Issue's CONTRIBUTORS

**Simone Neri (Zendrolion)** teaches history and philosophy at secondary school in Florence, Italy. He has mastered Mystara campaigns since 1987, his favourite settings being Thyatis, Norwold, Karameikos, and Glantri. He is an active member of The Piazza community with the nickname of Zendrolion - but don't fear backstabbing from him!

**Giampaolo Agosta (a.k.a. Agathokles)** agrees with Schiller that man "is only completely a man when he plays". Therefore, he makes a point of taking gaming seriously, and real life casually. Besides Mystara, his gaming interests include (among others) Dark Sun, Planescape, Ravenloft, Birthright, Call of Cthulhu, and Witchcraft RPG.

**I. "MeandratheL" Calvin** enjoys drawing fantasy, and animals that can kill. Namely wolves, dragons, horses, and most large felines. Human animal hybrids are not excluded either; she often draws human versions of her favorite animals. She does, however, despise drawing things that are unbearingly cute. It's a pretty awful thing to do.

**John Calvin** is fascinated by the depth of Mystaran history, and has always wanted to share that more fully with players. To that end he has been developing sub-settings like The Hollow Moon and Mystara 2300 BC.

**Allan Palmer (aka AllanP)** was first introduced to D&D a long time ago (but not quite in a galaxy far away) by a work colleague who set up a gaming group using the last version of the "blue book" rules. While dabbling with RuneQuest and Traveller along the way, he developed a liking for what

would become the world of Mystara as the BECMI box sets were released. He has always been fascinated by maps. He is an IT professional and when not indulging in hobbies of panelology, retro tv watching and family history research, uses his various PC skills to consolidate the writings of others into the issues of Threshold.

**JTR, (a.k.a. OldDawg)** is the author of the acclaimed F-GAZ series, which covers several regions of Norwold and neighboring areas with full-blown gazetteer-style treatment. In this issue, JTR showcases his work for the FGAZ "The Open Arms of Leeha", covering the northern Hin lands.

**Robin Dijkema.** (Robin at the piazza, Robin D elsewhere) Female, from 1962. Playing D&D since the earliest days as far as 1978. Soon becoming "addicted" , bound to the world of Mystara, liked because of its diversity and yet complexity latched to each other. Current compiler of massive materials available on the Pandius site or her "Breath of Mystara" blog. Former Teacher of Biology, Ecology, Chemistry, Physics, travelled all over Europe as a stage dancer at house parties. Once at a UK Gencon called "The Fletcher" by Bruce Heard for my compilation work in "Revenge of the Little Ones".

Even though **Sturm (a.k.a. Francesco Defferrari)** loves any alternate world, he believes Mystara is incomparably the best for its vibrant community endlessly delving into ethnography, linguistics and history just to make a little sense of it. Something like the real world, but with dragons.

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The Threshold editorial team invites all fans of the Mystara setting to submit contributions to the next issues of the magazine.

We are looking especially for contributions fitting the following themes:

### Issue 8 - The North

**Proposal Deadline:** Expired, but proposal could still be submitted if the author is confident that the article will be completed by the below deadline

**Manuscript Deadline:** April 30<sup>th</sup> 2015

**Issue Published:** End June 2015

Call for proposals for main themes of forthcoming issues (2015):

### Hollow World and the Immortals

The editorial team will accept proposal about the above topics or anything related.

### Glantri and beyond

The editorial team will accept proposal on Glantri and nearby nations (Darokin, Sind, Wendar, Ethengar, the Adri Varma plateau, the Broken Lands) and on Magic too.

### Isle of Dawn, Thyatis and Alpathia

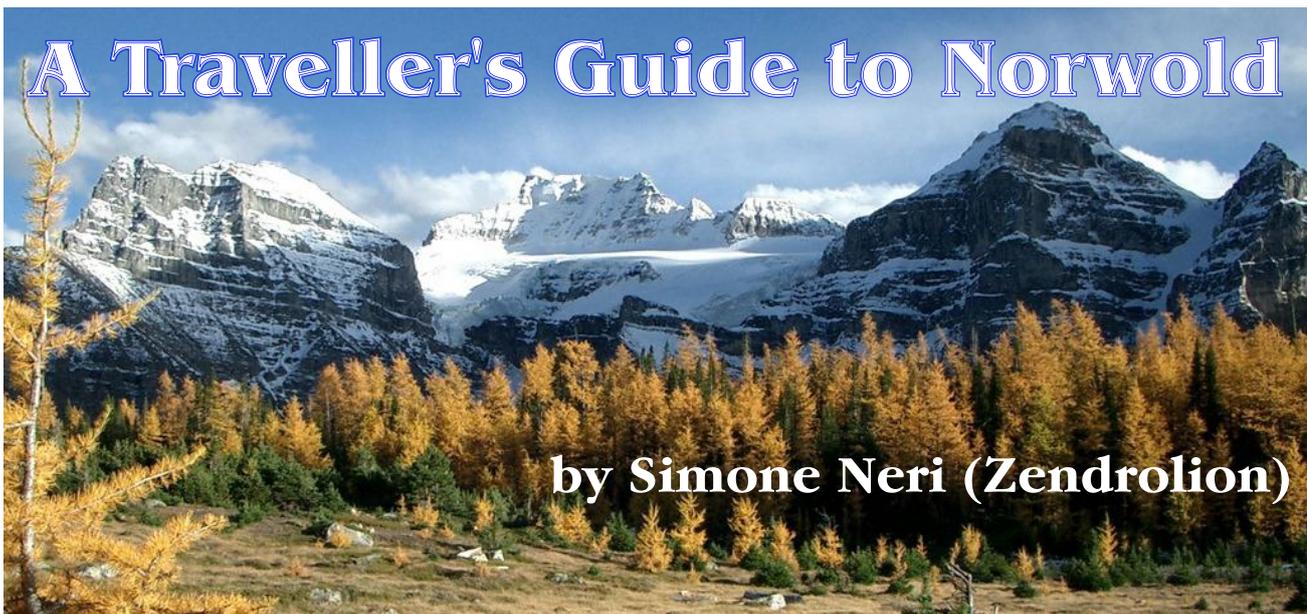
The editorial team will accept proposal on the Isle of Dawn, Thyatis, Alpathia and dependencies (Ochalea, Pearl Islands, Alatians, Bellisaria, Esterhold and any other colony).

*Articles about other topics are still welcome and the editorial team will evaluate their publication in an issue, taking into account space available and that issue's theme.*

Threshold accepts (and invites) the submission of extended or revised versions of works having appeared on The Piazza or the Vaults of Pandius.

Contributions may include, but are not limited to, articles (short stories, short adventure modules, NPCs, historical treatises and timelines, geographical entries, new monsters and monster ecologies, etc.) and illustrations (portraits, maps, heraldry, illustrations, etc.)

The Threshold editorial team strives for edition neutrality, but edition specific articles (e.g., conversions) are also accepted. Statistics for new monsters and NPCs may be included in articles (e.g., adventure modules, new monsters or NPCs) in any version of Dungeons & Dragons. The editorial team also offers help in providing conversions to some specific rules set (including BECMI/RC, 2nd Edition, 3rd edition/Pathfinder). However, they should be limited to the minimum -- for most NPCs, it is sufficient to mention class, level, and alignment. For important NPCs, a one or two line stat block could be included.



*The Eagles' Barrier from a clearing in the Dragon Spur Hills*

Welcome, dear traveller, to the untamed lands of Norwold! Leave behind the trappings and comforts of civilization, and prepare to deal with the cold environment, the inclement weather, the deep forests, the majestic mountains, the crystal-clear lakes, and the frozen tundra - the true north, in all its ancestral beauty and dangerousness!

And prepare to meet its inhabitants - oh no, not the soft southern peoples you know, used to plowing fields under the sun and to buying what they need in their sprawling cities... No, this is the north, and its peoples reflect its features: hardy, strong, even rugged or fierce at times, but undoubtedly warm and welcoming, because no one is denied the heat of a heartening fireside after a day spent in the wilderness!

So, dear traveller, don your fur-clad cloak and follow us in a tour of Norwold, to discover its history, its cultures, its regions, and its dangers!

## GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Norwold region encompasses the whole north-eastern corner of Brun, just north of the Known World and east of the Borean valley. The region's borders are marked by the Alphatian Sea and the Strait of Helskir to the east, by Norzee to the north, by the Borean Range, the Icereach Range, and the Mengul Mountains to the west, and by the Heldland River and the Eastern Mengul Mountains to the south. To the south-west, things are more blurred - some consider Wendar and the Northern Wildlands to be part of the Norwold region, while others assert that those realms do not belong to this area. Whatever the case, Norwold is a huge region which dwarfs the more populous Known World in size.

## The Updated Norwold Map Used for this Article

The description of Norwold featured in this article is based on an updated version of [my old Norwold map](#). The update aims in particular at achieving a better blending of the various conflicting canonic maps which shows the areas bordering the Known World, the Isle of Dawn, and the Heldann-Denagoth region.

In order to make my choices understandable by everyone, I would like to list the steps of the process I used to assemble the updated map, and the basic assumptions from which I started. They are summarized in the following 16 points ("mph" stands for "miles per hex"):

1 - The correct relative position of the Isle of Dawn in regard to the Known World is the one featured in TM2;

2 - The correct position of the Denagothian Plateau in regard to the Known World is arguable from the 24mph map of the Known World included in Wrath of the Immortals, where the plateau's southern tip is visible;

3 - The correct position of Norwold in regard to the Isle of Dawn (and therefore to the Known World and the Denagothian Plateau) is defined through the matching of the position of Helskir on Dawn of the Emperors' 24mph map of the Isle of Dawn with the CM1-M2 24mph map of Norwold (note that the rest of the Isle of Dawn in the latter map is a little different from the one of DotE, and therefore has to be discarded);

4 - X11 Saga of the Shadowlord's 24mph map is considered correct up to the eastern fringes of the Denagothian Plateau; regarding the Heldann part, it is correct up to the northern political border of the Freeholds, as featured in this map; the Freeholds' coastline then matches quite exactly with the coastline continuing north as shown in CM1 Test of the Warlords. Wrath of the Immortals' 24mph map's coastline north of Heldann (a couple of hexes) follows X11 Saga of the Shadowlord, so this part is considered wrong. The Norwold coastline north of the Freeholds' border thus follows the CM1's map. Note also that this causes a change in the shape of the Kamminer Bay (which now is narrower and more in line with several canon depictions, from the D&D Companion Set to Dawn of the Emperors maps) in regard to the shape it had in my old map - on which several fan works (mostly GAZF8) were based;

5 - The shape of the north-western coastline of Norwold and of the western half of Frosthaven have been determined using D&D Companion Set's non-hex map of Brun;

6 - The position of the Arctic Circle has been set according to [Bruce Heard's article on the climate of the Known World](#)

7 - Terrain types north of Wendar and Denagoth have been determined according to the Wrath of the Immortals' 48mph map, up to the northern limit of this map; this required changing some hexes of the Northern Wildlands as they were shown in

X11 Saga of the Shadowlord, as well as adding some hexes of hills and steppes in the western fringes of the Denagothian Plateau (X11 gave these as "plain = empty" hexes);

8 - Terrain types north of Wrath of the Immortals' 48mph map, and west of CM1 Test of the Warlords' 24mph map have been determined according to Dawn of the Emperors' 72mph map; this map is highly problematic and includes many errors, but for the purpose of determining terrains in the area west of the Icereach Range most problems are addressed by moving this entire section of the map one 72-miles hex to the south-east and superimposing the map to the CM1's one. This actually corrects most serious mistakes. Also, in this way the northern coast west of the upper Icereach Range limit can be matched quite well with the D&D Companion Set's map;

9 - Terrain types indicated for Norwold in Dawn of the Emperors' 72mph map have been used to determine the general presence of those terrains in a given area of the region; in particular: (a) "plain = empty" hexes in the map have been considered forest in the subarctic band, and tundra in the extreme north; (b) the two stretches of steppes on the northern coast of Norwold have been ignored and substituted with tundra (no steppe is possible in the tundra climate); (c) hill hexes have been taken into account not as hexes full of hills, but as the points where the land rises to hill/highland altitude (this point has been marked on the final updated map as a mostly continuous, one-hex row of hills);

10 - Despite point (4) above, a wide valley linking Heldann with Denagoth (due to the use of CM1 Test of the Warlords' map) located north-west of the Altenwald was "closed" with mountain hexes because it was not consistent either with the background of Denagoth or the non-hex map of Heldann (from the Poor Wizard's Almanacs and Joshuan's Almanac);

11 - Something resembling the Vinisk Valley is shown in the non-hex map of the Heldannic Territories found in Joshuan's Almanac; there the valley's terrain is indicated as desert. Since a desertic valley crossed by one of the major rivers of Norwold was considered highly inappropriate, and since the Joshuan's Almanac map is badly drawn and largely inaccurate, I chose to ignore the desert terrain. The valley's terrain was thus filled with hills and marshes (albeit the latter were quite reduced in regard to my old map of Norwold);

12 - Norwold's forests have been positioned according to the non-hex map of the region found in the Poor Wizard's Almanacs;

13 - Heldland River and the forest surrounding its mouth, in Heldland, has been taken from the non-hex map of the Heldannic Territories from Joshuan's Almanac; the same is true for the high course of a river which disappears beyond the upper limit of that map (this one, which I named Skejdar River, went up to Oceansend in my older map, but it has been now shortened - it had little sense for a river to run parallel to a coastline for a long stretch);

## Climate and Weather

**14** - Terrain types for the whole Norwold region have been borrowed, when consistent with the canon sources and the assumptions listed above, from various fan works (the GAZF series, Robin Dijkema's map of northeastern Brun, Carillion's map of northern Norwold). This means that the terrains featured in the fanworks have been modified or changed altogether when they were not consistent with the canon maps, and adapted to match those. Greatest changes have thus happened (in regard to the GAZF line) with Landfall region, Kaarjala, and the Ghyr-Western Alliance region beyond the Icereach Range;

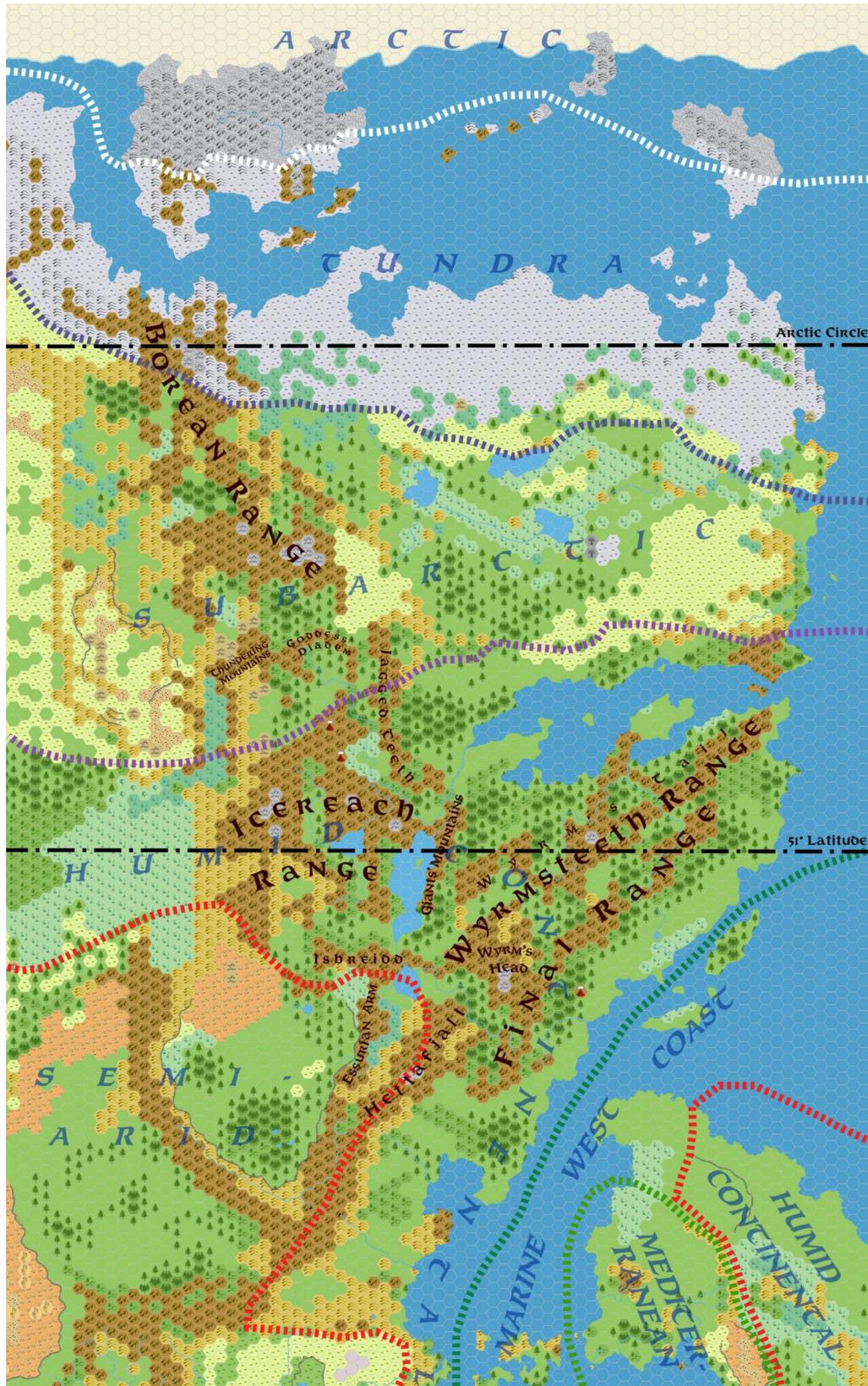
**15** - The Norwold region has received a more liberal treatment of hill hexes in regard to the CM1 Test of the Warlords' map; this was due to a sentence found in the module (mountain hexes bordering plains must be considered half-hill hexes), to a much larger presence of hills in larger-scale canon maps (Dawn of the Emperors, Wrath of the Immortals), and mostly to accommodate as much as possible other fanworks;

**16** - The vast "plain = empty" hexes between the Great Bay and the Landsplit River have been partially filled with a taiga-type forest, since the area is found in the subarctic band in the final updated map (as per point [6], above); having tundra in the subarctic band (as in GAZF series, which has the Arctic Circle much more to the south than Bruce's article) was inappropriate, and a different terrain (which is also consistent with CM1 Test of the Warlord) was chosen.

The climate of Norwold generally belongs to the continental band, up to the Great Bay included. The region is characterized by a wide seasonal variation of temperature, ranging from severely cold winters to hot summers, and a high degree of precipitation year-round. Snow is the norm at the height of the winter season, and usually may fall between late autumn and early spring, while in the summer rains tend to occur as thunderstorms. In the isles of the Strand, seasonal temperature variation tends to be narrower, with warm summers and cool winters and precipitations as abundant as on the mainland.

North of the Great Bay, climate turns subarctic, with a huge temperature variation between the long winter months that feature a below-freezing temperature (which can last even 5-7 months per year), and the warm but short summers. The soil is mostly characterized by the permafrost phenomenon, allowing only for hardy plant species, conifer trees, and taiga-type forests to survive. Near the coasts and at the southern boundary of this climate band, winters are milder and the permafrost does not occur, so the soil is better suited for agriculture here. In the subarctic areas, precipitations are low during the year and most of them occur during the fall, but they still allow for a snow cover during winter.

North of the Landsplit River system and of the Autuasmaa Plain, the tundra climate prevails. The frigid temperature and the presence of permafrost year-round do not allow for the growth of trees here, and only moss, heath, and lichen are supported in this area. The tundra is characterized by two main seasons, featuring dark and very cold





*Winter in the Katfjellene*

winters, and somewhat warmer summers, when the upper layer of permafrost melts, leaving the soil soggy and covering the land with small marshes, lakes, and ponds.

In the region's highlands and mountains, climate tends to be colder than in the surrounding region. Mountain ranges usually have subarctic climate regardless of latitude, and are characterized by alpine tundra climate above the treeline, with huge glaciers and permanent snowfields occupying the highest peaks and mountaintops.

## MOUNTAINS, RIVERS, AND LAKES

Norwold's main geographical feature is undoubtedly its huge mountain ranges. The region as a whole is dominated by five major mountainous systems - each of which is divided into a number of lesser ranges - and by a number of minor chains. The southernmost mountain block is represented by the imposing **Hettafjall** (the "hooded mountains"), a range which represents a continuation of the Eastern Mengul Mountains and of the Kithor Mountains that form the south-eastern border of the Denagothian Plateau. The smaller *Essurian*

*Arm* and the *Isbreidd* north-west of the Hettafjall complete the isolation of the Denagothian Plateau from Norwold.

The Hettafjall is by some scholars considered the southern third of the **Final Range**, a narrower but very imposing chain which runs parallel to Norwold's eastern coast, and whose name was given to it by the first Thyatian explorers who thought that these very high mountains might mark the end of the world. The Final Range includes from the south to the north the *Lirovka's Alps*, the *Ironroot Mountains*, and the *Peaks of Snorri*.



*A valley in the Hettafjall*

A third infamous mountain system is the **Wurmsteeth Range**, which is found north-west of the Final Range and includes both the so-called *Wurm's Tail* - the long chain made up by the *Eagles' Barrier*, the *Pierced Crown*, and the *Bloody Scythe* - and the huge massif of the *Wurm's Head*, which is linked to the upper end of the Lirovka's Alps and thus considered by some both a part of the Wurmsteeth and of the Final ranges. The Wurmsteeth's two blocks are separated by a large area of mostly plain highlands that truly seems to break the range in two. Seen from a distance, the Wurmsteeth - and especially the Wurm's Tail - have a jagged appearance which - together with the presence of many dragons in the area - has contributed to the range's name.

The fourth system is the collection of several mountain chains collectively known as the **Icereach Range** (sometimes also called the White Range), which deserves the name of the highest range of Norwold, and which is usually considered as the western border of Norwold. The range's heart is made up by the *Ice Wall*, with the two long branches stretching southward, in the middle of which is found the highland valley known as the Throne of He Who Watches; the Icereach Range, broken by the Timayam and Skelleft river valleys, continues to the north-east with the *Arch of Fire*, the south-west with *Quesa's Massif* and the *White Mountains*. The smaller *Giants' Mountains*, on the eastern side of the Azure Lake, are also sometimes considered part of the Icereach as well. Long but narrower mountain ranges called the *Thundering Mountains*, the *Goddess' Diadem*, and the *Jagged Teeths* are found to the north and north-east of the Icereach, likely the result of huge earthquakes or geological upheavals - perhaps even a meteor

strike - that happened tens of thousands of years ago.

The fifth and last mountain system thus runs northward from the Icereach Range, even if it was likely connected with that range before the cataclysms. The northern range is unimaginatively called the **Borean Range** by Alphatians and Known Worlders, while the Kaarjalans call it the *Valtavia Vuoria* (the "great mountains"); the range forms the north-western border with Borea as well as the largest mountain range of whole Norwold. The great southern massif of the Borean Range is made up by the *Karelides* to the east (which include the ominous *Mount Crystykk*) and by the *Vuoret Muistamisesta* ("mountains of remembrance") to the west, while to the north it continues with the *Pelon Peaks* (and their south-western branch, the *Azurun Mountains*), and the northernmost *Luminen Kiviä Mountains*.

A multitude of small and large rivers and lakes is scattered all over the Norwold region, and small ponds and lakes become much more numerous north of the Great Bay. However, the largest rivers and lakes of Norwold can be grouped into three



*The Tarbren Valley and the Pelon Peaks*

hydrographic systems. The first is the one made up by the **Foxes' River** and its twin to the west, the **Sabre River**, which spring from the Final and Wurmsteeth ranges, respectively, to flow into the Gulf of Wrecks, south of the Peninsula of Alpha. The second system, which is the largest of the region, ties together Norwold's three largest southern lakes. The **Vinisk River** springs from the slopes of the Denagothian Plateau and flows into **Lake Gunaald**, while the **Ransarn River** starts in Lirovka's Alps, reaches the Gunaald, then continues northward into the huge **Azure Lake** and northward again, emptying into the **White Bear River**, which flows into the Great Bay after a long course from its spring in the Goddess' Diadem. From the south, the White Bear River receives the waters of the **Skelleft River**, which springs from the White Mountains and flows into the **Lake Vanern** before joining the White Bear; Lake Vanern also receives the water of the smaller **Timayam River** which springs from the northern Ice Wall. The third system is found north of the Great Bay, and is commonly called the "Landsplit system", and it is basically made of two huge rivers. The southern one, which flows into the Alphantian Sea to the east, is called **Landsplit River** by the Alphantian settlers, but the Kaarjalans call it *Maanselkä*; the river flows eastward from the Ratovaarat Mountains, forming also two large lakes, called **Hämäräjärvi** and **Isojärvi**. The northern river is called **Tukkijoki** and it gathers the waters of the third great lake of the north, **Pohjanjärvi**.

## Norwold in the View of Outsiders

Norwold is considered a wilderness, dangerous, and barbaric region by most folks of the Known World and the Alphantian Empire, a land suitable only for pioneers and other brave individuals, or for people like exiles and refugees who have nowhere else to go. The peoples of the Northern Reaches and of the Heldannic Territories share common cultural roots with the inhabitants of Norwold, but even they consider their northern cousins a backward lot, to be taught civilization or - in the worst case - to be raided and plundered.

Nevertheless, Norwold also represents a source of attraction for the major powers and people who in the rest of the surrounding civilized world would like to start new lives there. This untamed land, in fact, is filled with untapped resources - plenty of ore, timber, and animal resources waiting to be extracted or exploited. Also, in the view of outsiders Norwold is a land of opportunity: a big empty place where, braving the region's climate, monsters, and barbarian natives, one - even if he is only a commoner in his homeland - could carve a land for himself and live as he pleases without having to submit to the authority of kings, noblemen, or the like.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF NORWOLD

No region can be properly understood for what its features really are unless one delves into its history... and Norwold's history is a rich and troubled one. Here we will give you a brief account of the most important events which took place in Norwold and in the surrounding lands, divided per age - from the great cataclysm which marked the dawn of our world, up to modern times.<sup>1</sup>

### The Aftermaths of the Great Rain of Fire (BC 3000-2500)

#### A New Dawn for Norwold

The region that one day will become Norwold underwent great changes after the cataclysm which rocked the planet and put

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<sup>1</sup> The history which follows is a revision of the one I wrote years ago (see [Timeline of Norwold](#) at the Vaults of Pandius), which now should be considered obsolete. For the events regarding lower Norwold and the northern realms of Littonia and Kaarjala, I used material from the GAZF series (by JTR), while the events for the Wendar and Denagoth area were mostly skipped apart from those related to the first migrations and to the last centuries, because after a careful analysis I found that both the new [Timeline for Wendar-Denagoth-Ghyr-Northern Wildlands](#) (by M. Dalmonte), the old [Timeline for the Wendar and Denagoth region version 2.4](#) (by M. Dalmonte and S. Stanley), and the [timeline featured in GAZF1 The Kingdom of Wendar](#) (by JTR), included many inconsistencies with the few canonical information known about Wendar and Denagoth; rewriting a complete timeline for those regions was beyond the scope of this article, so I deemed better to skip this part.

an end once and for all to the Blackmoorian civilization. In fact, this region changed its latitude because of the Great Rain of Fire, its upper reaches ended up beyond the Arctic Circle while the Known World (formerly under the arctic icecap) became a temperate area.<sup>2</sup> A slow and lengthy process of ice-melting and freezing started due to the latitude change. In this new age, which started in BC 3000, Norwold was connected to the Isle of Dawn through a land bridge in the modern Oceansend - Helskir area, and the Isles of the Strand were no islands at all and part of the mainland. Most of the inner mountain valleys and highlands of central and western Norwold were still covered by glaciers in this age, and are therefore impassable.

#### The Ancestral Denizens of Norwold

Due to the latitude change, the frost giants who lived near the pre-cataclysmic arctic icecap started a northward migration from the Known World to Norwold, settling in the glaciers and cold lands up to the freezing northern coast; many giant realms gathering both frost giants and other giant races were established in this time in central and south-eastern Norwold. The elder dwarves, who lived in the subarctic pre-cataclysmic mountains at the border between Norwold

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<sup>2</sup> The article assumes, in agreement with the GAZ series and the "Timeline of History" (featured in Hollow World boxed set, Dungeon Master's Sourcebook) - but not with the "Outer World, Pre-cataclysmic Map" (included in the same Hollow World boxed set) - that the Known World was under the arctic icecap before the Great Rain of Fire, and that the North Pole was located in modern Ethengar. See also [Blackmoor and Pre-Cataclysmic Mystara](#) (by LoZompatore) for more information.



*The frozen wastes of Norzee during winter*

and Borea, started as well a slow migration southward to reach milder areas.

The Beastmen, who had been pushed near the Arctic Circle - in the area between Borea, Norwold, and the Known World - by the Blackmoor crusades centuries ago, by now used to the freezing climate, migrated to the ruins of the (then) eastern provinces of the Blackmoor Empire found in Hyborea.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Beastmen's canonical migrations up to BC 2400 show a series of inconsistencies regardless of which pre-cataclysmic map do you use. In this version, the Beastmen were pushed by the Blackmoor crusades into Borea and the Known World (then beyond of near the borders of the Arctic Circle) between BC 3500 and BC 3200. Next - when the Great Rain of Fire happened in BC 3000 and Blackmoor was destroyed - the Beastmen moved in Hyborea, where the ruins of many recently-destroyed Blackmoor provinces on Brun were located, and stayed there; the region of Hyborea, which was found in a temperate area before the Great Rain of Fire, now was beyond the Arctic Circle. In BC 2400, as per canon timelines, the Beastmen migrated from Hyborea again to Borea, toward the ruins of the old Blackmoorian city of Urzud.

Sparse tribes of rakasta belonging to the snow pardasta and lynxmen breeds dwelled in the glacier-covered central and western reaches of Norwold. Also living in the frozen Icereach Range valleys were a number of "brute" tribes - humans who in the past centuries had interbred with the Beastmen - who called themselves the Dena ("Children of Den" in their tongue), after the name of one of their legendary leaders. Around BC 2700, competition with the local pardasta tribes grew harsher for the Dena; thus, the female warrior Jotakk decided to lead her people in a migration southward from the Icereach Range's valleys to a large plateau, where they settled. They called their new land Denagoth ("Land of the Dena").

About a century after the Great Rain of Fire, elven refugees from a colony near the old Brunian border of the Blackmoor Empire - who found shelter in a large valley still partially covered by ice they named Genalleth - managed to survive the radiation induced wasting disease which afflicted them thanks to the abandonment of technology, the rediscovery of druidic magic, and the help of the fey.

### **The Dragon Nation is Born**

In this age, gold dragon priests of the Great One, following omens from their patron, begin to gather many dragon of all species in the central mountain ranges of Norwold (the modern Wyrksteeth Range), laying the foundations of the Dragon Nation.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> See [History of Dragonkind](#) (by S. Neri) for more details about the history of the dragons before and after this event. The Dragon Nation and the Dragon Parliament were first introduced in the Dragonlord Trilogy novels, by T. Gunnarsson.

In BC 2800, in the heart of a dead volcano in the midst of the Wyrms Head Mountains, the dragons build the seat of their gathering place in Norwold and of the Dragon Parliament, the city of Windreach. A number of dragons loyal to the Dragon Nation start to migrate in the Wyrmssteeth Range, but many more openly defy it and continue to live as they always did; they are called the "Renegades".

### The First Human Cultures

Only a few human tribes lived in Norwold in this time; they belong to the Valoin culture,<sup>5</sup> who centuries before had been pushed north by the Blackmoorian expansionism and had settled the coastal area located between the Norzee and the Great Bay. Due to the latitude change, they mostly relocated on the north-eastern shores of the Great Bay after the Great Rain of Fire.<sup>6</sup> Around BC 2700, from their northern lands the Valoin gradually spread to settle the eastern coast of Norwold south of the Great Bay, up to the modern Oceansend region.

In BC 2600, Vantalian tribes migrating from Borea reach the western fringes of Norwold and cross some of the valleys at last freed from the glaciers, settling the lands around the White Bear River's mouth.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> In terms of real-world language families, the Valoin would speak a Baltic tongue.

<sup>6</sup> Before the Great Rain of Fire, the Valoin (and their Valemén ancestors) lived in the area north-west of Blackmoor, on Skothar, which was connected by land to Brun in the area of modern north-eastern Norwold; thus, they were already found there when the cataclysm happened. I have changed this detail from the Valoin timeline found in [GAZF6 The Kingdom of Littonia](#) (by G. Gander), to make it more consistent with the choice of the Known World as the pre-cataclysmic North Pole.

## The Antalian Age (BC 2500-1700)

### The Rise of the Antalian Culture

The latter half of the third millennium BC marked the rise of one of the great civilizations of the ancient world, the Antalians, whose ancestors were stationed on the Isle of Dawn. Around BC 2500, they crossed the Helskir land bridge and settled in the Oceansend region, clashing against the Valoin and pushing them to the north.<sup>8</sup> BC 2400 is usually considered the year which marks the Antalian civilization's rise in Norwold - a warlike, bronze-age culture devoted to farming, fishing, and raiding, that also developed seafaring skills. The Antalians, thanks to their bronze-age technology, clashed successfully against the Valoin to the north, and warred intermittently with the neighbouring giant kingdoms.

In the following century (BC 2300-2200), wars against the giants became commonplace and raged in eastern Norwold for many decades; the events of those wars spawned the subjects of old Norse sagas, which depict this time as an age of heroes and villains, in which the historical figures of Donar and Lokar (later known as the Immortals Thor and Loki, ascended toward the end of this age) shaped the fate of whole peoples. The giants were ultimately defeated and dispersed.

### A Time of Division and Expansion

Following the defeat of the giants in BC 2200, the Antalians settled most of the

<sup>7</sup> In terms of real-world language families, the Vantalian would speak a Slavic tongue.

<sup>8</sup> In terms of real-world language families, Antalians would speak a North Germanic or Proto-Norse tongue.



*An Antalian sacrificial stone on Walrus Island*

eastern coast of Norwold from the Altenwald to the Great Bay area, the northern tip of the Isle of Dawn included. Then a split began to occur within the Antalian culture, between the Aesinar dwelling from Oceansend to the north - attached to the traditional warlike lifestyle - and the Vanitar dwelling in the southern reaches - who had developed an interest for magic and fertility cults.

In BC 2100, the rift between those two groups of Antalian clans had widened so much that they started a decades-long season of wars, which ended with the Treaty of Kasavir nearly a century later and the reunification of the Antalian culture. The two branches of the Antalian culture, once the internal wars stopped, started to expand in the neighbouring lands.

By BC 2000, the Vanitar Antalians had settled Nylland (modern Heldann)<sup>9</sup> and the Northern Reaches, while the Aesinar had further expanded toward the western Great Bay, but on the Isle of Dawn their expansion was hampered by the arrival of the Dunharian peoples through the Redstone land bridge. The Aesinar's drive toward the White Bear River also forced many local Vantalian tribes to migrate south into the newly-opened valleys of central Norwold, where they settled.

A side effect of the Dunharian migration toward the Isle of Dawn was the pressure put from the south on the Aesinar clans who lived in the northern region of the island, which in turn triggered movements and skirmishes of the clans living further north-west along the Norwold coast. Some of the latter, under the leadership of Bjorn One-Arm, decided to migrate to recently-discovered lands beyond the sea to the north-east. Some years later, these clans would establish the realm of Ystmarhavn, in modern Qeodhar.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Before the time of Heldann 'the Brave' (AC 707-710), modern Heldann was known as Nordurland; this was the name the Northmen of the Northern Reaches gave the region because it was found due north of their own lands. However, the ancient Antalians who first settled this region called it Nylland ("new land" in their tongue).

<sup>10</sup> This story is told in [The Jarldom of Ystmarhavn](#) (by G. Gander); the realm's foundation date (BC 1400 in Gander's version) has been backdated to BC 2000 to be consistent with the Antalians' golden age. It may be worth noting that Ystmarhavn survived the destruction of the Antalian civilization in Norwold, and further expanded along the coasts of Frisland, to the south, establishing a series of colonies. The colonies had fallen under Alpathian rule by BC 0; Ystmarhavn was likewise conquered by

## The Fate of the Valoins

While the Antalians were still on the rise, around BC 2500 the Valoins living south of the Great Bay developed a different dialect from their cousins to the north. This is the root of their differentiation between Lietuvans (the southern ones) and Litoniesu (the northern ones). However, by BC 2200 the more powerful Antalians had pushed most Valoin-descended people north of the Great Bay (only some sparse tribes remained in the area between the Oceansend Marshes and the modern Isles of the Strand). The language and cultural split between Litoniesu and Lietuvans was by now complete. Most Lietuvans migrated back to areas beyond the Great Bay, settling north of their Litoniesu cousins.

But their disgraces were destined to grow worst: in BC 1800, a large group of frost giants migrated north from the Ironroot Mountains to withdraw from the nearby Antalian-dominated lands. Under the leadership of Ulf One-Eye, they crossed the Great Bay and enslaved the Litoniesu and Lietuvan peoples, establishing the realm of Nordenheim in BC 1763.

## The Humans and the Elves in Genalleth

In the midst of the Antalian age, around BC 2000, a vast Dunharian migration from central Brun entered the Known World from northwest, passing through Genalleth, Nylland, the Northern Reaches, and then - through the Redstone land bridge - ending

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Yanifey people chased from the Alpathian mainland - only later (AC 510) a local chief named Qeodhar unified the island (which still brings his name) and aligned his realm with the Alpathian Empire.



*An Antalian thing from a Thyatian bas-relief*

up in the Isle of Dawn.<sup>11</sup> A number of clans of these humans decided to stop in Genalleth and settled among the elves. The Genallethians, as the humans settled in modern Wendar were known, peacefully acknowledged the local elves' supremacy and lived in friendship with them in the plains between their woods.

During the course of the next couple of centuries, Vanitar clans coming from nearby Nylland also entered Genalleth, soon outnumbering the Genallethians;<sup>12</sup> their nature-loving culture, however, was welcomed both by the Genallethians and the elves, so their migration there was a peaceful one. In the next centuries, the Vanitars

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<sup>11</sup> In terms of real-world language families, the Dunharians would speak a Celtic tongue. This branch of the Dunharians is the ancestor of all the Dawner peoples (the Dunaels, and the natives of Redstone and of the Shadow Coast).

<sup>12</sup> According to the Poor Wizard's Almanac I, the humans of Wendar were descended by the Antalians, so their arrival in Genalleth must happen after BC 2000 (when Heldann and the Northern Reaches were settled) and before BC 1700 (when they cease to be Antalians). I chose to keep in Wendar also a contribution from a Celtic-like people like the Dunharians - which is hinted at by most fan works - and I deemed it better to tie their arrival in Genalleth with the great Dunharian migration of BC 2000.

actually mixed with the Genallethians, and the latter's culture was gradually absorbed into that of the Vanitar's. The humans and the elves helped one another against outside enemies in the centuries to come, slowly developing greater friendship ties.

### The Coming of the Great Horde

An outside, savage force would soon bring to an end the prosperity of Norwold's peoples. In BC 1750, as a consequence of the humanoid movements in Borea, some human tribes fled eastward and crossed the northern passes of the Icereach and Borean ranges, ending up in the great plain found between the Great Bay and the Landsplit River system. They were the ancestors of the Viaskoda.<sup>13</sup> They brought with them tales of tremendous and unstoppable humanoid hordes beyond the mountains.

In fact, not many years passed that in BC 1722 the humanoid Great Horde of King Loark crossed the Icereach and Borean ranges, bringing death and destruction upon Norwold's peoples and ravaging the region for eleven years before migrating further south to Ethengar in BC 1710. The Antalian civilization was destroyed (apart from some clans whisked by the Immortals into the Hollow World); its survivors in Norwold were sent into a dark age. The hero siblings Fredar and Fredara (later known as the Immortals Frey and Freyja, ascended around BC 1600) lived in Nylland during this dark time.

A few Antalian clans managed to flee the onslaught, seeking shelter in the high valleys of the Icereach Range and the northern fringes of the Denagothian Plateau, where

<sup>13</sup> In terms of real-world language families, this people would speak a Uralic language.

they lost most of the trappings of their civilization - they were the ancestors of the Icereachers (or Hengerians).

The Vantalian, sheltered in their valleys in central Norwold, were spared from the brunt of the invasion, but some of their tribes were nevertheless displaced, and migrated southward into the Known World.<sup>14</sup>



*An ogre kidnaps a young Antalian shepherdess*

<sup>14</sup> This migrating group should include the Vandars, the people who later will invade the Traladaran lands in the late 10<sup>th</sup> century BC.

## The Dark Age (BC 1700-1000)

### Norwold Under the Humanoid Yoke

After the ravages of the Great Horde, the Antalian civilization was no more and Norwold continued to be a battlefield between the surviving humans and their humanoid overlords, or between rival humanoid war leaders. By BC 1600, due to the gradual melting of the Norwold glaciers, the lowlands north of Oceansend were submerged by the sea, a process which formed the Isles of the Strand and the Oceansend Marshes; to this date, many humanoid tribes had already crossed the Helskir land bridge and had poured into the Isle of Dawn from the north, heralding times of war for the Dawner peoples. The process would have gone on until BC 1200, when the Helskir land bridge collapsed and was finally submerged by the still rising sea level; now the Isle of Dawn was fully separated by the Norwold mainland.

Thanks to their stay in Norwold, the humanoids absorbed some traits of the old Antalian culture. By BC 1400, the humanoid tribes stationed on the eastern coast of the region started to develop some seafaring skills; in the following centuries their sea raids hit the coasts of the northern Isle of Dawn and the western coasts of the Alphanian mainland as well.

In this age many humanoid realms dotted the eastern coast and the southern reaches of Norwold; some of these realms were nothing more than semi-nomadic hordes, while others, built over the remnants of the old Antalian civilization, saw the humanoids settle down. One of the most powerful humanoid nations of this age was established

in southern Norwold, in the area between modern Lighthall and the Final Range.

### Namejs and the Littonians' Freedom

While the people of southern Norwold had their troubles with the humanoids, north of the Great Bay the hero Namejs leads the Lietuvans and the Litoniesu in an uprising against their frost giant masters in BC 1371. In BC 1362 the rebels were victorious: the realm of Nordheim was destroyed, the frost giants retreated toward Frosthaven, and the humans established the Kingdom of Littonia, with Namejs as king. In the years of Namejs' reign (BC 1362-1329), the Littonians started a southward expansion, controlling the Landrise and the Helm, and even foraging south of the Great Bay.



*An Antalian chief's farewell*

However, when King Namejs mysteriously disappeared in BC 1329, no one was able to truly take his place as ruler of a unified realm. Littonia started to weaken and fragment under his descendants, as the kingdom's successor states warred among themselves. By BC 1100, the unified kingdom was a thing of the past; intermittent wars between the petty Littonian states had ravaged the countryside, and many areas fell prey to humanoid and frost giant raids from the neighbouring regions.

## The Age of Rebirth (BC 1000-400)

### Norwold at the Turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BC

By BC 1000, the surviving glaciers of the interior valleys, remnants of the past ice ages, had greatly reduced, opening lush forested valleys, rivers, lakes, and meadows to settlement. At the start of this age, Norwold was divided among various human cultures, and many more small humanoid and giant tribes and kingdoms mostly found in the region to the south of the Great Bay; the rakasta tribes and the dragons completed the picture. One of the most powerful giant kingdoms was centred on the Peaks of Snorri, and it underwent a time of expansion in this age.

Centuries after the fall of their ancient civilization, the surviving groups of Antalians developed different cultural identities due to separation. The Antalians living south of the Oceansend area preserved a more settled lifestyle, with farming and fishing villages, while their cousins to the north had gradually adopted a semi-nomadic lifestyle. In the interior valleys, the old Vantalian tribes intermarried with other clans, forming the Vanatic culture, while in the western valleys the Icereacher culture had mostly kept to itself.

To the north of the Great Bay, the Viaskoda and Littonian cultures strove to survive in front of the humanoid and frost giant threats. Around this time, another human people called the Shonaks also migrated from Borea to the tundra and marshy lands between the rivers and lakes of the Landsplit River's system.

Moreover, by this time sea reaving humanoids turned to migration; from the Norwold coasts many humanoids left for some nearby destination - the furthest place to which they migrated was the Limn region of mainland Alphatia.

### The Nithians Turn North

Around BC 1000, the Nithian Empire started looking to the north for expansion. The Nithian armies conquered the coasts and the lowlands of the Northern Reaches and Nylland; these lands soon became slave reservoirs for the empire, which deported them away from their homelands for various purposes.<sup>15</sup> In the following years, the Nithian pharaohs discovered the gates which lead from the Arch of Fire to the Elemental Plane of Fire, and decided to establish a series of outposts along the coast of Norwold and the Great Bay in order to set a direct link between the empire and that wondrous place. The main Nithian colony in Norwold was located at the mouth of the White Bear River. During their expansion along the Norwold coast, the Nithians successfully clashed against the local humanoid domains, destroying their seafaring capabilities and forcing them to retreat in the interior; thus, the age of the humanoid sea raiders came to an end. In AC 970, the Nithian Pharaoh Tokoramses V himself goes on pilgrimage to the Arch of Fire.

In order to make up for the loss of manpower in the north due to the deportation of the native population as

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<sup>15</sup> Some of the natives of those lands are transplanted by the Nithians to a colony on Davania's northern shores (in the modern Thyatian Hinterlands); they will become the ancestors of the Thyatian, Kerendan, and Hattian tribes.

slaves, the Nithians started importing halfling slaves from the Sea of Dread to the Northern Reaches and their Norwold outposts; many halfling slaves were indeed brought to the large Nithian colony in the western Great Bay.

Elsewhere, an alien human race, the Alphatians, migrated from their own ravaged world arriving in BC 1000 on the large island-continent to the east of Norwold in the event called "The Landfall". Some decades later, they established the small colony of Helskir on the northern tip of Isle of Dawn as a trading post with the Nithian Empire.

### Norwold During the Late Nithian Age

Even if the Nithian-dominated areas of Norwold were small, the empire exerted a relevant influence on the story of this region, some of which was destined to survive the destruction of Nithia in BC 500. For example, in BC 800, a large horde of Nithian-created gnolls chased from the Northern Reaches reached the Mengul Mountains and lower Norwold; their tribes scattered among these lands.

Around BC 700, the leaders of the Nithian Empire started to worship entropic Immortals and imposed those cults on the population; the easternmost part of the empire, led by the colony of Thothia on the Isle of Dawn, refused to accept this and civil war ensued. The governors of the Nithian colonies in Norwold, their minds poisoned by dreams of power sent by the entropic Immortals, started to clash in a series of useless wars against the humanoid and human peoples of Norwold, impoverishing their own domains and causing much suffering to the population. During the next two centuries (BC 700-500), some Nithian settlements were destroyed during slave

uprisings caused by resource exhaustion, others fell in front of the counterattacks of the human and humanoid tribes that the Nithians themselves had angered.

During the Nithian age, another important event happened: civil unrest and disagreement against the king led many clans of the elven Kingdom of Shiye-Lawr to migrate away from their homeland, to the untamed forests of Norwold. In the course of a century, these Shiye clans established a number of forest communities (called "Foresthomes") in the forests of the region.

Then, after two centuries of decline and civil strife, in BC 500 the Nithian Empire finally fell; the Immortals erased memory of it from the minds of the mortals. By now, all Nithian colonies in Norwold had been destroyed, abandoned or absorbed by local peoples. The Antalian-descended people of the Northern Reaches' mainland and Nylland were at last freed from the Nithian rule, only to fall under the dominion of the giants from the interior, now free to attack the lowlands. Only in the islands of Ostland did the people kept their freedom and prospered; the Northman culture started to develop here as a result.



*A battle of the Nithian civil war*

### The Foundation of Leeha

In the Northern Reaches, the fall of Nithia also marked the liberation of the halfling slaves; most of them gathered in a number of communities to the north of the Hardanger Mountains, closely allied with the local gnome clans, but cornered between the local giant and gnoll clans, now again on the rise. In BC 490, large hordes of kobolds - split from Ubdala's Great Horde defeated at the Battle of Sardal Pass by the Rockhome dwarves two years before - entered the gnome underground realm in the Hardanger Mountains and began a war of extermination against them. In the course of the next two centuries (up to BC 300), the gnome population was slowly exterminated; the survivors abandoned the area, scattering around the Known World and the north.<sup>16</sup>

Seeing the end of their gnome allies nearing, the halflings of southern Soderfjord in BC 400 fled from the region, heading northward under the guidance of a prophet of the High Heroes, to find their lost Norwold brethren (the descendants of the Nithian slave colony at the mouth of the White Bear River). After many years, they managed to reach the western Great Bay and found their kin, settling among them and establishing the Shire of Leeha around BC 350.

<sup>16</sup> The city of Torkyn Falls (from the novel *Dragonlord of Mystara*, by T. Gunnarsson), in the Three Fires Volcanoes area of the Wendarian Range, will be later established by the gnome refugees from the Hardanger Mountains.

### The Time of the Old Kingdoms (BC 350-AC 300)

The age between the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AC was an important age for Norwold, in which some of the realms enduring to this day were founded, while others rose but crumbled or were subsequently destroyed. The peoples of Norwold call this age the "Time of the Old Kingdoms", in contrast with the "new kingdoms" which were born after the 6<sup>th</sup> century AC.

#### Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Alpha

In BC 345 a powerful Alphatian prince named Alinor came to Norwold with a fleet of flying ships and established a colony in the western Great Bay region, whose first settlement was founded on the coast of the small bay south of the Peninsula of Err.<sup>17</sup> He named his new realm the Kingdom of Alpha, after his coastal capital, and brought more settlers from the Alphatian mainland. In the following decades, thanks to the aid of a potent magic staff, Alinor's armies conquered the barbarian wildlands north and south of Alpha.

By BC 280, the Kingdom of Alpha has defeated and caused the downfall of the old giant Kingdom of Snorri, expanded from the western Great Bay further westward to the White Bear River's valley and the Great Circle, and settled more lands.<sup>18</sup> Eventually,

<sup>17</sup> The story of Prince Alinor is mentioned in CM1 *Test of the Warlords*. It's entirely possible that Alinor was a mage specialized in earth-shaping magic, maybe with ties to [The Kingdom of Kerothar \(Abandoned\)](#) (by R. Burns). Alpha's establishment date and subsequent timeline have been borrowed from the GAZF series (author JTR).

its wizard-king came at odds with the dragons who dwelled in the Wurmsteeth Range, and a costly war ensued. Barbarian and humanoid tribes caught the opportunity to harass the Alphan armies as well. The war dragged on until the final collapse of the Kingdom of Alpha in BC 260: the war between Alinor and the Wurmsteeth dragons climaxed when the wizard-king's final spell to destroy his enemies backfired, causing a tremendous earthquake which rocked the whole kingdom from one border to another. The city of Alpha was buried under a mountain, Alinor himself crushed to death; legends tell of mountain ranges which raised or collapsed throughout the kingdom due to this disaster.<sup>19</sup> After the event, the dragons retreated, content with Alpha's destruction.

In some of Alpha's now scattered provinces, a number of petty successor states of the Alphan kingdom survived. Despite their technological and magical advantage over the neighbouring peoples, they quickly lost ground against them due to the aftermath of Alpha's downfall, the scarcity of resources, and because they were left alone and ignored by the Alphan Empire. Eventually, they were all conquered or absorbed by natives and humanoids in the turn of two centuries.

<sup>18</sup> This westward expansion is tied to the material found in the GAZF series (author JTR).

<sup>19</sup> It is worth noting that as of AC 1000 the buried ruins of Alpha (formerly a port) are not found on a coastline, but on a hillside, which suggests something of catastrophic proportions happened in the last days of the kingdom. In my old obsolete [Timeline of Norwold](#) I speculated that Alinor's final spell (as hinted even in CM1 Test of the Warlords) might concern destroying the dragons' lairs in the Wurmsteeth Range by making a part of that mountains collapse.

Only some villages survived, which from BC 200 were infrequently visited by Alphan fur traders or adventurers searching for old Alphan relics; one of those was found on the site of the modern city of Alpha.

### Ilkundal's Gift to the Norwold Elves

During the past four centuries, the Foresthomes established by the Shiye elves had grown in number and spread over many of the forests of Norwold; the Shiye, despite being at odds with their king in mainland Alphan, had preserved their traditional cult of Eiryndul, but their religious allegiance was bound to change around BC 200, when after a series of quests the elven heroine Lornasen brought a branch of the Sylvan Realm's *Tree of Life* to Norwold and introduced Ilkundal's relic and cult among many local Foresthomes. She even managed to magically keep an area of the Lothbarth Forest (north of Leeha) in a state of eternal springtime. Thereafter, she became Immortal herself and her cult spread, second only to Ilkundal's, among the Norwold elves.<sup>20</sup>



*Lornasen during her days as a mortal*

<sup>20</sup> The mortal background of Lornasen is described in [Codex Immortalis](#) (by M. Dalmonte)

### The Birth of Kaarjala and the Unification of Littonia

A human people, the Saamari, in BC 140 migrated eastward from beyond the Borean Range, where their realm was being harassed by humanoid tribes and other dark forces. They crossed the Winter Peaks and arrived in the northernmost region of Norwold, west of the Landsplit River system, seeking to take control of the Autuasmaa Plain. Conflict ensued against the Shonak human tribes who occupied these lands and with Littonian settlers from the southeast, who also claimed parts of this area from themselves. In AC 115, the Saamari finally defeated the Shonaks and drove them again into the northern tundra.

But this did not enable them to secure the Autuasmaa Plain for themselves. In fact, in BC 128, after 11 years of war, the most powerful Littonian warlord, Karlis, had managed to unify through war and diplomacy the scattered Lietuvans and Litoniesu domains, and to re-establish the Kingdom of Littonia; he was hailed as King Karlis 'the Unifier'. In BC 115, just after the Shonaks' defeat, the new Littonian king, Uldis I, raised an army to reclaim the Autuasmaa from the Saamari for Littonia.

The war went on for ten years, until the Saamari decisively defeated the Littonians in the Battle of Lake Isojärvi (BC 105); King Uldis I fell during the fight. The new Littonian king, Māris, signed the Treaty of Valmiera with the Saamari King Risto, agreeing to cede to him the whole Autuasmaa region.

The Saamari Kingdom of Kaarjala was then founded. In BC 100, the Immortal Ilmarinen gifted the Saamari with the artefact known as the *Great Saampo*, a magical windmill which



*Kaarjalan swamps*

made the climate of Kaarjala milder and suitable for agriculture.

In the following centuries, Kaarjala and Littonia coexisted in an uneasy peace, punctuated by brief wars and skirmishes, but also by growing trade relations. The two young realms were mostly occupied with other opponents though: both had to fight back the humanoids and the hostile human neighbouring tribes, and occasionally to repel frost giant invasions from Frosthaven - in fact, one such invasion (BC 15-12) wreaked great havoc in Kaarjala and ravaged Littonia's north-western marches. As a result of the frost giants' invasion, goblin tribes occupied a weakened Littonia's south-western marches. Only in AC 200 King Guntis II of Littonia was able to start a series of wars against the goblins to reclaim his kingdom's south-western territories, but the humanoids mounted a vigorous defence and only in AC 300 Littonia was finally able to subjugate the so-called Sarkans goblins.

## The Thyatians Land in the North

In the far south, King Lucinius of Thyatis and Emperor Alphas VI of Alphatia signed the Treaty of Edairo in AC 0. The two rulers agreed to keep a large part of the Isle of Dawn and the whole region of Norwold free from their armies and influence, in order to put a large stretch of neutral lands between their realms. Later that year, back in Thyatis King Lucinius was assassinated by Zendrolion Tatriokanitas, who was then crowned first Emperor of Thyatis; Zendrolion declared the Treaty of Edairo void, on the ground that Alphatia had continued to keep relations with the sparse post-Alinor communities found in the Great Bay, including the village on the site of modern Alpha.<sup>21</sup>

But this was not enough for Zendrolion. The Thyatian Empire, after befriending key Ostland clans, from AC 5 started to establish outposts along the eastern Norwold coast. In AC 12 the Thyatians occupied the village on the site of the modern city of Alpha and built



*Remains of a Thyatian fort near Lighthall*

<sup>21</sup> Some of these details, as well as the Trial of Norwold and the Bog War below, are found in the "Library Clues" in the adventure module M5 Talons of Night.

a heavily fortified town around it, naming the settlement Cape Alpha; this was to be the northernmost settlement established by the Thyatians in Norwold. In Alphatia's eyes, the construction of Cape Alpha violated the Treaty of Edairo: the Trial of Norwold opened in Dunadale with representatives from both empires to determine control over Norwold, but negotiations during the Trial of Norwold were abruptly interrupted by the Alphatians in AC 15 when they discovered that the Thyatians were exploiting that time to carry on further violations against the Treaty of Edairo and to make war preparations. The Alphatian Emperor, using gold and magic, persuaded many Ostlander clans to turn against Thyatis and exhausted the already meagre imperial treasury to hire barbarian sea reavers from the Northern Reaches, Qeodhar, and Viaskaland to unleash them against the Thyatian colonies in Norwold in a surprise attack. The move succeeded: Cape Alpha was taken and sacked by the reavers, as well as other Thyatian colonies along the Norwold coast. As a result, the Bog War between Thyatis and Alphatia on the Isle of Dawn began (AC 15-18); the war ended with Thyatis conquering territories on the Isle of Dawn and reducing many of the traitorous Ostlander clans to vassal status, but with the abandonment of any plan of expansion in Norwold on the empire's part.

In order to ensure that the most advantageous spot in the Great Bay will never again be settled by anyone else, the Alphatians laid on the ruins of Cape Alpha a curse that forbade anyone inside. A few survivors from the colony mixed with the local population and resettled in the nearby shores, founding a village which was called

Holfa (a corruption of "Alpha").<sup>22</sup>

### The Northern Reaches at the Dawn of the Modern Age

In Ostland, the Northman culture developed after the fall of Nithia, and was prospering by the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC; the divided clans - who had again developed decent seafaring skills - often fought among themselves and, in times of peace, carried on sea trade and occasional raids. This was made possible by the elimination of the Thyatian sea power since BC 190, when that country had been conquered by the Alphatians. Also, around BC 100 the names Nordurland, Ostland, Soderfjord, and Vestland came in use after the four cardinal points to indicate the main regions inhabited by the Antalians-descended peoples.

The rise of the Northmen of Ostland was short-lived though, because their meddling in the relations of the two rival empires of Thyatis and Alphatia brought them into the former's sphere of influence, more so after AC 18 when most of the clans hostile to Thyatis were defeated and reduced to vassal status. Only around AC 200 did the Thyatian influence on the Ostlander clans started to weaken and wane; some clans then gradually switched allegiance to Alphatia - which held the northern Isle of Dawn - seeking the protection of the rival empire from Thyatian influence.<sup>23</sup> In AC 250, this allowed the Alphatians to penetrate into the Western Sea

<sup>22</sup> The story of the curse and the subsequent events regarding Holfa are described in [A city of Alpha mini-gaz](#) (by LoZompatore).

<sup>23</sup> This change of alliance of many Ostlander clans has been devised to make more consistent the Alphatian colonization of northern Alasiya in AC 250.

of Dawn and to establish colonies along the coasts of north-eastern Alasiya.

On the other hand, the Northern Reaches' mainland was still only sparsely populated by humans, and dominated by the giants. Around AC 50, a powerful and mad renegade red dragon named Kardyer<sup>24</sup> began his reign of terror over the Soderfjord area, commanding a score of lesser dragons and various goblin and orc tribes, with whom he harassed local Northman, giant, and gnoll clans, and raided the neighbouring lands. His lair was found in Darmouk, an ancient stronghold of the elder dwarves located in the Makkres Mountains between Soderfjord and Rockhome.

### Nordurlanders and Dwarves Settle Norwold

The turn of the modern age marked a time of population rise in Nordurland. Starting from AC 100, the Nordurlanders began to settle the lower reaches of Norwold, up to the Strand region; farms and hamlets were



*Northmen landing on the Norwold coast*

<sup>24</sup> The story of Kardyer is told in the novels of the Dragonlord Trilogy, by T. Gunnarsson.

gradually built all over the coastal strip which runs around the Bay of Kammin and east of the Final Range. The main colonization drive would last up to around AC 300. The northward expansion was also driven by the Nordurlanders' frequent conflicts against the southern Ethengar hordes - in fact, around AC 100, the empire of the Great Khan Muhuli extended his control over all Nordurland and lower Norwold, up to the Skaufskogr Hills (it would dissolve a decade later).

Likewise, around AC 200, the Rockhome dwarves' policy of establishing colonies and settlements in foreign countries was well underway. The first dwarven clans also reached Norwold around this time, exploring its reaches and searching for the best places - that is, near mineral resources - to settle. In the next three centuries a number of small dwarven communities were established all over central and southern Norwold - Stormhaven, in the Ironroot Mountains, was founded around AC 400.

## The Middle Centuries (AC 300-510)

The historians call Norwold's Middle Centuries the time which ranges from the reign of Akra the Witch-Queen (AC 322) to the failure of the first Alphatian colonization (AC 510). As the preceding age had been one of expansion and relative prosperity, this one was an age of renewed conflict and woe for the peoples of Norwold. Many historians have noted that Norwold was already on the verge of an economic and demographic crisis during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AC, when - likely due to the population rise in the previous centuries - a number of famines and localized plagues spread. With death becoming commonplace, entropic cults like that of Darga (a northern alias of Thanatos) spread in Nordurland and in the Bay of Kammin region. The fatal blow was however delivered by the crop failures caused by the Witch-Queen's ice spells. Nevertheless, this was also an age of positive developments in the northern realms, as testified by the military reform of AC 320 in Kaarjala - which de facto marked the birth of the Saamari noble class - and the creation of the *Saiema* (the nobles' parliament) in Littonia in AC 454.

### The Reign of the Witch-Queen

In AC 286, a young Vanatic priestess of Mara (Hel) named Akra was blamed for charming her tribe's chief and was cast out of the tribe. During her exile, she stumbled upon Alphatian ruins dating back to Alinor's time, and discovered a cache of hidden spellbooks and arcane secrets. With the aid of her Immortal patron, she deciphered the books and quickly increased her powers, acquiring great mastery of cold-related magics. After

years spent increasing her powers, in AC 298 Akra assembled around her a secret fraternity of Mara-worshipping witches skilled in the use of cold energies: the "Sisterhood of the Ice Witches" was thus born, with the goal to rule Norwold and to bring over the region an eternal winter. The Ice Witches began to expand their influence over many Vanatic and Norwolder tribes, and to enlist in their service humanoids, ice creatures, giants, and white dragons. Akra established her lair in the Ice Cavern, located in the depths of the modern Quesa's Massif.

In AC 322, the Ice Witches decided that time was right to put Norwold under their rule. Joining the influence of her Sisterhood to her great magical powers and to the strength of her armies, Akra imposed her domination over a large part of north-central Norwold, and proclaimed herself "Witch-Queen of Norwol"<sup>25</sup>. She managed to expand her control up to the whole Great Bay and the eastern coast, enslaving native peoples who opposed her with sheer force, and subverting the human tribes from within thanks to the covert actions of her Ice Witches. In central Norwold, only the dragons of the Wyrms Head Mountains and the elves of the Lothbarth Forest (thanks to Ilsundal's protection) managed to stay free from her rule.

In AC 330, Akra used her powerful spells to make Norwold's climate colder, with the purpose to turn the region into a land of ice and death, to honour her patron Mara; snowstorms and blizzards became more frequent in the next years, sometimes even

<sup>25</sup> The characters of the Witch-Queen Akra and Quesa, as well as the Ice Cave, are briefly mentioned in the novel Rogues to Riches, by J.R. King.



*A Yeti minion of Akra*

hitting Norwold at the fringes of the winter season. This process culminated with the so-called "Sunless Year" (AC 335), when in central Norwold bad weather with snow and ice ran for months even during summer, while on the mountain peaks new glaciers formed or old ones enlarged, and became the shelter of all sorts of ice-loving creatures.

### **The End of Akra's Tyranny**

During those years, many of Norwold's native peoples and races died of cold and starvation - crops failed due to bad weather, and more famines ensued. Faced with the prospect of gradually dying or being transformed into ice-creatures themselves,

groups of tribal chiefs, shamans, and priests belonging to the tribes and clans of all the races who opposed Akra's rule began to form a resistance movement against the evil Witch-Queen. After many years of skirmishes and battles at the borders of Akra's domain, the "Sunless Year" marked the widespread rebellion of Akra's subject peoples.

As Akra was occupied with the vast rebellion which was sweeping her domain, in AC 336 a coven of three ambitious Ice Witches belonging to the entourage of the Witch-Queen rebelled against her, allying with the resistance groups which had been fighting Akra's minions in various parts of Norwold. While the rebel armies engaged Akra's minions, the three traitorous witches cornered the Witch-Queen in the Ice Cave and finally destroyed her; Akra's white dragon Quesa was trapped inside the Ice Cave and bound there by a powerful sorcery of the three witches. Without the Witch-Queen's leadership, the domain of Akra crumbled swiftly, the enslaved clans and tribes recovered their freedom while a general counter attack scattered the remaining ice creatures that had allied with Akra. Subsequently, the Ice Witches who were part of the Sisterhood were hunted down everywhere; a very few of them managed to hide and go underground, disappearing and losing contact with one another.

The three witches that contributed to the fall of Akra went to live on Mount Crystykk, north of the infamous Ice Cave from where the Witch-Queen ruled. They assume on themselves the duty to keep everyone out of the Ice Cave and from delving again into Akra's secrets; their goal is to shelter the races of Norwold from the resurgence of



*Mount Crystykk towering above the Karelides*

similar threats. The three witches become known as the "Crones of Crystykk", and over time they come to be considered as oracles of Norwold, willing to advise those who visit them, and to diffuse warnings (in the form of dreams and visions) regarding forthcoming threats.

### **The Rise of the Sons of Cnute**

The Middle Centuries also saw the rise of a unified Kingdom of Ostland. Around AC 400, a handful of war leaders rose to prominence in the coasts of Noslo and Kalslo Islands, Ostland. They united small communities into larger war clans through conquest, marriage, and diplomacy. While they battled each other constantly, they also brought on a development of the Ostlander seaborne war and raiding techniques. Their rise marked the start of an age of Ostlander raiding activity, which extended from Thyatis, Alasiya, and the Isle of Dawn in the south, to Nordurland and Norwold in the north.

In AC 478, the most powerful jarl of Noslo Island, Cnute 'the Bold', managed to defeat all his rivals and to unify the Ostland archipelago under his rule; he was proclaimed King of Ostland. Under Cnute, Ostland continued to carry on its reaving tradition, and became a new, feared and



*Cnute 'the Bold' in the initial of a 7th-century Thyatian manuscript*

warlike political player in the north. Cnute carried on an expansionist policy as well: in AC 500, his three younger sons led a series of expeditions to colonize the coasts of Vestland; they penetrated in the interior, successfully battling against the trolls and the giants, and were welcomed by the local human population. The Vestland region was thus brought under the dominion of the Ostlander king.

A decade later (AC 510), the hero Thelvyn Foxeyes and his companions penetrated into the lair of the mad red dragon Kardyer, in the Makkres mountains, and killed the beast; the dragon's death freed the other lesser dragons of the area and the local orc and goblin tribes. The humans of the Soderfjord coastlands were as well free from Kardyer's tyranny; afterwards, with the contribution of outcasts and settlers from nearby Ostland, small independent jarldoms started forming in this region.

### The First Alphatian Colonization

The latter half of the Middle Centuries also saw the first Alphatian attempt to colonize the Great Bay region after the fall of the

ancient Kingdom of Alphaia. Around AC 450, the Alphatian Emperor Volospin III started an ambitious colonization project in Norwold, with the immediate aim to collect raw resources (minerals and timber) for the empire's mainland, and the future goal to use it as a base for the conquest of the Known World from the north, crushing Thyatis in the middle.<sup>26</sup> A third, secret aim of the emperor was creating a strong additional power base for himself and his dynasty.

Thanks to a time of relative peace in relations with Thyatis, a carefully-planned expedition established the fortified outpost of Delphradin at the mouth of the Sabre River, south of the Alphan Peninsula. Local tribes and clans were scattered or enslaved, and many more outposts and towns were founded. By AC 490, the Alphatian colony in Norwold was at its height, stretching from the Wotandal in the east to the Scarlet Forest in the west, and from the Great Bay's coast in the north up to the Dragon's Tail range in the south. Trade with the mainland was flourishing, and some Alphatian wizards - including the emperor himself - had even built summer palaces and hidden research towers in the region.

However, in an attempt to bring the Foresthome elves of the Scarlet Forest and those who lived in the Wyrmswoods under their fold, the Alphatians unwittingly angered the Wyrmssteeth dragons, who had an old

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<sup>26</sup> This Alphatian colonization ties both to the events told in CM3 Sabre River and to the plot of the Dragonlord Trilogy novels by T. Gunnarsson; it follows the latter's placement around the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AC (AC 504-513 to be precise). The name of the Emperor Volospin III comes from [Alphatian Rulers since Landfall](#) (by J. Guerra).

alliance with the local elven clans. By the end of the century, dragon attacks at the borders of the Alphatian colony had become commonplace, and were joined by a large alliance of Norwolder tribes which scored its first victory on the field against the Alphatian armies in AC 500 (Battle of Scarlet's Edge).

As this was not enough, the emperor was caught in a financial scandal in AC 493, when members of the Grand Council discovered that he had used funds from the imperial treasury to build personal assets of his own house in Norwold; further investigations also exposed the truth that various Grand Council members had been bribed by the emperor in order to lend their support for the continuation of the Great Bay colonization. Political infighting and intrigue moved the imperial crown's attention from the Norwold events to the situation at home. This turn of events made the sending of reinforcements and help to the Norwold colony effectively impossible.

The 6<sup>th</sup> century AC opened with general unrest in the Norwold colony by the subject peoples, and barbarian and dragon attacks at its borders. The Alphatians began to lose ground and were pushed back toward the Sabre River, until in AC 507 the main Alphatian army was slaughtered by a smaller barbarian host in the Battle of Sabre River; during the battle, the Alphatian general invoked a powerful curse on the region, throwing his magic sword in the river below before falling himself in it to his doom. The river became known as the Sabre River due to the general's magical sword thrown into it.

Following the Alphatians' disastrous setback, the Wyrksteeth dragons' commitment against them would have likely lessened was it not for the theft of the artefact known as



*The upper course of the Sabre River*

the *Collar of Dragons* from Windreach's vault - a theft of which the dragons accused the Alphatians. On the other hand, the Battle of the Sabre River had persuaded the majority of the Alphatian Grand Council of the need to put the Norwold affairs under the Council's control, and it ultimately decreed the sending of reinforcements to the colony.

But it was too late to save Delphradin: after many skirmishes and battles, the Wyrksteeth dragons penetrated into the Alphatian territories and put the city under siege while the Alphatians set up a desperate resistance; eventually the dragons managed to conquer the city, but not before the Alphatians managed to evacuate most of their troops and personnel. The dragons reduced the Alphatian capital to rubble. In AC 510, the Alphatian Empire sent a mighty fleet to retake possession of Delphradin and push the dragons back from the colony's territory - but their fleet was met at sea by the dragons, and completely destroyed; unable to send - due to the dragons' presence - any aid to the surviving settlements in Norwold, the Alphatian Empire's control over the Great Bay area rapidly waned, and the rest of the Alphatian settlements were left to fend for themselves.

### The Time of the Second Dragonlord

While the events of the Alphatian colonization were unfolding, at the end of the Middle Centuries the Known World and Norwold were also involved in the Time of the Second Dragonlord (AC 504-513).<sup>27</sup> Dragon activity had increased after the Witch-Queen's demise: more dragons defied the rules of the Dragon Nation, going renegade and attacking the human settlements. These raids became more frequent and more devastating at the turn of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AC, ravaging parts of Genalleth, Nordurland, and lower Norwold. In AC 505, a large flock of dragons under the leadership of a powerful renegade was positioned to attack the Flaemish Highlands (nowadays Glantri), but the dragon army disbanded after their leader was defeated by the hero Thelvyn Foxeyes, who had recovered the *Dragonlord Arms* from their vault in the Endworld Line.<sup>28</sup>

In the next few years, however, the theft of the *Collar of Dragons* - an artefact of historical meaning for the wyrms - from Windreach's vaults again sparked conflict between the dragons and the other races. At first the dragons thought the Alphatians who had started a colonization of the Great Bay in Norwold were responsible for the theft, and waged war on them (see the previous paragraph). Afterwards, when it was discovered that a sect of Flaemish wizards had stolen the *Collar*, the dragons again

turned their wrath against the Highlands, coming to siege the capital city of Braejr itself. The battle was stopped when an emissary of the Great One revealed that the general of the Flaemish and allied armies, the hero Thelvyn, was in truth a gold dragon and a son of the Great One himself (AC 511). In the following years, Thelvyn would recover the *Collar*, being hailed as the "Dragonking", and led the resistance of the peoples of the Known World and the dragons against the alien menace of an immensely powerful being, the Overlord, who invaded Mystara with a huge army. After the latter's defeat in AC 513, Thelvyn became Immortal and Ruler of the Lawful Dragons with the name of Diamond. In the next couple of centuries, peace would rule between dragons and other races as a result of Thelvyn's feats, but from the 8<sup>th</sup> century AC on, the Dragon Nation again lost much of its authority and the dragons of Norwold again started to behave independently of it - even if no all-out war against humans or other races has happened since the Time of the Second Dragonlord.

<sup>27</sup> The following events are told in the Dragonlord Trilogy novels, by T. Gunnarsson. I used LoZompatore's analysis to help setting the timing of the events.

<sup>28</sup> During those events, the gnomish city of Torkyn Falls, located in the Three Fires' Volcanoes in the eastern Wendarian Ranges, was abandoned after having been hit hardly by the dragons.

## The Time of the New Kingdoms (AC 510-900)

### The Alphatian Successor States

The retreat of the Alphatian imperial troops from Norwold left many of the local settlements they had established - those which had survived the recent war against local populations and dragons - at the mercy of the native humanoid and human barbarian clans. The Alphatian ruling class had left the region, leaving the Alphatian commoners to



*An Alphatian noble family at the mercy of a cloud giant*

defend themselves. Some of the settlements were destroyed, their inhabitants scattered or enslaved; some others were conquered by the barbarians, but the latter absorbed some traits of the settlers' culture, replacing the Alphatian as ruling class but mostly preserving the trappings of civilization; in still others, the Alphas managed to hold on and preserve their control of the territory. The Wyrksteeth dragons were not interested anymore in destroying these dominions, as they had lost any contact with the Alphatian Empire and thus were absolutely harmless to them.

These various petty kingdoms and domains ranged from the Katfjellene and the Giants' Mountains to the west up to the Peninsula of Alpha, and the Raiders' Point to the east, and from the Great Bay to the north to the Dragon's Tail Range to the south. Theirs was not an easy existence - troubled as they were by resource shortages, decline of trade, almost constant skirmishes and wars, and continuous threat of invasion by barbarian clans, humanoid tribes, and giant or dragon raiders. Some of them changed hand a number of times during the course of the next three centuries, others fell more quickly, and very few even experienced a time of relative prosperity and rise.

### The Birth of Denagoth and Essuria

During the 6<sup>th</sup> century AC, the Denagothian Plateau also underwent a process of kingdom-building, as the High Priestess of Idris, Nalla, managed to assemble an alliance of Denagothian clans and to establish the Kingdom of Denagoth, with herself as queen, in the central area of the plateau (AC 563). Not long after, an Icereacher barbarian warlord named Nebunar conquered the

plateau's eastern clans, and then allied with the Geffron elves to establish the Kingdom of Essuria (AC 596). Nebunar's successors founded the Teriak dynasty and consolidated the power of Essuria, while a rival branch of the Teriaks was raised by Nalla to the throne of Denagoth. The two kingdoms of the plateau began a centuries-long struggle for supremacy - Denagoth under the influence of the Church of Idris, Essuria enjoying the alliance of the Geffronell elves. Essuria expanded in the next centuries mostly at the expense of nearby Denagoth, up to the latter's fragmentation (AC 839), becoming the dominant power of the plateau; Essurian kings settled the northern regions of the plateau (where various domains, among whom was Ghyr, were founded), exerted their influence over the centaur tribes of the Vinisk River valley, and extended their trade network up to the Bay of Kammin (the earliest settlement in the Landfall site was established by Essurians in AC 860); less successful and soon abandoned were instead Essuria's early attempts to conquer the Nordurlander freeholds (Battle of Naga River, AC 648).

### Vestland Gains Independence

The beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AC saw important events take place also in the Northern Reaches, where the mainland jarls' resentment toward the rapacious greed of the Ostlander monarchs would swiftly erupt into a ten-years long rebellion (AC 604-614), which ended with the defeat of the Ostlander host at the Battle of Bridenford and the proclamation of the independent Kingdom of Vestland under Jarl Gendar 'the Good', who assumed the name of Ottar I 'the Just'.

The Ruthinian Cult<sup>29</sup> gained diffusion in Vestland in the following years due to the sponsorship it gave to the feats of Gendar.

### War and Expansionism North of the Great Bay

The beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AC also heralded troubled times for the northern peoples of Norwold. In AC 630 the Saamari's western kin, the Vaarana, were forced to abandon their realm of Isanmaa, west of the Icereach Range, due to massive humanoid attacks, and migrated toward Kaarjala - with a huge horde of humanoids after them. The humanoid invaders hard-pressed the Kaarjalans, but were ultimately repelled in the Battle of Skulls (AC 640, in the Plain of Skulls) thanks to the aid of the Littonians, the Viaskodas, and the Sarkan goblins. In the aftermath of the battle, Kaarjala had to sustain a war with the northern Shonaks, who were defeated as well (Battle of the White Siedi, AC 654). As a result of those events, the Vaarana settled south and west of Kaarjala, leading a semi-nomadic lifestyle. The Kingdom of Kaarjala itself underwent an age of expansion in the following decades, and for a time (AC 663-770) it became the dominant power in the far north, with some of its kings even assuming the imperial title of *keisari*. On the other hand, this contributed to reducing Littonia's military power and political influence, more so because the kingdom's attention was drawn

<sup>29</sup> The Ruthinian Faith is featured in module X13 Crown of Ancient Glory, for the historical placement of which I chose to follow PWAI (see footnote 46, below). Events regarding this cult in this article follow the entry about the Ruthinian Faith found in [Codex Immortalis, Book Two: Religions of Mystara](#) (by M. Dalmonte).

## The Updated List of the Kings of Essuria and Denagoth

The following tables shows the version of the royal succession in Essuria and Denagoth which I have used for the present article. The list is consistent with information about the Essurian monarchs found in X11 Saga of the Shadowlord, and borrows some of the kings' names from [GAZF2 Denizens of Denagoth](#) (by JTR).

<b>Teriak Kings of Essuria</b>	<b>Reign (AC)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Nebunar	596-628	Icereacher warlord.
Arus	628-659	Elder son of Nebunar.
Ankarus	659-679	Son of Arus.
Kalidor	679-714	Son of Ankarus.
Arathon	714-726	Grandson of Kalidor.
Sandryn	726-741	Sister of Arathon.
Telles	741-766	Son of Sandryn.
Thalis	766-792	Son of Telles.
Naren	792-822	Nephew of Thalis.
Halvan	822-838	Younger brother of Naren.
Gallathon	838-863	Son of Halvan.
Mirimar	863-882	Son of Gallathon.
Vespen	882-889	Son of Mirimar.
Landryn	889-894	Younger brother of Vespen.
<i>Kingdom destroyed</i>	894-...	

<b>Kings of Denagoth</b>	<b>Reign (AC)</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Nalla	563-628	High Priestess of Idris.
Gereth	628-634	Younger son of King Nebunar of Essuria, husband of Nalla.
Landru	634-690	Son, husband of Nalla.
Dallován	690-715	Son, husband of Nalla.
Ranyn	715-757	Son, husband of Nalla.
Ranak	757-788	Son, husband of Nalla.
Beldan	788-812	Son, husband of Nalla.
Garlan	812-839	Son, husband of Nalla.
Kingdom fragmented	839-893	
Landryn	893-894	King of Essuria.
<i>Kingdom fragmented</i>	894-...	



*Giants look over their plunderings*

by bloody wars against neighbouring humanoids (like the Bloody Waters goblins); nevertheless the small coastal realm saw a gradual growth of urban population, of crafts and trade during the 9<sup>th</sup> century AC (which was not halted by the events of the Ice Witch Frota, see below).

### **The Feats of Heldann 'the Brave'**

The end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AC saw the rise of a powerful troll realm in Nordurland's southern reaches. The local human clans were spurred to ally together to face the trolls' threat, and ultimately they formed a unified realm under the leadership of Heldann 'the Brave', of clan Haldis (AC 707).

Three years later Heldann led the Nordurlanders to victory over the trolls in the Battle of Gil Eldur<sup>30</sup> - which made the troll realm crumble once and for all - but the envious and quarrelsome jarls of Nordurland could not stand the presence of a strong king, and had Heldann poisoned after the battle (AC 710). Thus, despite attempts by Heldann's successors of clan Haldis to keep the realm together, it soon fragmented in a multitude of independent domains, whose leaders hypocritically named it the Heldann Freeholds to honour their deceased warlord.

### **Vranakig's Empire**

Near the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century AC, most of the petty domains which had survived the fall of the old Alphatian colonies in the south-western Great Bay area were conquered by a large alliance of human barbarians, humanoid tribes, and centaur clans held together by Vranakig, a charismatic ogre warlord, who invaded the region between the Bloody Scythe and the Great Bay from the Valley of the Wind and installed himself as a self-styled emperor. His domain went on for a couple of decades (AC 754-771), but when he was killed the area fell into anarchy, was ravaged by internecine wars between the leaders of Vranakig's army, and by further invasions and rebellions. All the trappings of civilization were lost by the end of the century. Only some coastal villages and wilderness ruins still testify to the late existence of the small successor domains of the Alphatian colonies in that region.

<sup>30</sup> Thyatian and Heldannic historians report the name of the battle in its Hattian translation (Feuerhals). Some Ethengarian tribes and the King of Vestland were allies of Heldann during the war against the trolls.

## The Vatski Settle Down



*Vatski warriors in battle*

The 9<sup>th</sup> century AC was a time of great changes and turmoil for the Vanatic tribes of central Norwold. After a powerful dragon ruler of the Wyrksteeth Range attained immortality - releasing all his dragon vassals from his control - infighting among dragons forced many tribes to relocate, and the mystical effects of the dragon's ascension also spurred them to adopt a settled lifestyle. A group of them even invaded the coastal lands in search of new territories, but were ultimately repelled (AC 830-834). Eventually, small domains headed by knyaz and boyarin (Vyolstograd was the first of them in AC 840, Stamtral followed in AC 900) were established along the southern shores of the Azure Lake and on the eastern ones of the Gunaald Lake. The settled Vanatic culture would become known as the Vatski, while their brethren who had preserved a semi-nomadic lifestyle came to be called the Vrodniki.

## The Second Alphatian Colonization

This age ended as it had opened, with another colonization attempt by the Alphatian Empire.<sup>31</sup> This time, instead of a

<sup>31</sup> See Dawn of the Emperors, Book Three:

concentrated effort, the empire chose to spread smaller colonization expeditions over a larger area. Starting from AC 868, settlements were established in the Great Bay<sup>32</sup> and on the eastern coast, up to the Kasverian Peninsula. These expeditions, most of them enjoying little or no direct support from the empire itself, were met with mixed outcomes - some of them succeeded, others failed (such as the one led by Prince Gaernil of Shiye-Lawr in the lands north of the Rhien Forest). Unopposed by the rival Thyatian Empire - which at this time was undergoing a half-century of serious internal turmoil and fragmentation - the Alphatian colonization attempt might even have succeeded as a whole, if it was not for an unexpected event.

## The Return of the Ice Witch

In fact, in AC 870 Norwold was hit by one of the coldest winters in its history. This was not a natural event, but was the result of the cold-summoning magics of Frota, a Norwolder sorceress who had stumbled upon the Ice Cave and had been possessed by the Witch-Queen Akra's returned spirit. The Long Winter, as it was called, wiped

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Player's Guide to Alphatia, page 7 ("The Alphatian emperor Tylion IV, looking for a way to recoup some of the Empire's losses [i.e. the loss of Braejr and the defeat of Halzunthram], began a colonizing effort in the long-forgotten lands of Norwold - and even so, not long after, Thyatians began their own settlements there, too").

Obviously, the reference to Tylion IV has to be discarded, being not consistent with the latter's background.

<sup>32</sup> One of those domains was that of the necromancer Meredoth (see the AD&D 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Domains of Dread campaign setting), which was located on Todstein Island (in the Great Bay) and was spirited away in Ravenloft during the Long Winter.



*The hordes of Frota*

away most of the Alphantian colonies in the Great Bay and on the eastern coast, and paved the way for the campaign of conquest by Frota's army of cold-loving creatures and humanoids. Frota's tyrannical reign extended over the whole Great Bay, even reaching Littonia's southern borders. But it was not to last: in AC 874, Frota managed to free herself from Akra's possession, vanquishing her spirit and regaining her freedom. While the domain she had built crumbled and the peoples she had enslaved rebelled, she retreated to a secret hideout in the Ljallenvals Mountains, where she started to

put the Ice Witches' lore to use to further her very own plans of conquest.<sup>33</sup>

### Essuria Falls, Wendar Rises

The 9<sup>th</sup> century AC also had a lasting impact on the history of the Denagothian Plateau and nearby Genalleth. Around AC 825, raids and invasion attempts launched from the Kingdom of Denagoth against the Genalleth communities spurred the mysterious sage Bensarian to bestow on the leader of the town of Wendar, an elf wizard named Gylharen, the powerful artefact known as the *Elvenstar* - of which Bensarian was the keeper<sup>34</sup> - in order to repel the dangerous Idris-worshipping Denagothians.<sup>35</sup> Due to the

<sup>33</sup> The character of Frota appears in the novel *Rogues to Riches*, by J.R. King; the Ice Witch will enact her master plan (the one told in the novel) in AC 1010.

<sup>34</sup> Bensarian received the *Elvenstar* from the elves of the Great Forest of Geffron after the sage gave the elves the evil *Blackstick* for safekeeping and offered to write the history of the elven folk; the *Blackstick* had been in turn discovered by Prince Halvan of Essuria during the construction of the Drax Tallen Mausoleum, and delivered to Bensarian after Halvan succeeded his brother on the throne. According to X11 Saga of the Shadow Lord, the construction of the Mausoleum took place more than one hundred years before the events of the adventure, and then Halvan kept the *Blackstick* "for years" before ascending to the throne. Obviously this whole chain of events has to take place before Bensarian bestows the *Elvenstar* on Gylharen. As a side note, X11 reveals that the *Elvenstar* is "older than the elves" and of unknown origin; the artefact was given this name by Bensarian - which may even mean that if the artefact appeared at other times during Wendar's past, it did so under a different name and guise.

<sup>35</sup> According to Poor Wizard's Almanac I, page 88, the artefact was bestowed by

prestige acquired in the defence of Genalleth against this and subsequent attacks from Denagoth, Gylharen became a sort of regional leader, and many other local leaders began pledging loyalty to him in the following four decades; he styled himself as the “Wizard-King”. But the hardest trial for him would still be to come.

After the dissolution of Denagoth in AC 839, the Kingdom of Essuria had grown more decadent and weak. At last, Landryn, brother of King Vespen, poisoned his brethren, assumed the throne of Essuria (AC 889) and allied himself with the Church of Idris, receiving in turn the crown of the Kingdom of Denagoth with the aim to unify the realm again and to exterminate the plateau's elven clans (AC 893). But this would seal both the fate of Essuria and Denagoth alike. The elf king of the Lothenar Forest, Denolas, called on the help of the lawful human tribes of the Northern Wildlands, who descended on Denagoth and Essuria, scattering Landryn's armies, sieging and destroying Drax Tallen, the Essurian capital, and putting an end to Landryn's foul rule (AC 894). The once-mighty Kingdom of Essuria was no more, and the Denagothian Plateau was in complete chaos.

Only a few years passed before Landryn resurfaced again under the guise of the Shadowlord, still closely allied with the Church of Idris; this time the villain succeeded in conquering the Lothenar Forest

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Bensarian on Gylharen “about 200 years ago”; this is not consistent with the date found at page 114 of the same booklet, when the event is said to have happened “around the Year 900”. The timeline presented here assumes then that two separate bestowing events happened, but does not go further on to detail the reason behind that.

and killing Denolas (AC 899), then started the invasion of Genalleth, which put him against Gylharen in what is known as the Wizards' War (AC 900-901). Gylharen, again thanks to the *Elvenstar* given him by Bensarian, defeated the Shadowlord, who retreated beyond the Mengul Mountains. This further great victory won over the resistance of all the remaining independent lords of Genalleth, who at last resolved to unify in one realm under the leadership of Gylharen, who was crowned King of Wendar in AC 901.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Gylharen's coronation date is found in Joshuan's Almanac.

## The Age of Empires (AC 900-today)

### The Empires' Partition of Norwold

The opening of the new century coincided with a renewed expansion drive of the Thyatian Empire, which had been internally pacified and stabilized after the last half-century of turmoil by the new Emperor Gabrionius IV. Besides the empire's other targets - Traladara, the Isle of Dawn, and the western Gulf of Hule - Norwold was also part of the expansion policy. In AC 900, the Thyatians established a major colony, Oceansend, in the middle of the eastern coast, and several minor outposts were founded north and south of it in the few next years.<sup>37</sup> This ambitious expansion, in a theatre considered by Alphatia within her own sphere of influence, sparked a long war between the two empires (AC 904-912), which saw the Thyatians prevailing due to the lack of commitment by the Alphatian imperial army.<sup>38</sup> As a result of the peace agreements, Thyatis got the northern tip of the Isle of Dawn, and Norwold was divided into two spheres of influence - the Thyatian one from Oceansend (included) to the south, the Alphatian one north of the city.

Oceansend became a major port in the following decades, and powerful fortifications were erected around it. Under

<sup>37</sup> The northernmost Thyatian outpost was Adia, on the coast north-east of the Dragon Spur Hills. It became de facto independent after the treaty of AC 912, when it was conquered by Someys of Arogansa, an Alphatian exile, who established there the domain of Somyra.

<sup>38</sup> Empress Tylari III's leadership was lacking because she was already after her search for Immortality.

Thyatis' influence also fell the small fishing village of Niður, born on the remains of the older Essurian trading post found at the modern Landfall's site - which had been pillaged and abandoned after the fall of the Kingdom of Essuria. The village saw immigration by many undesirable elements - pirates, smugglers, thieves - in the following years, grew into a sizeable town and assumed the name of Landfall in AC 935.<sup>39</sup> Thyatis exerted little control over Landfall, whose reputation of crime grew unchecked during the course of the century.

### Rise and Fall of the Shadowlord

Despite the foundation of the Kingdom of Wendar and the defeat of the Shadowlord in the Wizards' War, Genalleth and the plateau underwent another time of troubles. The Shadowlord, in fact, managed to arrange the theft of the *Elvenstar* from Wendar (AC 930). Weakened by drought and famine, unprotected by the artefact's powers, the kingdom was about to fall before another invasion from Denagoth, but a party of brave adventurers reached the Shadowlord's keep at Gereth Minar, defeated Landryn, recovered the *Elvenstar* and took it back to Gylharen, saving the day (AC 931). Denagoth fragmented beyond hope once more, a battlefield between rival army commanders, humanoid leaders, and local warlords. The same adventurers later chased Landryn to his last hideout in Drax Tallen and destroyed him once and for all (AC 932). Under Gylharen's rule, Wendar would prosper in the peaceful decades that followed.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The town's foundation date is found in its entry in Poor Wizard's Almanac I, page 49.

<sup>40</sup> The events described in this paragraph are included in the module X11 Saga of the Shadowlord.



*A questing knight from Ghyr helps a damsel in distress*

### Ghyr and the Quest for the *Heartstone*

In the north-eastern third of the Denagothian Plateau, the fall of Essuria had left the local marches without a ruler, and the area fragmented under a multitude of petty feudal lords, among whom a handful of the most powerful took the title of king (among them was Qasmar, ruler of Ghyr). These domains entered a time of turmoil after the discovery of deposits of a strange gem-like mineral which harboured magical properties in the Essurian Arm and Isbreidd Mountains; these gemstones were called the “prisms”. The various lords began to fight among

themselves to get their hands on the prisms, starting a series of endemic skirmishes and raids which are known as the Prism Wars (AC 915-932). Some of these lords even struck deals with the Shadowlord in order to secure the villain’s help in the war. Nevertheless, thanks to the *Heartstone* - a magical artefact sent by his Immortal patron He Who Watches, which allowed him to see into other people’s hearts and desires - King Qasmar of Ghyr put together a stable alliance of loyal lords and brought the wars to an end, enlarging his kingdom and becoming a recognized regional power.

His son, Ganto, who had achieved many victories as military leader during the Prism Wars, succeeded him in AC 948, and kept his prosperous kingdom in peace while the rest of the Denagothian Plateau was ravaged by civil wars after the ultimate destruction of Landryn. What Ganto and Qasmar before him tried not to let others know was that in AC 933 the precious *Heartstone* had been stolen from their vault; they managed to keep this secret until AC 985, when Ganto died childless and his young wife Leahrah hired a group of adventurers to find the artefact.<sup>41</sup> The “Quest for the *Heartstone*” was carried out successfully; with the artefact in her hands, the queen chose a new husband and king, and Ghyr continued to prosper, entering the second millennium as the leading power of the area.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup> The paladin Strongbow, the priestess Mercion, and the halfling Figgen - nowadays well-known heroes in the Ierendi Islands - were part of this party.

<sup>42</sup> The events summed up in this paragraph are told in the module XL1 Quest for the Heartstone.

## The Order of Vanya Conquers the Heldann Freeholds

For the Heldann Freeholds, the 10<sup>th</sup> century AC opened with the threat of an invasion from Ethengar; the tribes there united under Toktai Khan, who was repulsed twice by the Heldanners, but in the end managed to destroy the town of Hayavik before dying (AC 926). The Ethengar khans began quarrelling among themselves, which saved the freeholds from conquest. However the enemy who would put an end to the Heldanners' freedom was not going to come from the steppes, but from the sea. In AC 950 the Order of Vanya, a Hattian military order fanatically devoted to the Immortal Vanya, attacked Haldisvall - the stronghold of the Haldis clan - by surprise, swiftly conquering the town and renaming it Freiburg; most of the rest of the freeholds south of the Altenwald were conquered by the Order within AC 960. The Hattian conquerors recasted the Order in AC 952 as the Heldannic Knights, with the purpose of appealing to the local population - with mixed success. A new aggressive and expansionist power had entered the political stage of the north.

Refugees from the freeholds flocked to southern Norwold and Wendar, while the Altenwald became the base of operation of Heldanner partisans bent on driving out the Hattians from their homeland, under the leadership of the surviving scions of the Haldis clan. Despite their courage, these Rangers of Altenwald, as they called themselves, were unsuccessful - the rebellion of AC 978-979 nearly succeeded, while their last attempt to cause a Heldanner uprising in AC 992-993, which was even supported by the Alphatians (who by then controlled



*A Heldannic castle in Nordurland*

Norwold), ended with the capture and execution of their leader, Halvard Haldis.<sup>43</sup> Their resistance movement slowly fell on the defensive and its members reduced in number, allowing the Knights to extend their control over the last freeholds located between the Altenwald and the Heldland River - which the Knights agreed with the Alphatian Kingdom of Norwold to recognize as the northern limit to their expansion.

## The Spike Assault and its Consequences for Norwold

A new war between the rival empires of Thyatis and Alphatia would change again the political balance in Norwold. Spurred by the weakening of Thyatis during the reign of Emperor Gabrionius V, the Alphatian Emperor Tylion IV launched a bold attack called the Spike Assault aimed at the conquest of the enemy capital city. The attack nearly succeeded, but the new Emperor Thincol Torion repelled the invaders and the war dragged on in the Isle of Dawn (AC 959-962). During the war, the colony of

<sup>43</sup> Those events are described in [GAZF7 The Heldannic Order](#) (by JTR).



*Trade between Heldanners and Vatski on the shores of Lake Gunaald*

Oceansend, fearing for its fate as other surrounding Thyatian outposts were being destroyed or conquered by the Alphatians, chose to declare itself independent from Thyatis (AC 960). After the peace treaty of AC 962, both empires recognized Oceansend's independence, and Thyatis relinquished any control over southern Norwold. Oceansend had to drop any claim over the nearby Isles of the Strand, where the Alphatians installed a garrison to keep an eye on the free city and to better watch passage through the Strait of Helskir.

In the years following the war, as the new Alphatian Empress Eriadna turned her eyes away from Norwold to the situation at home, Thincol, still unable to directly act against his rival, spurred the Ostlander clans to raid the Norwold coasts. The raids climaxed in AC 970-975, when the Ostlanders seized the Isles of the Strand and established the domain of Ostmark, as well as some minor domains along the northern coasts (Noskien, founded by a Soderfjordan pirate) as well as into the Great Bay (where an Ostlander raider conquered the small Alphatian holding of Hastamal).

### The Northern Reaches in the Last Century

In the Northern Reaches, the 10<sup>th</sup> century AC brought important changes in the three Northman nations. The jarls of Soderfjord answered the continuous raids from Ostlanders, gnolls, and giants by forming the League of Nordhartar (AC 950), a very loose confederation of allied dominions which should have helped each other in time of war; the League allied itself with Ylaruam and Vestland to discourage attacks from Ostland.

In the last century and a half, Ostland had seen its maritime power decline and had been left isolated on the diplomatic stage. In order to react to those losses and to the formation of the League of Nordhartar, Ostland signed a close military alliance with the Thyatian Empire (AC 950). The alliance with Thyatis allowed Ostland to send its raiders against the coasts of Norwold and to take part in skirmishes against Alphatian forces on the Isle of Dawn. In AC 987 Emperor Thincol even agreed to marry his daughter Stefania to Prince Alfgeir,<sup>44</sup> son of King Hord of Ostland - but when Stefania stabbed her husband to death a serious diplomatic breakup happened between Thyatis and Ostland, with the Northman raiders starting to plunder for a while the coasts of the Thyatian side of the Isle of Dawn in retaliation. The Thyatian diplomacy ultimately managed to heal the diplomatic wound, and more recently also allowed Ostland to establish colonies in northern Westrouрке.

<sup>44</sup> Alfgeir should have been the only son of King Hord and Queen Rhora of Ostland; the queen later died in childbirth, and the baby was lost as well.

In the second half of the century Vestland, under King Gudmund,<sup>45</sup> started a colonization program aimed mostly at the Trollheim area, where several dominions were established. The program however brought Vestland at odds with the neighbouring Ethengarian tribes and with the Eridians, a barbarian and savage people who lived in the hills forming the border between Vestland and the Heldannic Territories. In AC 974, King Gudmund fell in battle against the Eridians, but what was worse was that the *Sorona*, the magical crown worn by the Vestlander kings and symbol of kingship, was lost with him. His son Thendel was killed in the same year by rebel jarls. A Regency Council was established, but without a king and the *Sorona* its power quickly waned and the realm was on the verge of dissolution. It was then that Annacks, patriarch of the Ruthinian Cult, in AC 979 hired a group of adventurers to find the lost *Sorona* and bring it back to the legitimate heir to the throne - the twin brother of Thendel, Tenitar, who had been secretly sent away from the court after his birth and raised by a hermit to avoid a succession crisis. Eventually, the adventurers succeeded in their task, the *Sorona* was recovered, the rebel jarls defeated, and Tenitar crowned King of Vestland under the name of Harald.<sup>46</sup> Vestland quickly recovered

<sup>45</sup> As the royal Vestlander custom dictates, Gudmund is the name - taken from the Northman sagas and mythology - which Prince Maramet assumed upon his ascension to the throne. See the entry on the Ruthinian Faith in [Codex Immortalis, Book Two: Religions of Mystara](#) (by M. Dalmonte).

<sup>46</sup> These events are told in module X13 Crown of Ancient Glory; while the adventure placement suggested by GAZ7 The Northern Reaches is AC 1150, I have preferred to use the placement indicated in PWAI ("Vestland"

from the crisis and stabilized itself under the rule of King Harald.

### Inner and Northern Norwold in Mid-Century



*A Vatski knyaz and his following in procession*

After the defeat of the Ice Witch Frota, only a handful of Alphantian domains were left around the Great Bay area. They were the two allied domains of Therimar and Hastamal, south-west of the Peninsula of Alpha, the isolated domain of Nevoshed along the Foxes' River course, the domain of Khemyr on the south-eastern coast of the Great Bay, and the domain of Somyra, south of Raiders' Point. Moreover, on the site of the modern city of Alpha was also found a domain centred on the trading town of Holfa, which had risen to a renewed prosperity under a native dynasty after the fall of Frota. Apart from the conquest of Hastamal by Ostlander pirates (AC 973) and the ravaging of Somyra by bands of

entry in the 'Overview of Mystara' section) - that is "35 years ago" from AC 1010, to be made consistent with Harald Gudmundson's canonical birthdate, AC 954, and with the fact that Harald - alias Tenitar - was 25 years old by the time of X13.

humanoids and giants coming from the Dragon Spur Hills (AC 982), the other domains fared moderately well in those decades, even if they had to periodically cope with the usual threats of Norwold - barbarian raiders, rampaging monsters, and bad weather. In AC 983, Holfa was eventually freed from a thousand-year old curse which hampered the use of the best part of its port, opening new possibilities for the town's excellent location.<sup>47</sup>

In the Vatski principalities, new domains were established in this century, like Lazarsk (AC 940) and some smaller ones, but they often had a troubled existence - Stamtral's legitimate ruler was overthrown by a rebel boyar in AC 977, while Gunvolod was established by a warband of Heldanner exiles from the Heldannic Territories, who conquered and unified a number of local smaller domains and tribes.

North of the Great Bay, the 10<sup>th</sup> century AC was relatively uneventful. Littonia recovered swiftly from the short domain of the Ice Witch, and saw an increase of trade and contacts with the outside world. The Kingdom of Kaarjala was mostly in peace during this time, but attempts to imitate Littonia in the improvement of contacts with Alphatia and the Known World were not that successful.

### The Third Alphatian Colonization

Empress Eriadna of Alphatia decided that time was ripe for a renewed effort of the empire to secure the Norwold region once

<sup>47</sup> See [A city of Alpha mini-Gaz](#) (by LoZompatore) for more details about this story.

and for all under its control. The campaign was accurately planned and began in AC 985: military strength was used when needed (such as in the conquest of the Ostmark domain and the destruction of its ruling clans), but it was accompanied by diplomacy. The surviving Alphatian-founded domains of the Great Bay area were more than eager to see the empire turn on Norwold again, and even the more independent-minded ones (like Landfall or other Northman-founded domains) understood that it was better to keep their lands and accept the Alphatian protectorate than end like Ostmark. On the other hand, the empire was not willing to devote a costly military campaign to submit stronger local realms (like Oceansend, Leeha or Littonia) or those too far from their direct interests (like Kaarjala or the Vatski domains).



*A newly-arrived Alphatian lord gathers his tribute*

The town of Holfa, in the Great Bay, was made the centre of the Alphatian Norwold protectorate, and renamed Alpha. It soon became a bustling trade and immigration centre for commoners coming from the Alphatian mainland in this frontier land. Great public works and fortifications were erected there, to make the town grow into a powerful and populous city.

In AC 992, the protectorate was elevated to the status of a full-fledged kingdom in the Alphantian Empire, encompassing Norwold from the Landsplit River to the north up to the Heldland River to the south and the city of Helskir on the Isle of Dawn. Eriadna appointed her non-magical son Ericall as king, who arrived in that same year with a team of experienced advisers mostly chosen by his parents, and established his court in Alpha. In the next years, Ericall tried to win the loyalty of the existing dominions by awarding them a hereditary nobility title in the kingdom's new aristocratic hierarchy. He strove to better control the most important areas of his realm by appointing trusted functionaries and lords - with mixed success, and at least one spectacular failure, that is the appointment of the king's half-brother Lernal as ruler of Landfall. The king attempted to persuade the independent domains of Norwold to join his kingdom, which a couple of Vatski rulers did, but which was ignored by Oceansend, Leeha, Littonia, and Kaarjala - Helskir even declared full independence from Norwold in AC 999 - not to speak of the various elven and dwarven settlements. Ericall allocated funds to improve the infrastructures of the realm, which essentially resulted in the construction of the grand Royal Palace in Alpha, but little else. Most importantly, Eriadna's son tried to keep Norwold free from Thyatian influence, which he failed again to do, as Thyatian spies infiltrated the kingdom and even managed to kidnap Ericall's brother Tredorian and half-brother Farian in AC 999.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Farian is mentioned in Dawn of the Emperors, Book One: The Dungeon Master's Sourcebook, page 74; as half-brother of Ericall, he should likely be a full brother of Lernal - a son their father Torenal had from a woman other than Eriadna. As a result of

Today, Empress Eriadna, after nearly ten years of Ericall's rule in Norwold, expects the kingdom to contribute to fill the empire's coffers with taxes and feed its industries with raw resources. Ericall has devised a massive land-grabbing program to start in AC 1002, which should bring many settlers to Norwold and supply the resources for the kingdom's development which the king could not afford himself. On the downside, Emperor Thincol of Thyatis is looking with interest to the opening of Norwold's riches for exploitation, and would like to take advantage of the loose political control exerted by Ericall on the realm.<sup>49</sup>

Tredorian's kidnapping, in order to avoid a full war against Alphatia, the Thyatian Emperor Thincol preferred to send his own daughter Asteriela as political counter-hostage to the Alphantian court in Sundsvall. Tredorian and Farian are still prisoners in Thyatis City.

<sup>49</sup> The future of Norwold is portrayed in some canon adventure modules, like CM2 Death's Ride, CM3 The Sabre River, CM4 Earthshaker!, M1 Into the Maelstrom, M2 Vengeance of Alphaks, M4 Five Coins for a Kingdom, and M5 Talons of Night. In this adventure series, Norwold develops more or less as a feudal kingdom under the rule of King Ericall, and becomes increasingly independent from the Alphantian Empire. More about the future of Norwold is found in Wrath of the Immortals and the Poor Wizard's Almanac series, as well as in Joshuan's Almanac - in this future, which stretches from AC 1004 to AC 1013 and presents a somewhat different version from the one of the CM-M adventures - Norwold fragments and Ericall can't keep his hold on the whole kingdom due to the sinking of Alphatia, preserving only the control of Alpha. The latter future timeline has been advanced up to AC 1019 by the work of the team of fans who produced the [Mystaran Almanacs line](#).

## INHABITANTS

In this chapter we will meet the most important human and non-human cultures and races of Norwold, and give a brief account of some of the minor ones.

### The Human Cultures of Norwold

The Norwold region is the home of many human cultures. Despite the fact that outsiders often label the whole of them as the “barbarians of Norwold”, these cultures have quite different origins, languages, and customs. The most important of them are briefly introduced below.

#### Heldanners

The descendants of the ancient southern Antalians have at different times in history been called Nordurlanders and, since the 8<sup>th</sup> century AC, Heldanners. The Heldanners who live in Norwold are of the same stock of the native people of the nowadays Heldannic Territories, and share their same hatred for the Knights of Vanya. In Norwold, they dwell in the lands which lay south and east of the Hettafjall Mountains and of Lirovka's Alps, up to the Mørkskog and the Oceansend area in the north.

The Heldanners are a rustic and hardy people, used to fighting giants, trolls, and humanoids, and fiercely attached to their own independence; they accept distant and non-meddling rulers like King Ericall and the Alphatian Emperor only as long as those do not interfere significantly in their lives and customs - otherwise they are likely to pick up arms and fight the would-be ruler back. They are also prone to infighting - and this



*A Heldanner chief takes hold of his land*

explains why a Heldanner realm has never managed to survive more than a few years. The Heldanners of southern Norwold have a more frontier-like mind-set if paralleled to the natives of the Heldannic Territories, and they are less civilized and more independent-minded than them.

The Heldanners lead a settled lifestyle, living in small hamlets and villages and practicing farming and herding, and what hunting and logging are needed. They are ruled by petty village chiefs or clanheads (usually these are the people who possess more lands in a given area), who periodically gather in a regional assembly called a *thing* (not unlike the jarls' *thing* in Soderfjord). The Heldanners worship the traditional Northman pantheon, but among its Immortals they pay special reverence to Frey and Freyja, who are believed to have been historical heroes of their ancient past.

The Heldanners are traditionally in good standing with the Heldann Shepherd lupins who live among them in relevant number and share their same culture and customs. They are also friendly toward the foxfolk

lupins of the Skaufskogr, but wary and fearful of the reclusive elves of the Rhien Forest. Humanoids, giants, Northman reavers, and the Vanatic tribes are instead their traditional enemies.

A small number of human clans live in the wooded valley known as the Skýfjall, which lies between Lirovka's Alps and the Ilescu and Gethbreid mountains; they speak a dialect of the Heldanner tongue, but other Heldanners claim no tie with them. Differently from the rest of the Heldanners, they are quite reclusive and nature-loving, and live peaceful lives off their forests' bounties; other Heldanners consider them an odd and wild people, and call them Skyfjallers (after the name of their valley).

### Icereachers

The Icereachers - or Hengerians as they are called in the Essurian tongue - are semi-nomadic descendants of the ancient Antalian tribes who lived in the valleys of western Norwold. The Icereachers were already a very insular culture during the Antalian age, and they became even more isolated after the fall of the Antalian culture. They live in the cold, vast valleys which are found at the feet of the towering Icereach Range, beyond the northern fringes of the Denagothian Plateau to the Timayam River and Lake Vanern valley to the north, up to the Azure and Gunaald lakes to the east, and down to the Isbreidd Mountains to the south.

There they live in small villages where they do some farming but mostly hunting and sheep and goat herding; they also practice various crafts like woodcarving, fur-making, and blacksmithing - some tribes indeed feature good weapon-makers. The Icereachers are quite resistant to their cold



*An Icereacher warlord leads his host to battle*

highland environment and used to fighting its denizens.

The Icereachers preserve a clannish social structure which they inherited from their ancestors. While the various clans often clash among themselves and raid one another, open unnecessary bloodshed is usually avoided. Also, all the Icereacher clans recognize a common ancestry and, if needed, many clans may gather together under the leadership of a war leader to oppose a common enemy or threat. Such alliances, of course, disband as soon as the common threat vanishes.

The Icereachers had close contact with the southern Kingdom of Essuria in the past, and have been converted by the Essurian missionaries to the worship of He Who Watches (an alias of the Immortal Diamond). Due to the influence of this lawful religion, the Icereachers - after a time of severe religious conflict between the supporters of the new religion and the worshippers of their old Immortals - have gradually abandoned some of their traditional barbarian customs and now, despite their relative isolationism, they could be considered one of the most friendly, open, and even "civilized" barbarian nations of Norwold. Also from the Essurians



*Quesa's Massif as seen from Lake Vanern*

they have inherited their hatred for the cult of the Immortal Idris and for the Denagothians, against whom they have clashed in the past.

The Icereacher tribes living in the upper Timayam River valley west of Quesa's Massiff live in fear of the powerful white dragon who dwells in the latter mountains. Quesa cannot leave his lair for long due to an ancient sorcery, but the Icereacher tribes living at the feet of his mountain often bring the dragon offerings and treasures to calm down his wrath.

### **Littonians and Lietuvans**

Both these people are descendants of the ancient Valoin culture which existed during the age of Blackmoor; they settled the lands to the north-east of the Great Bay shortly after the Great Rain of Fire. During their subsequent history, they expanded the

southern land and gradually split into two different cultures: the Littonians (or *Litoniesu* in their tongue) and the Lietuvans. While the two cultures share many common traits, customs, and traditions, they speak two different tongues, worship the Immortals under different names, and have a history of rivalry and mutual struggles.

Littonians and Lietuvans dwell in a wide area which includes the whole Landrise, the Noskumis Plain, and the wide coastal stretch going from the Ljallenvals Mountains to the Landsplit River. The Lietuvans are prevailing in the northern half of this area, Littonians in the other; a great concentration of both peoples is found in the area east of the Lietuvan Hills and the Namejs Line up to the coast, where the Kingdom of Littonia is centred. While the kingdom is quite densely populated by Norwold standards, the surrounding lands claimed by Littonians and Lietuvans as "Greater Littonia" only host

small rural settlements. Smaller pockets of Littonians or Lietuvans could be found also on the western coasts of the Great Bay, as well as on the shores of Norwold immediately south of it.

Both peoples are settled and mostly made up of farmers, herders, and fishermen, more rarely of loggers and miners. They are ruled by a nobility of landowners, which is particularly strong in the Kingdom of Littonia, where a fledgling middle class is also on the rise in the coastal trade towns. One of their most important folk traditions rely on *dainas* (*dainos* in Lietuvan), short moral poems sung with the accompaniment of a zither that have been passed down for generations since the ancient times. The lands of Littonia host rich amber deposits, which have always made - more so recently - this area a coveted trade destination for ships coming from Alphatia and the Known World.

Magic, especially arcane, is quite rare among these people, but they have developed a wholly original branch of arcane magic which taps on the power of amber gemstones. While secretive and reserved, these "amber mages" are rumoured to hold quite a degree of influence over the Kingdom of Littonia.



*The forested lands of Skogenvår*

The Littonian and Lietuvan religion has great reverence for nature and nature spirits. The most important Immortals worshipped by these peoples (names are listed in the Litoniesu version) are Jūras Māte (Protius), Laima (Terra), Zemes Māte (Ordana), and Saule (Ixion). They perform most of their religious ceremonies in the open, and the number of actual temples is therefore very low.

### Norwolders

The Norwolders are the descendants of the northern Antalians, and for most outsiders they represent the iconic native people of the region (hence their name); they simply call themselves the *Nyrfolk* (the "young people" in their tongue), and it might be that the name "Norwold" given to the region in which they live was simply a foreign corruption of that word. The Norwolders are a people divided in many clans and tribes, often separated by large distances or huge natural barriers; to an outside eye, they make up no one people at all, and their customs and lifestyle also differ from place to place.

The Norwolders are found in the area to the south of the Great Bay, north of the range made up by the Bloody Scythe, the Pierced Crown, and the Eagles' Barrier, and east of the Final Range from the Oceansend area to the north. Some tribes are also found in the Hidden Valley and in the White Bear River valley up to the Arch of Fire. The Norwolders were - and mostly are - a semi-nomadic people, even if in the last two centuries some of the clans who lived in coastal areas and near major rivers have begun to settle down, establishing small villages of farmers, herders, and fishermen; many have also moved to live in the shadow or within the



*A Norwolder fishing outpost in the Corsairs' Coast*

walls of the large recently-built cities of Oceansend and Alpha. The semi-nomadic tribes look down on those “civilized” Norwolders, who in their opinion have abandoned their forefathers' customs and virtues.

For the most part, the Norwolder tribes lead a semi-nomadic lifestyle in Norwold's interior. Most tribes have winter encampments which get temporarily abandoned during spring and summer when the tribe moves to its hunting grounds. They are a hardy folk, herders and hunters, used to fight wild beasts, giants, and humanoids, but they appreciate individual combat much more than mass battle. The Norwolders have inherited the worship of some of the oldest Antalian Immortals from their ancestors, but the worship of “newer” Immortals like Thor, Frey, and Freyja is practiced only by some tribes and by the settled clans; the semi-nomadic tribes worship Wotan (Odin) and other Immortals tied to natural phenomena, and pay special reverence to Erda (Djaea), their beloved nature deity. The druids also play an important role in their society. The Norwolders, especially the semi-nomadic tribes, are an art-loving people, practicing

wood- and stone-carving and poetry above all, but they have a severe mistrust of arcane magic.

### **Saamari and Vaarana**

The Saamari and Vaarana are two closely-related peoples who dwell in the vast strip of land located around the Landsplit River system and in the surrounding lands. Both peoples' origins lay beyond the Icereach Range, where they had their own kingdom once; later, they were forced out of it and in two successive migrations first the Saamari in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and about seven centuries later the Vaarana came to the Autuasmaa Plain and seized it, driving away the Shonaks and the Littonians. Even if they were a single people in the distant past, now the Saamari and Vaarana cultures have widely diverged, and the two people speak a different language altogether (the Saamari tongue and the Vaarsu), unrelated to any other tongue of Norwold. The Saamari and Vaarana are a tall, fair-complexioned people, known for their stubbornness and melancholic behaviour.

Most Saamari dwell in the Autuasmaa Plain between the great rivers and lakes of northern Norwold. There, they established more than a thousand years ago the Kingdom of Kaarjala - a backward realm by Known World standards (even more so than Littonia), but which nevertheless represents the northern bastion of civilized life in Norwold. The Saamari are a settled people and live in small villages where farming, logging, fishing, and herding are practiced. Most commoners own their own land, and even if they are ruled by an influential landowning noble class, no serfdom exists among them. They enjoy a better climate than the surrounding areas, because their



A Vaarana house in Länsimaa

Immortal patron gifted them with the *Great Saampo*, a magical artefact in the shape of a windmill able to make the Autuasmaa climate milder.

The Vaarana are instead a semi-nomadic people who roam the plains, steppes, and woodlands to the west and to the south of the Kingdom of Kaarjala. They are closely allied with the Saamari and share with them many traits and customs, but they have preserved their own ancestral lifestyle tied to the reindeer herds they follow and hunt. As with the Saamari, they are a hardy people, involved in a daily struggle for survival and in frequent skirmishes with local humanoid tribes, frost giants, Shonak tribes from the north and Viaskoda tribes from the south.

The Kingdom of Kaarjala has its own established church, the Church of Kaarjala, which worships the patrons of craftsmanship, hunting, and war called Ilmarinen, Lemminkainen, and Vainamoinen (three separate identities of the Immortal Ilmarinen), and which wields a strong influence over Saamari society. Other Immortals worshipped by the Saamari are Ahti (Protius), Tapio (Ordana), and Pelervo

(Terra). The Vaarana pay reverence to Ilmarinen as well, but worship their own patrons, the main of which are the Immortals Beavi (Ixion) and Mattarakka (Djaea);<sup>50</sup> they do not have an established church, of course, and rely on their *noaide* (shamans) for rites and ceremonies.

### Shonaks

The Shonaks who live in the Everwinter Lands are closely related to the Shonak tribes who dwell far to the west of the Icereach and Borean ranges, in the Borea region. They are a stocky people, with a light copperish skin tone and slanted eyes, who speak a language called Qamuug unrelated to other Norwold tongues. In ancient times they lived in the Autuasmaa Plain among the great rivers of the Landsplit system, but the arrival of the Saamari in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC forced them out of that area into the tundra of the Everwinter Lands. Since then the Shonaks have harboured a fierce hatred for the Saamari and their kin the Vaarana, more so because the activation of the *Great Saampo* produced climatic changes which caused much suffering among them.

The Shonaks are nomadic herders and hunters; they follow the herds of reindeer that roam the northern tundra, and compete with the other denizens of the cold environment like the northern humanoids of the frost giants from Frosthaven. The Shonaks do not have enough raw ore or

<sup>50</sup> In [GAZF10 The Kingdom of Kaarjala](#) (by JTR) the Immortal Mattarakka is identified with Terra, leaving unanswered the issue of a cult of Djaea hinted at in the text; also in order to differentiate between Saamari and Vaarana, in this article Mattarakka has been identified with Djaea.



*Reindeers grazing at the feet of the Raatovaarat Mountains*

techniques to forge metal weapons and armour, and usually rely on bone, wood, and stone weapons, or on pelts, leathers, and furs for armour. They have good relationships with the Norwold malamute lupins that live in the Everwinter Lands as well. From time to time - especially during meagre years - the Shonaks mount raids against the people of Kaarjala, but trade occurs during peacetime.

The Shonaks are divided into a number of small tribes who recognize the leadership of a tribal chief, who in turn is advised by the shamans. They pay reverence to the spirits of animals and ancestors, and worship the Immortal Torngasuk (Odin), the lord of the sky, as well as Taavar (Ixion), the patron of hunt, war, and valor, and Taara (Tarastia), who watches over oaths and revenge.

### **Vatski and Vrodniki**

These two peoples have common cultural and linguistic roots, as they are the descendants of the ancient Vantalian people who lived in Norwold's interior and were mostly spared from the onslaught brought by King Loark's Great Horde. Due to their common origin, Vatski and Vrodniki are

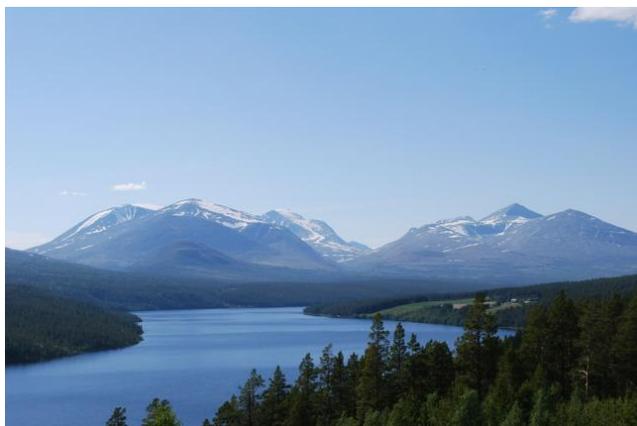
usually considered a single people by outsiders, who label them both with the name "Vanatics"; actually, even if they worship Immortals from the same divine pantheon and speak dialects of the same language, the customs and lifestyle of the Vatski greatly differ from that of the Vrodniki.

The Vrodniki are a semi-nomadic people made up of many tribes, each of which does not recognize any special loyalty toward the others and could be considered a stand-alone people if it was not for cultural affinity with their kin. The Vrodniki dwell in a vast area which includes the Severnaya Polovina, the Valley of the Wind, and the long Hidden Valley to the north, as well as parts of the Ransarn Valley to the south. Each Vrodniki tribe is led by a *starosta* ("senior", "elder"). Sometimes, loose alliances called *voyskos* ("hosts") form between a number of tribes, usually during wartime; such alliances gather under a *knyaz* ("duke", "prince"). The tribes follow the cattle herds which roam the huge valleys of the Wyrksteeth Range, and also practice hunting, gathering, fishing, and some agriculture. Typically a Vrodnik tribe stays in a territory as long as there is plenty of food as resources there, which may mean years in some cases; during this time, Vrodnik camps assume the appearance of



*A Vatski knyaz holds court*

ragtag villages. Migration, due to the *starosta's* will or lack of resources, usually sparks conflict with other tribes. The Vrodniki are considered one of the most savage and bloodthirsty people of Norwold by outsiders: they love battle, have a ruthless and swift form of justice, mark their bodies with tattoos and ritual scars, keep war prisoners as slaves, and do not hesitate to raid and plunder other peoples' settlements; once in a given time, a large Vrodniki host might as well gather for a grand invasion of the coastal lands.



*The Ransarn River*

The Vatski are the settled cousins of the Vrodniki. They live in a series of principalities of various sizes which are located mostly in the area called the Vatskiy Rodina, between the Azure and the Gunaald lakes, mostly south-east and north-east of them respectively; they are also found at the western end of the Ransarn valley. The larger and most important of those dominions are Vyolstograd and Stamtral, but there are many smaller ones. The Vatski society is dominated by the *knyaz* ("prince", "duke") and by the *boyarin* ("barons"), who make up the upper ranks of the nobility, and by the noble landowning class of the *okolnichy* ("lords"); the noblemen gather in a local assembly

called the *duma* which is not unlike the Heldanners' *thing*. The rest of the population mostly belongs to the peasant class, who earns a meagre living through farming, herding, logging, and hunting; some dominions also practice some mining activities, and a few small towns born within their borders have started to produce a fledgling craftsmen class. The most powerful noblemen command large armed bands, rule their peasants with an iron fist, and often quarrel and skirmish among themselves. Even if they are settled, the Vatski are in many regards no less savage than their semi-nomadic kin: they are warlike and willing to raid their neighbours, keep slaves and concubines, and have no respect or mercy for weakness.

From a religious point of view, Vatski and Vrodniki share more or less the same common pantheon, which features among the main Immortals Dazhbog (Ixion), Volos (Pearl), Perun (Thor), Yaro and Yara (Frey and Freyja). In the Vatski lands, priests are usually powerful figures of the nobility as well, with their own armed retinues. Among the Vrodniki, reverence for animal spirits is also very important, and shamans hold a central role in the tribe's religious life; besides the Vatski Immortals, they also worship Zemlya (Terra) and Semargl (Simurgh).

The Vrodniki despise and fear the use of arcane magic; they consider it a tool of evil, and usually attack known wizards on sight before they can invoke some fiendish effect. Among the Vatski this distrust toward magic-users is somehow lessened, but the process is limited to the noble class - peasants will usually try to avoid and hide from known magic-users.

## Viaskodas

The Viaskodas are an ancient people who came to the region north of the Great Bay many centuries before the crowning of the first Thyatian Emperor; their original language shared distant similarities with that of the Monzags of the Midlands, and with that of the Saamari and Vaarana to the north, but subsequently - due to close contact with the Antalian culture - it changed a lot, gradually losing most relationships with those tongues. The Viaskodas are a semi-nomadic people spread over a vast area, going from the Noskumis Plains to the east to the large valleys located between the Arch of Fire and Mount Crystykk to the west; in north-south direction, their territories lay between the Great Bay's northern shores and the Koleamaa and Tuonela areas inhabited by the Vaarana.



*A clan of Azure Banner Viaskodas on the move*

The Viaskodas are divided into three cultural groups, whom they call their “Three Banners”, each one including a vast number of tribes who share common customs and traditions. While the tribes of each Banner recognize their common origin with the

tribes of other Banners and speak different dialects of the same tongue, they feel kinship only with people of their own Banner. The three Banners are labelled after the colour of their elaborate war standards - Red, Azure, and White. Each Banner is informally led by a “chief among chiefs” (*urakur* in their tongue), a ceremonial figure in times of peace who leads the whole Banner in battle in times of war. All the tribes of a single Banner gather at a traditional gathering place during each year's summer solstice; these gatherings (called *betesteverzek*) are the occasion to feast, celebrate, exchange news, and give thanks to the Immortals together. All Viaskodas are a bit distrustful of arcane magic, and they do not practice it, relying on the powers of their shamans and of their *taltos* (strange individuals gifted from birth with a small, odd physical feature, and magical powers). The Viaskodas worship a number of traditional Immortals tied to natural cycles and phenomena; spirits of animals and places also play great importance in their religion. While each Banner has its own favourite Immortals, they all pay homage to Istun (Odin) and Istunna (Terra), the gods of sky and earth, respectively.

The Red Banner Viaskodas live in the area between the Jotunheimr Hills and the Lothbarth Forest, stretching along the coast of the Great Bay up to the Landrise. In ancient times they absorbed many cultural traits from the nearby Antalians, including some of their Immortals and their seafaring skills. The Red Banner Viaskodas are semi-nomadic: they live in stable coastal villages all along the coast of the Great Bay, but parts of their clans leave them to hunt and follow herds during spring and summer. They are also quite skilled seamen aboard their boats, which resemble smaller versions of the

Northman longships and which they use to trade and to raid the coasts of the Great Bay. The Red Banner tribes are distrustful of the Lothbarth elves and leave them in peace, but often clash against the Jotunheimr humanoids and giants

The Azure Banner Viaskodas live in the grassland and steppe area between the Jotunheimr Hills and the Noskumis Plains, north of the Landrise and of the Red Banner's lands. They are true nomads, setting camps for winter but traveling from one hunting ground to another during other times of the year; they follow the bison and reindeer herds which are found in their lands, and often clash with other nomadic peoples and races native of the area, such as the Vaarana to the north or the Sarkans goblins to the east. They are quite capable horsemen, the only one among the Viaskodas to train and extensively use horses in battle.

The White Banner Viaskodas are the most isolated one among the Viaskodas' Banners, living beyond the Jagged Teeth Mountains and the Plain of Skulls, in the Natoka Valley and along the upper course of the White Bear River. They are hunters, trappers, and gatherers in the forests and woods which fill their valleys, often trading with Norwolder tribes living down the White Bear River. This region has a great number of caves and ruins, dating back to the age of the elder dwarves or to the time of Alinor; many White Banner tribes indeed make them their home, and often some of the old items or artefacts belonging to those ancient times can be seen on one of their warriors or chiefs. The White Banner tribes living around the Goddess' Diadem are allied with the Najnartas, the all-women culture centred on that mountain chain (see 'Minor Cultures', below).

## Minor and Foreign Cultures

The ones described above are only the most important and numerous of the native peoples of Norwold. Besides them there are many smaller, isolated, or forgotten peoples, each with its own distinctive culture.

Some of these are relics of peoples who have migrated away or died out, like the so-called **Swamp Folk**<sup>51</sup> who inhabit the Oceansend Marshes - small clans who haunt the misty coastal swamps, surviving mostly through fishing, and who use weapons poisoned with herbal concoctions. Their tongue shows many similarities with the one of the northern Lietuvans, and it is commonly believed that they are a leftover of that people before its migration in Littonia.

Some others are cultures who developed out of isolated branches of other peoples, like the **Gremlish**<sup>52</sup> tribes who live in the Dragon Spur Hills. Tall and with clear Antalian blood in their veins, the Gremlish once lived in the Kilmik Vale before the Norwolders pushed them north. Their language is a unique one, which borrows words both from the Vrodniki and Norwolder tongues. They are semi-nomadic hunter and gatherers, with a primitive lifestyle but able to forge steel weapons; they sometimes raid the nearby communities, and infrequently sell out as mercenaries.

Yet another unusual find in Norwold are the **Najnartas**,<sup>53</sup> a small amazon-like people who

<sup>51</sup> The Swamp Folk is borrowed from [GAZF9 The Free City of Oceansend](#) (by JTR).

<sup>52</sup> The Gremlish are briefly described in "[Stamtral \(Duchy of\)](#)" entry in the *Mystaran Almanac for AC 1018*.

<sup>53</sup> This race is described in an old write-up of mine, [The Nainartas](#); note that the linked article needs an update to match the current version of Norwold presented here.

live on the slopes of the Goddess' Diadem, near Norwold's western border. They are the descendants of a group of women of mixed Alphatian and native blood who fled the destruction of their small realm in the southern Great Bay area in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AC (it was one of the petty successor states of the Alphatian colonies abandoned after AC 510). These women have a civilized lifestyle if compared to the nearby peoples, have a tradition of arcane magic, and choose their mates among the nearby allied White Banner Viaskoda tribes (some of whom are de facto controlled by the Najnartas).

Then Norwold hosts minority peoples migrated from foreign countries. The most numerous of them are of course the **Alphatians** coming mostly from the mainland, but also from other territories of their empire, who have been more or less a continuous presence in some coastal areas but are becoming more and more numerous since the establishment of the Kingdom of Norwold in AC 992. The **Thyatians** are fewer, centred mostly in Oceansend and



*An alpine mire in the Ironroot Mountains*

neighbouring areas, as well as in the southern coastal regions; many of them come from the empire's mainland but peoples from the Isle of Dawn are also represented. The third foreign minority groups is made up by the **Northmen**, coming mainly from Ostland, who are found on the coasts all the way from the Bay of Kammin to the Great Bay, with greater densities found on the Kasverian Peninsula and on the Isles of the Strand.



*The Najnarta queen and her handmaids*

## The Demihuman Races

Even if they are less numerous than the humans, Norwold is the home of a number of demihuman clans and cultures, none of whom however is native to the region. The main demihuman races that inhabit this region are described below.

### Dwarves

While the dwarven presence in this area dates back to the days before the Great Rain of Fire, none of the elder dwarves are found in Norwold anymore. All the dwarves who live in Norwold migrated from Rockhome at different times since AC 200. Their small clans are independent from one another and are scattered among Norwold's many mountain chains - known clans are those living in the Isbreidd Mountains, in the Peaks of Snorri, in Lirovka's Alps, and in the Eagles' Barrier, but there are certainly others. The Ironroot Mountains west of Oceansend host the highest concentration of dwarves in Norwold; there indeed is found the small dwarven nation of Stormhaven. Mining of common and precious metals and stones is what brought most dwarves to Norwold. A sizeable dwarven minority also lives within the territory of the Kingdom of Oceansend, and many of these work as skilled craftsmen inside the city's walls.

### Elves

Fair elves are not natives of Norwold, nor are they related to the elven clans who live in Wendar and on the Denagothian Plateau. They instead belong to the Shiye clan, and are third- or fourth-generation descendants of migrants from the Kingdom of Shiye-Lawr on mainland Alphatia, who came to Norwold

about one thousand and a half years ago. The fair elves are scattered among a myriad of small forest communities called Foresthomes, which range from the Lothbarth Forest and the northern coast of the Great Bay up to the Rhien Forest in the south; the Jagged Teeth Mountains, the Azure and Gunaald Lakes, the Wyrms' Head Mountains, and Lirovka's Alps mark the western limit of elven presence in Norwold. The elves are generally quite reclusive and wish to be left alone; due to some ancestral pact, only some centuries ago they enjoyed the protection of the Wyrms' Head dragons, but this alliance is not honoured by most dragons anymore<sup>54</sup> - even if none of them has been known to attack any of the Foresthomes. Even if the original elven settlers from Shiye-Lawr were worshippers of Immortal Eiryndul, most Foresthome elves some centuries later converted to the faith of Ilsundal following the deeds of Lornasen, an elven heroine who brought back from the Sylvan Realm a root of the *Tree of Life*. Today most Foresthomes have their own *Tree of Life*, but the heart of Ilsundal's worship is located in the Lothbarth Forest, north-west of Leeha. Scattered Foresthomes still faithful to the traditional cult of Eiryndul are still found, though. Elven minorities are also found within the walls of Oceansend and Alpha, but these are made up mostly of foreign elves

<sup>54</sup> The alliance between the Norwold elves and the Wyrms' Head dragons is featured in the Dragonlord Trilogy novels, by T. Gunnarsson; there, it is due to the presence among the dragons of the last members of the ancient Eldar race, elf-like beings whose blood runs both in modern elves' and in the gold dragons' veins. Take a look at my [History of Dragonkind](#) for a way to reconcile the different origin of elves told in the novels with the canonical one found in the Hollow World boxed set.

coming from mainland Alphatia, Wendar, and the Known World (with a relevant presence of water elves from Minrothad).



*Tall redwood sequoias in the Scarlet Forest*

### Gnomes

Gnomes are not very numerous in Norwold, and are found only in its southern reaches. Most of them descend from gnomish refugees who fled from the Hardanger Mountains in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century BC or from the eastern Wendarian Range after the destruction of Torkyn Falls in AC 505.<sup>55</sup> The majority of Norwold's gnomes are found scattered among various woodland communities all the way from Oceansend to the Altenwald, with a greater number present in the woods and hills around the Heldland River; by outsiders, these gnomes are labelled "forest gnomes" and have adapted to a nature-oriented life. Other groups of more traditional earth gnomes are instead found in the Hettafjall, as well as in major human settlements (like Landfall).

<sup>55</sup> This event is featured in the *Dragonlord of Mystara* novel, by T. Gunnarsson.

### Halflings

The heart of the halflings' presence in Norwold is the Shire of Leecha, a set of closely allied halfling communities and clans located at the mouth of the White Bear River. The presence of halflings here is very ancient, dating back to the Nithian age when they were brought north by the empire as slaves. After the foundation of Leecha in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, the halflings have expanded from their holdings, with many clans and families going to live in coastal villages and towns alongside their human neighbours. Today, the largest halfling community besides Leecha is the one in Oceansend; halfling minorities, practicing all sorts of trades and crafts, are found anyway in most major and minor human settlements. Coastal areas from Oceansend to the south also host groups and families of foreign halflings, coming from the Known World or the Alphatian Kingdom of Stoutfellow.

### Centaur, Lupins, and Rakastas

Not at all related one another, centaurs, lupins and rakastas are nevertheless a well-established presence in Norwold; the rakastas are indeed one of the most ancient races of this region, having lived there since the time before the Great Rain of Fire, while the centaurs' arrival in the region from the Ethengar steppes is probably dated after the fall of the Antalian civilization around BC 1700. The lupin presence is instead more recent, tracing back to about BC 1500.

## Centaur

These majestic equine creatures are scattered all over Norwold, and divided among a variety of tribes and clans with different cultures and traditions. Most of them migrated in ancient times and successive waves from the steppes of Ethengar or from the grasslands and woodlands of the Northern Wildlands or Borea.

In southern Norwold, prominent semi-nomadic centaur cultures are found in the Vinisk River valley, in the southern reaches of the Finster Forest, and in the plains north-east of the Skýfjall; there, their clans recognize the rulership of a single ruler, called the *betman*. In the past, the Vinisk centaurs have cooperated with human realms, such as the Kingdom of Essuria, while the coastal hetmanates have always been wary of colonization attempts by the humans.

More to the north, smaller centaur tribes are found in the woods and plains east of the Final Range, as well as in the Hidden Valley; their culture is derived from that of the coastal hetmanates. These tribes are usually good friends with the nature-loving semi-nomadic Norwolder clans, and have friendly relations with local druidic circles.

Larger centaur tribes dwell in the northern steppes and taiga, beyond the Great Bay; the local centaurs have absorbed traits of the Viaskoda human culture, and the clans of a single tribe gather under a war leader called *kaman*; they compete with the human and humanoid peoples who inhabit this region, and tend to be more warlike than their southern kin.

## Lupins

While not a major race of Norwold, the lupins are quite well represented in this region through a relevant number of breeds. Differently from what happens in the Known World or the Savage Coast, there some lupin breeds tend to keep to themselves, and as a result they have developed their own unique culture instead of being assimilated by that of the humans'.

One of the most numerous breeds is that of the **Heldann shepherds**, whose clans are interspersed among the Heldanner humans and are found east of the Final Range and of the Hettafjall Mountains from the Oceansend latitude to the south. The Heldann shepherds share many cultural traits with the Heldanners, earning a living as farmers and herders.

The **foxfolk** are represented by the white fur variety and live in two main areas - the Skaufskogr Hills and the Foxes' River valley; smaller tribes are found north of the Great Bay, up to the tundra of the Everwinter Lands. The foxfolk tribes are quite reclusive, possess a strong druidic tradition, and live in forest villages (south of the Great Bay and Skaufskogr) or wandering clans (north of the Great Bay).

Another major lupin breed of Norwold is that of the **gnomish snoutzers**, who favour the woodland environments of the regions south of the Great Bay. Most of them are found south of Oceansend, in the same woods where the forest gnomes dwell, and are in very good standing with the small folk. They live in forest communities, and only infrequently move from the territory in which they have settled.



*The Foxes' River flowing through the Giants' Cradle*

A native breed, the **Norwold malamute** haunts the northern regions of this part of the continent, namely the frigid tundra of the Everwinter Lands and parts of the plains and woodlands which stretch south of the Autuasmaa Plain. Their small clans are nomadic and travel across the northern wastes, even crossing the icy arctic cap to places unknown and back.

Among the minor breeds which are found in Norwold we should mention the **great dogge**, which is found in human communities mostly on the eastern coasts as a result of immigration from the Northern Reaches. Lastly, a relevant number of **mongrels** are found in the coastal areas and immediate interior from the Great Bay to the south, mostly in or around human communities.

### **Rakastas**

A variety of breeds of these feline humanoids is scattered among the regions of Norwold, mostly in wilderness or borderland areas not too near the settlements of the humans. Differently from the lupins, the rakastas are

not particularly friendly toward humans, and they see the recent, renewed encroachment of civilization in this part of the world as a danger to their lifestyle.

The most aloof of the Norwold rakastas, the **snow pardastas** live above the tree line in the great mountain ranges of Norwold - mostly in the Icereach and Borean ranges, with sparse clans also found in the highest spots of the Wurmsteeth Range. They are hunters and herders, and practice a sedentary lifestyle, dwelling in small mountain villages centred on caves and fiercely competing with the few other creatures that haunt their altitudes.

The nomadic **lynxman** breed ranges from the coldest northern tundras to the Wurmsteeth Range in the south; the northernmost variety has white pelt, while the southern one has a reddish one. They live in small clans of hunters, who travel a lot and even compete with the Norwold malamute lupins in their route through the icy northern wastes, even beyond the Everwinter Lands.

Lastly, **mountain rakastas** live in the wooded mountain valleys and foothills of central Norwold, most of their small clans are found in the Wurmsteeth Range as well as along the Final Range. They are usually semi-nomadic hunters and herders, but some clans live in stable villages nested in high mountain valleys.

## The Humanoid Dwellers

Humanoid presence in Norwold dates back to the terrible days when the Great Horde of King Loark laid waste to the Antalian civilization. Since then, the various humanoid races have spread, becoming more numerous, and holding their sway over entire regions of this wilderness land. During their history, the Norwold humanoids have mostly fought the other races and challenged their control over the land; in the past, many humanoid realms have risen over the ruins of human cultures and dominions. Times of cohabitation have also existed - mainly with giant clans or individual dragons, but more recently also with the humans; usually those non-hostile contacts have only concerned orc, ogre, or goblin tribes, and have been limited to trade and mercenary service offered by the tribes to human realms and lords.

The most numerous humanoids in Norwold are the **orcs**, who are spread over most of the region. The *Orcus Porcus* variety is found south of the Great Bay, with greater population densities in the Hettafjall Mountains and along the main mountain ranges of central Norwold, like the Bloody Scythe, the Pierced Crown or the Eagles' Barrier. Orc tribes are also found in the Katfjellene, in the Hidden Valley, and in the Dragon Spur Hills (there they are rumoured to be under the control of a powerful dragon). Many *Orcus Porcus* tribes and clans living in the regions north of the Severnaya Polovina and the Hidden Valley are quite civilized (by humanoid standards) as a result of contact with human realms which rose there in the past - they often adopt the culture of their human neighbours (usually the Norwolder of Vrodniki one), a settled lifestyle (at least for a time), and some clans sell out as mercenaries to nearby human dominions. Also as a result of contact with



*A mountain lake in the Hettafjall*

foreign and native humans, half-orcs (offspring of a human and of an orc parent) are also uncommonly encountered. The *Orcus Hyborianus* variety is more savage and found in the Ljallenvals Mountains north of the Great Bay's mouth, in the Jotunheimr Hills, and in the freezing tundra of the Everwinter Lands; these tribes are semi-nomadic or nomadic and fiercely compete for the scarce resources against other dwellers of this area - Shonak humans, lupins, rakastas, and other humanoids.

Not as numerous as the orcs are the **goblins**, who are divided into two subraces as well. The *Goblinus Goblinus* variety haunts parts of the Hettafjall and of the Essurian Arm Mountains, with many tribes dwelling in the Gnomsdalur between the Lirovka's Alps and the Hettafjall themselves. All these tribes are quite savage and lead a semi-nomadic existence. Sometimes, however, goblins do hire themselves as mercenaries to local lords, and a very few goblin families are even known to haunt major human population centres (like Landfall), doing menial labours there. The *Goblinus Hyborianus* variety is found north of the Great Bay. The most primitive northern goblin tribes there are those living in the western mountain ranges, from the Icereach to the north, and those who wander the Everwinter Lands; the most powerful of those goblin tribes is the one called the Yrguns, which lives on the slopes of the Winter Peaks. Nomadic goblin tribes also wander the whole stretch of the Noskumis Plains and parts of the taiga forests found in Koleamaa. A more friendly lot are the tribes which live in the Sarkans Plains, south-west of Littonia; while semi-nomadic, these goblins have enjoyed contact with the Littonians for centuries (even becoming subjects of the kingdom for some centuries),

and have mastered the skill of training the pygmy mammoths who live on the Landrise. The Sarkans goblins trade freely with the humans, and some of them also live in Littonia's southern settlements, alongside local humans.



*A goblin family*

Among Norwold's fiercer humanoid denizens are also the **bugbears**. Clans of savage bugbears belonging to the *Ursus Bipedis Vulgaris* variety are found scattered in the wilderness of southern Norwold - between the Skaufskogr Hills and the whole stretch of the Wurmsteeth Range, but no large tribes are found there. The *Ursus Bipedis Hyborianus* variety, instead, is quite numerous in the northern regions: many tribes are found in the Borean Range, and many large nomadic bugbear tribes wander the Jotunheimr Hills, Koleamaa, and Viaskaland, clashing with local Vaarana and Viaskoda tribes. Smaller bugbear tribes are also found in the tundras of the Everwinter Lands. Bugbear are generally hostile and unfriendly, only associating with creatures stronger than them or with powerful villains who can offer them plunder and the chance to pillage.

Norwold's **ogre** population belongs mostly to the *Homo Monstrum Bellicosus* variety, even if clans and tribes made up of *Homo Monstrum Brutalis* ogres can be found in southern and south-western areas. Many ogre tribes indeed dwell in the areas which border the Denagothian Plateau, including the Essurian Arm, Isbreidd, and Hettafjall Mountains, and the Icereach valleys in the immediate north of the plateau. These tribes range from the savage to the civilized (again for humanoid standards), with the latter employing some trappings of the nearby human cultures, and at times selling their services as mercenaries. Ogre families are often allied with neighbouring smaller humanoids, such as orcs. A relevant number of ogre tribes dwell in the Borean Range as well, but these are much more primitive and generally hostile to humans. Half-ogres, while uncommon, are not unknown either: they are most often found in rural and frontier areas of Skogenvår, Ashtland, and Heldland.

Among Norwold's major humanoid races one can't forget the **trolls**, who are spread all over the region from the southern reaches to the northern icy wastes. In the south, trolls belonging to the *Monstrum Imbecilus Rex* variety are found on the Essurian Arm's and Hettafjall Mountains' foothills, but small clans of them can be found throughout the deepest forests and most lonely hills south of the Great Bay. Many nasty troll clans belonging to the *Monstrum Carnivorus Maximus* haunt the moors and marshes found along the Vinisk River, and they are of the same stock of those found in the Menascha Swamp, on the other side of the Essurian Arm. A relevant number of troll tribes belonging to the *Monstrum Erroneus Hyborianus* live scattered in the northern

regions, with special concentrations in the Noskumis Plains, the Ljallenvals Mountains, the Jotunheimr Hills, the Winter Peaks west of Kaarjala, and the tundra of the Everwinter Lands. Trolls are unmistakably savage and hostile toward most other races, and are considered dangerous and unreliable even by other humanoids; sometimes, however, they can be made to obey orders by much more powerful creatures (like giants) or villains (like the late Ice Witch Frota, who enlisted many northern trolls under her banner).

Other humanoid races are not as numerous as the abovementioned ones. A few clans and one tribe of **hobgoblins** are found in the Hettafjall Mountains and vicinities, and other tribes are known to dwell in the Jagged Teeth and south of the Winter Peaks; they all belong to the *Goblinus Grandis* variety. One of the most vicious humanoid races elsewhere, **gnolls** are few in Norwold and all belong to the *Canis Erectus Septentrionum* variety; small tribes and bands of gnolls can anyway be found in Norwold's southern reaches, in the Heldland region and at the borders with the Denagothian Plateau. Lastly, among less numerous humanoid races, Norwold also features a northern variety of **kobold** different from the subraces found at southern latitudes, whose tribes live in the Borean Range, north of the Great Bay latitude.



*The northernmost tip of the Jagged Teeth*

## The Giant Clans

Norwold was one of the ancestral homelands of the giants after the Great Rain of Fire. Most of the giant races are represented here, and despite the presence of other races, they thrive in their mountain or wilderness havens - even if giant kingdoms and realms like those of the ancient past are gone, save perhaps the icy Frosthaven.

The most numerous of the giant races is indeed the **frost giants**. A very large number of them is found in the far northern island of Frosthaven, where a frost giant kingdom under a powerful jarl is rumoured to exist; Frosthaven giants are a constant threat to the northern human peoples - the Shonaks, the Vaarana, and the Saamari - and to the southern ones as well when the Great Bay freezes during colder winters and season-long frost giant raids from Frosthaven take place. Lesser clans of frost giants are found throughout most mountain chains of Norwold featuring glaciers, a legacy of their ancestral realms in this region. Clans of frost giants are known to dwell in the Hettafjall Mountains, the Lirovka's Alps, the Peaks of

Snorri, the Eagles' Barrier, the White Mountains and Quesa's Massif, in the Icereach Range, in the Ljallenvals Mountains, and all the way along the Borean Range up to the northern coast.

The second most numerous giant race in Norwold are the powerful **mountain giants**, who live scattered in a number of small clans and families, with no actual great tribe or realm. Many of them are found in the southern and central mountain ranges, like the Hettafjall, the Lirovka's Alps, the Ironroot Mountains - where they wage constant skirmishes with local dwarven clans - and the Peaks of Snorri. In the interior, mountain giant clans can be found in the Giants' Mountains and in the Icereach Range. Nevertheless, solitary individuals and small families can be infrequently found in the Pierced Crown, in the Eagles' Barrier, and in the Dragon Spur Hills. Mountain giants are not as hostile as other giants toward other smaller races, and sometimes they trade with them or serve them as mercenaries.

Some Norwold mountain ranges are the home of warlike **fire giant** clans; they tend to dwell in the vicinities of volcanoes, heated caves, or underground lava deposits, and shun the colder climate of the regions north of the Great Bay. Known fire giant clans dwell in the Peaks of Snorri, around Mount Velkka (a volcano south-west of Oceansend), in the Hettafjall, in the Bloody Scythe, and in the Icereach Range. A large concentration of fire giants live in the area known as the Arch of Fire. Fire giants are aggressive and usually form small bands of raiders which periodically attack the settlements of other races.

The lesser of their race, the **hill giants**, are found in Norwold's southern half, around

and below the latitude of the Great Bay. Savage and unruly, their clans regularly clash against one another, and they have a difficult time cooperating with other giants. Most often they associate themselves with smaller races, such as various humanoid tribes or strong villainous human warlords - sometimes dominating, sometimes serving them. Hill giants are more frequently encountered in the Essurian Arm, in the Hettafjall Mountains, in Lirovka's Alps; more to the north, the foothills of the Icereach Range and the Giants' Mountains, the Katfjellene, and the Dragon Spur Hills also host many tribes of hill giants.

Rarer than other giantish varieties, **cloud giants** live on the highest mountaintops, usually far from the other races' settlements, but only in the region south of the Great Bay. They live in small family groups, and build small mountain castles or, more rarely, live in enchanted palaces that float on the clouds themselves. Cloud giants have been spotted in the Icereach Range, in the Hettafjall Mountains, and in Lirovka's Alps.

## The Ancient Dragons

Among humans and demihumans, Norwold is infamous for the presence of a great number of dragons of any type, whose lairs are mostly found in the Wyrksteeth Range. Actually, the dragons' hold over this region is much older than what any of lesser races think. In fact, the Wyrms' Head Mountains, the wild "heart" of the Wyrksteeth Range, hosts the millennia-old dragon city of Windreach, a unique city built by dragons for other dragons. For a long time, up to about three centuries ago, the city hosted the great



*A giant raids a Norwolder village*

Parliament of Dragons, where dragon representatives from all over Mystara periodically met to discuss events and news which could affect the fate of the Dragon Nation,<sup>56</sup> and to assist the appearance of the Great One, who manifested himself in

<sup>56</sup> The Dragon Nation was a borderless body which ideally included all Mystaran dragons; it was created after the Great Rain of Fire by gold dragon priests of the Great One and furthered the lawful side of the dragon race, striving to overcome differences between the various dragon species and to stress the unity of the dragon race as a whole. Not all dragons agreed with this purpose, and many turned Renegades, refusing to obey the rules of the Parliament of Dragons and preserving an independent existence. Actually, the Dragon Nation was sponsored by the Great One also as a means to face the foreseen return of the gemstone dragons and the threat of the Overlord. Thus, after the latter's destruction, the Nation lost much of its importance and active support from the Great One. See [History of Dragonkind](#) (by S. Neri) for more details.

incorporeal form during the meetings. Gold dragon clerics of the Great One watched over Windreach and presided over the Parliament of Dragons. As a result of hosting the seat of the Parliament of Dragons, many dragons of all species settled their lairs in Norwold - and especially in the Wurmsteeth Range - during the course of the centuries.



*The Wurm's Head Mountains*

After the 6<sup>th</sup> century AC, the role of the Parliament of Dragons gradually began to decline, and many dragons living in the Wurmsteeth Range started to defy the rules and restrictions it imposed on the members of the Dragon Nation. More and more dragons turned Renegades, and fights among dragons for supremacy became commonplace; as the control of the Parliament over the dragons reduced, a number of draconic kingdoms rose and fragmented. As the Great One's appearances before the Parliament became less frequent, the ruling body of the Dragon Nation lost much of its prestige and authority, and in the course of a couple of centuries, disappointed by the chaotic situation in the Wurmsteeth and by their kin's unwillingness to preserve the Dragon Nation, most gold dragons left the region for other shores.

Today, Windreach is a lonely and half-empty city; its location is known only to members of the dragon race, but some of the youngest dragons might even not have ever been there or know the city's location. Its only dwellers are a small cadre of gold dragons who still tend to the Great One's local temple, and some dragons belonging to other species.

The rest of the Wurmsteeth Range hosts scattered lairs of nearly all other dragon species except for gold dragons. Most of the dragons living in this region are subject of a vast draconic kingdom led by a huge, very powerful red dragon of unknown age, whom the humans have nicknamed "Red Death".<sup>57</sup> The self-styled dragon king does not care about the Parliament of Dragons, but so far has allowed the gold dragons of Windreach to stay, out of respect for their role as the Great Ones' priests. "Red Death" enjoys letting his subjects launch raids against other races and peoples of Norwold, but is smart enough to avoid massive attacks and to hit areas far from the Wurmsteeth in order to lure the humans' attention away from his mountain dominion. As a result, the humans

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<sup>57</sup> For a different take on the draconic political situation in the Wurmsteeth Range, see [Wurmsteeth Gazetteer](#) (by G. Caroletti); to stay more true to the description of the Wurmsteeth Range featured in CM1 Test of the Warlords, and in order to better integrate the background of the Dragonlord Trilogy novels, the draconic kingdom described in Caroletti's article has not been used as a basis for this version of Norwold. The nickname of the red dragon ruler of the Wurmsteeth Range, "Red Death", has however been borrowed from Caroletti's version. Still another take about the Wurmsteeth dragons is the one found in the narrative [The future of the Heldannic Knights](#) (by B. Heard), tied to Heard's "World in Flames" material.

suspect that only a hundred dragons or so live in the range, while their actual number is closer to a thousand. "Red Death" is wary of the human empires' encroachment in Norwold in the last century, but the humans are as good as invaders and as prey, so he is awaiting before taking direct action, contenting himself with the periodical destruction of the last attempt at settling within his territory.

Dragons are also found away from the Wurmsteeth Range. **White dragons** are the most common species of Norwold; they make their lair in the icy mountaintops and glaciers of which there is plenty all over the region, and in the icy tundra and in the arctic wastes beyond the Autuasmaa Plain. The Icereach Range, Quesa's Massif, the White Mountains, and the Borean Range are their favourite southern haunts, as are the various islands of Norzee (including Frosthaven) in the north. **Red dragons** are not as numerous as the whites, but a large number of them call Norwold their home, making lairs in the rugged mountainous wilderness, especially at lower altitudes and near (or within) local volcanoes; a not small number of them lives in the Arch of Fire area. **Green** and **black dragons** live in Norwold's deep forests (mostly in the western half of the region) and swampy lands, respectively, even if both species dislike the cold climate found north of the Great Bay and shun the subarctic latitudes. **Blue dragons** are the least represented dragon species, and almost all of their members live in the Wurmsteeth Range. Gemstone dragons, likely as a consequence of the presence of the Dragon Nation's seat in the region, are extremely rare and nearly unknown in Norwold.

The attitude of dragons toward other races varies according to the individual dragon, but the wyrms have generally become gradually more disrespectful of other races - especially the humans - in the last four centuries. Strong dragons from time to time establish control over humanoid tribes, human barbarian clans, or giant bands, forming small armies with which they harass their enemies or prey. Centuries ago there were rumours of an ancient pact of alliance between the Foresthome elves and the dragons of the Wurmsteeth, but nowadays that agreement is thought to be all but gone; nevertheless, dragon attacks on elven communities are still almost unheard of.

## Other Races

Many more intelligent races are found in Norwold, even if their number and influence do not allow them to feature among the most prominent races of the region. What follows, of course, does not exhaust the number of potential dwellers of Norwold, but represents only a brief listing of the intelligent creatures most frequently spotted in the region.

The vast forested valleys and hills of Norwold host representatives of various woodlands races, such as hsiaos, dryads, and fauns; ancient groves of treants live in Norwold's older forests. Members of the Good People are represented as well, and more than one fairy realm might be accessible through Norwold's deepest glades, clearest waterfalls, or similar spots.

Norwold's wilderness mountains and hills are the habitat of some peculiar races of trolls. At least, the human scholars call these "trolls", but they are quite different from the common, Beastmen-descended root trolls (as the three



*A slumbering giant troll*

*Monstrum* subraces are usually called). These beings share instead a strong connection to the elemental earth, tend to live in very small family units or be solitary, are less aggressive than the root trolls, and often go "dormant" for a long time, becoming immobile and assuming the appearance of the rocky environment in which they dwell. Among these troll races are the earth troll (a larger, more durable, but less intelligent species), the rock troll (a slow, powerful, and peaceable species), and the giant troll (a dumb, huge, and voracious breed). While the scholars believe these three species of trolls to be descended from common root trolls tainted by elemental earth energies, the truth might actually be the opposite - the root trolls could be the result of the mix of the Beastmen blood tainting these elemental-tied creatures.

Sasquatches are found in relevant number, mostly away from the coasts, in the high mountain valleys and caves. They belong to the northern mountain variety called *yeti*, and tend to be much more aggressive and primitive than their kin in the Known World. Many gathered under the banner of the Ice Witches in the past.

Nasty and often dangerous creatures such as harpies, medusae, reveners, and gremlins are found in southern and central Norwold, while shapeshifters like doppelgangers and mujinas hide in the human communities. Solitary sphinxes may be occasionally found in the milder latitudes of Norwold as well. Cryions are quite prominent in Frosthaven and in the nearby icy wastes.

Cave systems in the region's mountain ranges host a number of dread beholders. There are also rumours about strange races of reptilian humanoids - perhaps northern varieties of lizardmen - living in heated underground caves in central Norwold.

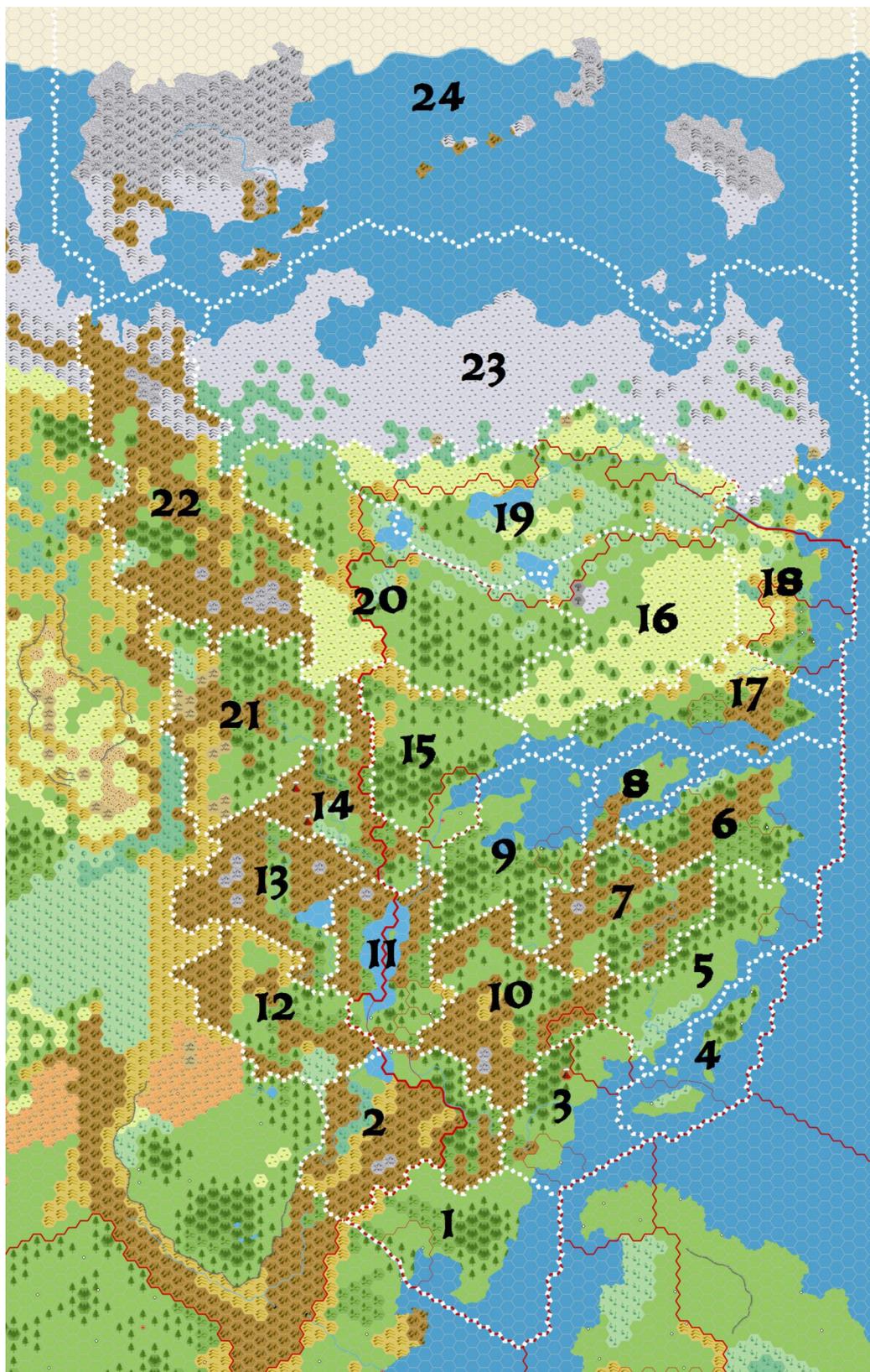
Lycanthropes are not a threat to the region's civilized races, but are nevertheless present in relevant number - in particular werewolves, werebears, wererats, and devil swines; also, unconfirmed rumours insist about the existence of unique local strains, like dog and deer lycanthropy in the Tranquil Coast, or reindeer lycanthropy in the far north.

Many planar creatures may also be found in Norwold, sometimes as occasional travellers - like the adaptors - some other due to the region's many gates to the Inner Planes. The Arch of Fire, for example, is the reason behind the presence of fire elemental creatures - fire elementals, hell hounds, helions, efreeti - while Norzee's Whirpool has brought there some water elementals and hydraxes.

Also, undead of all types are quite well represented in Norwold, due to the region's troubled past history and to the influence of death-loving Immortals such as Hel.



Map of Norwold (24-miles per hex)



*The regions of Norwold*

## TOURING THE REGIONS OF NORWOLD

Now that you have learned about Norwold's terrain, climate, history, and dwellers, it is time for you to follow us in a quick tour of this diverse region. Refer to the number featured on the map included in this chapter to direct your travel.<sup>58</sup> So, fill your backpack with rations, don your fur coat, sharpen your axe and wit, and... Let's start!

### 1. Heldland and the Skaufskogr

**Heldland** is the region included between the Altenwald and the Skaufskogr Hills; it is one of the most populous and settled areas of Norwold, due to it being continuously inhabited since three millennia ago. Heldland is split in half by the **Heldland River**,<sup>59</sup> which forms the border between the

<sup>58</sup> A number of sources have been used to detail the map and the various locations of Norwold: all the ten booklets of the GAZF line (by JTR), the description of Norwold's dominions featured in the Mystaran Almanacs, [Map of Northern Norwold, 24 Miles per Hex](#) (by M. Fleet), [Map of Brun](#) (by F. Defferrari), [Detailed Map of Northeast Brun](#) (by R. Dijkema), [Norwold, AC 1160](#) (by A. Francolini), and [material from Tharquil's French homepage](#). Some details might have been slightly changed from those original maps, though, in order to result consistent with the rest. Most of the material regarding southern Norwold (the Skaufskogr and the Ransarn-Vinisk valleys) was borrowed from the work of G. Agosta, and are further described and given an in-depth look in the dedicated article found in this same issue of "Threshold".

<sup>59</sup> This is the river on whose banks the outpost of Forton will be built by the

Kingdom of Norwold to the north and the Heldannic Territories to the south - even if de facto claimed by the Heldannic Knights, the area between the river and the Altenwald (included) is still beyond their control, but things may change in the very near future. Heldland's plains are quite fertile and blessed with many streams and woods.

The land is inhabited by Heldanner folks and hosts many farming villages and a couple of towns, the small port of Strondborg, located on the coast south of the Heldland Rivers' mouth, and the large, ill-reputed town of Landfall, a crime haven ruled by Ericall's half-brother Lernal. Villages are less numerous near the Hettafjall's foothills, where clans of hill giants, trolls, and gnolls live. Semi-nomadic Heldann Shepherd lupin clans live in the plains north-west of Landfall, while gnomish snoutzer lupins are found in the region's woods and forests, alongside their friends the forest gnomes.

Lernal possess the feudal title of duke for Landfall and the lands west of the town, but also holds sway over the whole Heldland and Skaufskogr region as governor of this province. Actually, Landfall's most powerful crime organizations control both the duke and the town, and have ramifications in the most important settlements of this region. Trails lead from Heldland to the Denagothian Plateau through a couple of passes in the Hettafjall Mountains; after being neglected for a half-century after the fall of Essuria, they are being crossed again by Ghyrian traders. In fact, the people of the Denagothian

Heldannic Knights in AC 1013, according to Joshuan's Almanac (which develops on the continuity of WotI and the PWAs). Because of this, this river is often labeled "Forton River" in many fan resources.

Plateau still call this region with its Essurian name, that is Heldunnar (to them, Lower Heldunnar would be the region west of the Skaufskogr, while Upper Heldunnar would be the area to the east of it).

**Skaufskogr** is the name used by the locals to identify both the forested hills which rise east and north of Landfall, and the great forest which lays further east; the latter is alternatively called the **Rhien Forest**. The Skaufskogr Hills, which rise up to 1,250 feet, are the homeland of many foxfolk lupin tribes, while the Rhien Forest hosts both foxfolk and a number of reclusive elven Foresthomes. South of the Rhien Forest, the

wind-swept **Kasverian Peninsula** is inhabited by Heldanner and halfling herdsmen, but its villages are some of the favourite targets of Ostlander pirates.

The plains north of the Skaufskogr Hills are mostly inhabited by Heldann shepherd lupin clans; further north, the plains known as the **Skarsholm** are occupied by orc and hobgoblin tribes from the Hettafjall. The long **Nordheim River** crosses north of the Skaufskogr and the Rhien Forest, forming the border between the southern woods and the Norwold coastal plain. Heldanner clans and Heldann shepherd lupins live in the plains north-east of the Rhien Forest.

Map of Heldland and the Skaufskogr



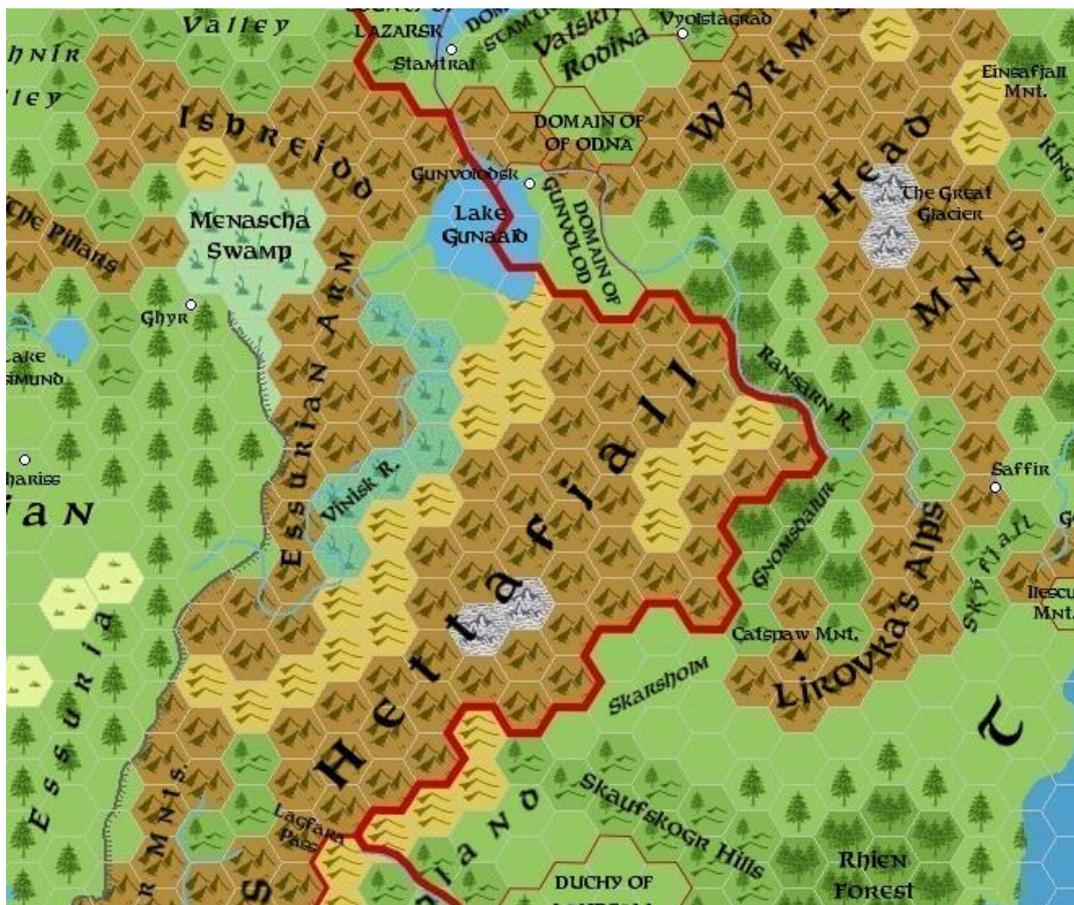
## 2. The Hettafjall, and the Ransarn and Vinisk Valleys

The **Hettafjall** is a large mountain range which separates Heldland from the Vinisk and Ransarn River valleys. Some scholars consider the Hettafjall Mountains the southern end of the Final Range, but actually the mountain chain is more a continuation of the Eastern Mengul Mountains, whose northern limit is usually considered the pass of Lagfara, near the source of the Heldland River. The Hettafjall are a double-ridge range with an average altitude of 10,000' that rises up to towering heights of 18,000 feet, and features one of the largest glaciers of southern Norwold; its heights are often

shrouded by clouds, hence its Heldanner name ("hooded mountains"). Many orc tribes live in these mountains, which are also the home of many mountain, frost, fire, and some cloud giants.

East of the Hettafjall, a smaller range called **Lirovka's Alps** rises sharply from the surrounding foothills, like a wall between the eastern coastal plain and the Ransarn River valley. The range's highest peak is Catspaw Mountain (altitude 14,103'), famous for being the place where the then-mortal elven heroine Lornasen first contacted her patron Ilsundal. The Alps are inhabited by many tribes of mountain rakastas, as well as goblinoid clans, and a handful of dwarves. A few mountain giants also live there.

Map of the Hettafjall, and the Ransarn and Vinisk Valleys





*Catspaw Mountain in the Lirovka's Alps*

A large forested valley known as the **Gnomsdalur**<sup>60</sup> lies between the Hettafjall Mountains and Lirovka's Alps. The place is inhabited by many goblin tribes, which makes it very difficult to use the route which from the Skaufskogr crosses the Gnomstal to reach the Ransarn River.

The two large Vinisk and Ransarn rivers both flow into **Lake Gunaald**, a large, beautiful clear-water lake which partly freezes during winter. It owes its name to the *gunaald*, a white, delicious freshwater fish which fetches high prices in Leeha and in the Vatski domains.

The **Vinisk River** flows into Lake Gunaald from the south-west, its source being found on the eastern slopes of the Denagothian Plateau. Contrary to most of the Norwold's valleys, the Vinisk valley is rugged and hilly but nearly devoid of woods and forests due to the high winds which blow there; the river's course is slow and marshy, and many

moors are found along it. The river's valley was crossed by Essurian traders during that kingdom's height to reach the Heldland region, and ruins from a century and a half ago can still be found there. Dangerous moor trolls live in this valley, alongside two warlike centaur hetmanates - which once were close allies of Essuria. Peoples of the Denagothian Plateau and the Icereachers still call this valley by its old Essurian name, the Golthan Valley.

To the west the Vinisk valley is bordered by the mountain range known as the **Essurian Arm**, which is considered part of Norwold as much as of Denagoth. These mountains average 10,000' in altitude, and host rich deposits of lead in the south and gold in the north, where the range joins the Isbreidd.

The **Ransarn River** springs from the Lirovka's Alps and flows through its forested valley to Lake Gunaald, linking it with the huge Azure Lake and then flowing into the White Bear River much more to the north. The river's valley was called Rethan Valley by the Essurians. Semi-nomadic Vrodniki tribes live all along the valley, fearful of the northern dragons, often engaged in skirmishes against the Gnomstal and Hettafjall humanoids, and sometimes coming to trade (and more rarely to invade) in the coastal lands to the east. On the eastern shores of Lake Gunaald is found the Vatski domain of Gunvolod, ruled by a Heldanner dynasty, which includes many fishing settlements.

<sup>60</sup> The valley is called *Gnomstal* by the Heldannic Knights and Known Worlders; the Essurians called this large valley *Heldereen*, and this name is still used by the people of the Denagothian Plateau.

### 3. The Lower Strand and the Mørkskog

The wide coastal plain which runs from the Nordheim River to the Gulf of Kirnath is simply called the **Strand** ("the plain"). The lower half of the Strand has fertile soil, but suffers from stormy weather and early winters which force the native people to rely more on herding than on farming. The **Skejdar River** cuts in half the lower part of the Strand, forming a natural boundary between the land traditionally inhabited by the Heldanners (to the south) and those where the Norwolders dwell (to the north).

The central area of the Strand is dominated by the powerful and rich city-state of Oceansend, whose King Yarrvik 'the Just' stubbornly refuses to acknowledge Ericall's authority. His kingdom encompasses the city itself and a large stretch of the surrounding countryside, up to the Ironroot Mountains to the north-west. Humans of mixed origin (mostly Thyatians and Norwolders, but also Heldanners, Alphatians, and Dawners) make up Oceansend's varied population, alongside a relevant number of dwarves (immigrants from Stoutfellow and Rockhome, and from the Ironroot Mountains themselves, whose clans are closely allied with the city), halflings, and elves (including a lot of water elves from Minrothad). The city's powerful

*Map of the Lower Strand and the Mørkskog*



fortifications ensure its independence from both empires, and Oceansend has thus become a neutral recruiting centre for many mercenary companies.

West and south-west of Oceansend lies the **Mørkskog** (“dark forest”),<sup>61</sup> one of the oldest and largest forests of Norwold. It is a deep, trackless forest filled with many small bogs, swamps, and ferocious animals. The south-eastern half of this forest is sparsely populated by a centaur hetmanate, while the rest hosts many elven Foresthomes. Small clans of bugbears compete with the forest’s other dwellers. **Velkka**, an active volcano, lies due east of the Mørkskog; according to Norwolder myth, inside the mount is found the gate leading to the infernal realms.

The southern part of the Strand features some small scattered Heldanner and Norwolder villages, and another large centaur hetmanate. Many ruins dot the countryside, mostly remnants of recent imperial colonization attempts. The coast on this side of the Strait of Helskir is controlled by the dominion of Lighthall, ruled by Count Theobold Redbeard from the lighthouse-dotted town of Lighthall; Theobold also has authority over all the lower Strand as he holds the charge of governor of this province for King Ericall. A trail leads from Lighthall toward the Lirovka’s Alps up to the trade



*The Mørkskog gives way to coastal plains in the distance*

town of Saffir, which makes a living through trade with the Vrodniki tribes of the Ransarn valley. Saffir’s countryside is populated by a mix of Alphatian, Heldanner, and Vrodniki peoples.

West of Lighthall lays a hilly, lush, and deeply forested valley called the **Skýfjall** (“cloud hills”),<sup>62</sup> clustered between the Lirovka’s Alps and the **Geithbreid** and **Ilescu** mountains. The valley is populated by independent-minded peoples who live in harmony with the forest and who are supposedly descended from an isolated branch of Heldanners.

<sup>61</sup> The Heldannic Knights and Known Worlders call this forest the *Finsterwald*.

<sup>62</sup> This place is called *Wolkenberg* by Heldannic Knights and Known Worlders.

## 4. The Isles of the Strand

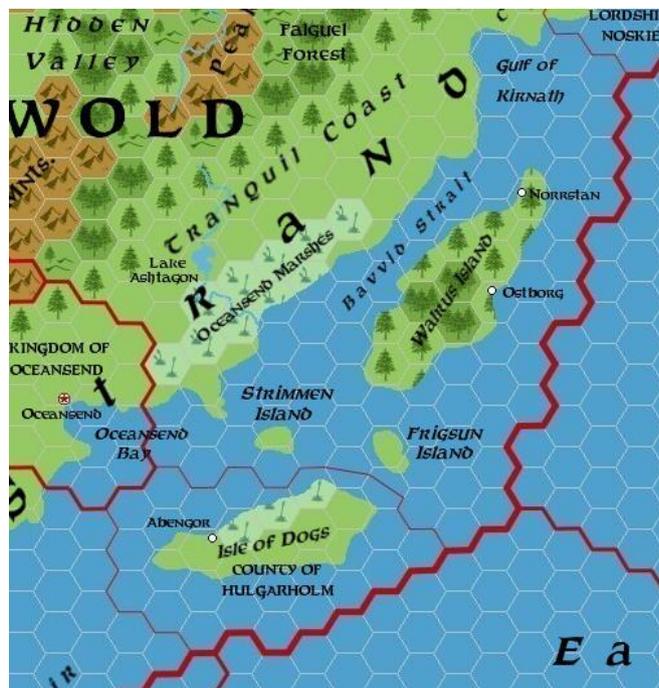
Two larger islands and two smaller ones lay in the sea in front of Oceansend. The northernmost one, **Walrus Island**, is a forested place with rocky coastlines, surrounded by many smaller islets and reefs which make it very dangerous for any ship to approach the island. The only safe harbour is in the middle of the east coast, where the town of Ostborg, with a mixed population of Northmen, Oceansenders, and Alphatians, lies. The island is a gathering place for walrus and other species of seals, which are ruthlessly hunted for their tusks, pelts, and fat. Another large village, Norrstan, is found on the north-western tip of the island.

The two smaller islands are called **Strimmen** (the western one) and **Frigsun** (the eastern one). The former is sparsely inhabited by farming families, while the latter hosts some fishermen but is mostly known as a stop for raiders and pirates.

The southern large island is called **Isle of Dogs** due to large number of wild dogs found on it. It hosts remnants from old and ancient settlements, as it was an important seat of power during the Antalian age. People claiming to be descendants of the early Lietuvan dwellers still inhabit the island, alongside the Norwolder majority. Ostlanders are also present, mostly in the island's western half, where the settlement of Abengor is found. Farming and fishing are the island's main activities.

From AC 975 to AC 985 all the four islands made up the Ostmark, a dominion founded by Ostlander raiders. The Northman ruling families, however, were wiped away by the Alphatians in AC 985; Tralkar Fenn, who led the campaign of conquest, was later awarded the whole Isle of Dogs as fiefdom and was appointed as count of Hulgarholm by King Ericall, as well as governor of the province including all the Isles of the Strand.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ostmark, Hulgarholm, Abengor, and Ostborg have been borrowed from a [post on the Italian MMB](#) (by Corann), albeit placed in a different context.



*Map of the Isles of the Strand*

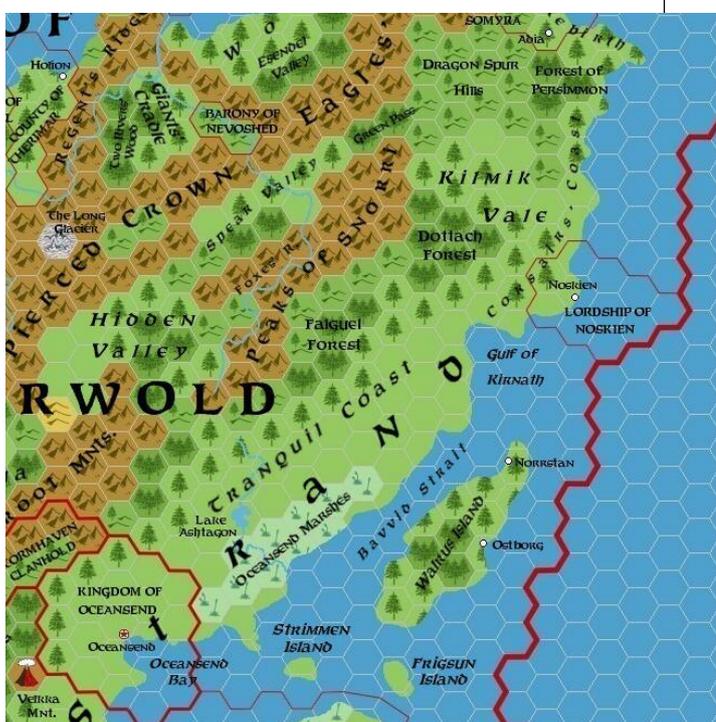
## 5. The Tranquil Coast AND the Kilmik Vale

The stretch of the Strand running north-east of Oceansend is called the **Tranquil Coast** because it is less swept by winds and storms than the southern half, and thus the waters in front of it are usually calmer. The plains here feature many small and isolated Norwolder hamlets, with traces of ruins mostly tracing back their origins to the Thyatian and Alphatian colonizations. Semi-nomadic Norwolder tribes also roam the land, especially the fringes of the woods which run parallel to the Final Range, where some elven Foresthomes are located. The **Falguel Forest**, west of the northern limit of the Tranquil Coast, is said to be the home of fairies and fey creatures. **Lake Ashtagon**, in the middle of the Tranquil Coast, is a deep freshwater body said to be haunted by devilfishes.

A good half of the southern Tranquil Coast is occupied by the **Oceansend Marshes**, a swampy region which extends for many miles inland and that is gradually expanding and making more and more land unsuitable for farming; the marshes host valuable salt pans, but are inhabited by clans of Swamp Folk humans, hostile to any foreign penetration into their lands.

North of the Tranquil Coast lies the **Kilmik Vale**, a large lowland area surrounded by the Dragon Spur Hills to the north and by the Peaks of Snorri to the west. The valley is a very beautiful spot, filled with meadows, small lakes, and streams, and shows its splendour mostly during spring, when its flowers blossom. The north-eastern half of it features clear terrain, while in its south-eastern half grows the **Dottach Forest**, where some Foresthomes are found. The coastal region which stretches to the north of the Gulf of Kirnath is also called the **Corsairs' Coast**, after its history as a common staging area for pirates and sea raiders.

Many Norwolder semi-nomadic tribes roam this area, where stable settlements are nearly non-existent apart from a handful of coastal villages. Among those, the largest is the town of Noskien, founded by Soderfjordan raiders and now ruled by Jarl Ragnar Blueshoulder, who has agreed to acknowledge Ericall's authority. An uncommonly-used trail leads from the Tranquil Coast to the south, through Noskien, to the Lordship of Somyra and the villages near Raiders' Point to the north.



*Map of the Tranquil Coast and the Kilmik Vale*

## 6. The Wotandal and the Dragon Spur Hills

This region encompasses the north-eastern corner of the southern half of Norwold, and is cut in half by the easternmost tip of the Wyrms' Tail, the so-called **Eagles' Barrier**, an impassable wall of rocks which rises from the surrounding forested foothills, with at least seven peaks reaching over 10,000' in height and with many glacial formations. Eagles, both normal and giants, live in those peaks, where the dragons' presence is relatively low if compared to the rest of the Wyrms' Tail Range; orcs, on the other hand, are quite common here, and many tribes of mountain rakastas are present as well. A small dwarven colony is found in the area of the range which comes near the Bluesea Gulf.

The coast along the Bluesea Gulf is called the **Coast of Rebirth** and hosts a scattering of fishing villages inhabited by Norwolders. Old

remnants and ruins of Alphatian settlements are found in this area, especially in the northern half near Raiders' Point, as well as one surviving domain, the Lordship of Somyra, which includes the tiny town of Abia, now ruled by the ruthless former mercenary and raider Sabatio de Florio. The southern half of the Coast of Rebirth is wooded, and the **Forest of Persimmon**, inhabited by a couple of elven Foresthomes, extends many miles inland.

The dangerous **Dragon Spur Hills**, a large region of forested hills with an average altitude of 1,800', rise west of the Forest of Persimmon. This area is inhabited by the warlike Gremlish humans, and by many orc tribes ruled by clans of hill and mountain giants. The place's name is due to a solitary mountain peak which rises near the eastern limit of the hill range, and which was rumoured in the past to be the lair of an ancient black dragon named S'hastarl. While the dragon is supposedly dead or dormant,



*Map of the Wotandal and the Dragon Spur Hills*

the other dwellers still make this area very dangerous to cross.

North-west of the Eagles' Barrier the long stretch of coast is called **Wotandal**<sup>64</sup> by the Norwolder villagers and semi-nomadic tribesmen who dwell in it, while the Alphatians divide the western Esendel Valley from the western Mhirren Plain. This region is notorious for a unique tidal effect called *eistrand* in Norwolder tongue: basically, when the ebb comes, a wide chunk (up to 8 miles in some points) of seafloor is left exposed and can be walked freely and without danger - until the flow comes, when the tide submerges this area very quickly. The settled Norwolders living here have learned to keep the sea away from some of the seafloor left uncovered by the tide, called the *kog*, building dams with earth, rocks, sandbags and mud in order to farm its fertile soil. Some elven Foresthomes are found in these woods as well. In the middle of the Wotandal is also found the Barony of Khemyr, one of the surviving old Alphatian dominions, today ruled by Azirun IV, a staunch supporter of King Ericall.



*The Eistrand on Wotandal's coast*

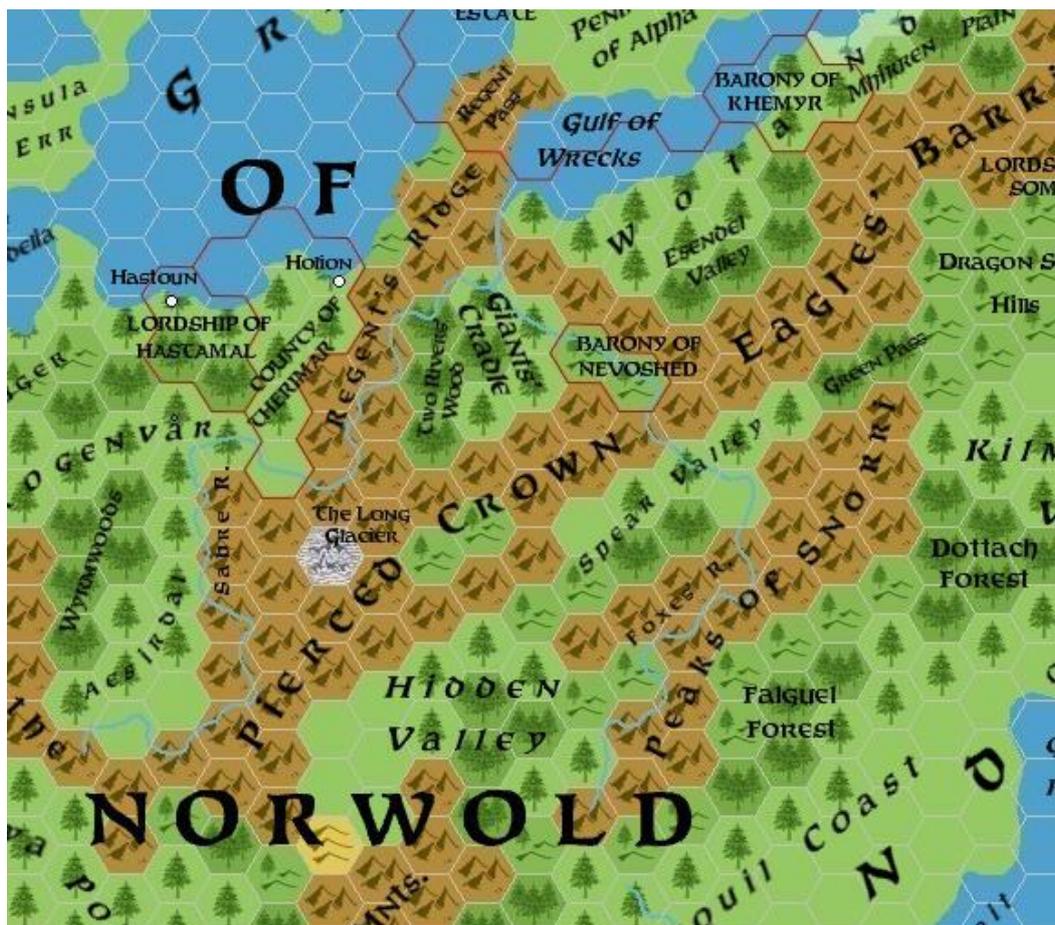
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<sup>64</sup> This region is called *Wiudental* by Known Worlders who use the Heldannic spelling of its name; the *eistrand* tide effect is likewise called by the Heldannics *wattermeer*.

## 7. The Giants' Cradle and the Hidden Valley

This region encompasses two large valleys laid between two imposing mountain chains. To the south-east the **Peaks of Snorri** form the region's boundary with the Tranquil Coast and the northern end of the Final Range. The Peaks, with an average height of 9,000', have been the seat of a giant domain for many centuries, and many clans of frost and mountain giants still dwell here, while fire giants have arrived more recently. Some hardy dwarven clans and tribes of mountain rakastas are said to dwell here as well.

Beyond the Peaks of Snorri lies the lonely and forested **Spear Valley**, home of a few foxfolk lupin tribes and scattered Gremlish human clans. The Green Pass connects the valley with the Dragon Spur Hills to the east. The valley continues to the south-west, into the larger **Hidden Valley**, a mysterious place from the coastal peoples' point of view, where strange monsters and unknown perils are said to dwell. Some of these rumours might even hold some truth, but actually much of the Hidden Valley is forested, and some elven Foresthomes are found there, while the plains of the south-western half of the valley are the territory of some Vrodniki tribes. The Hidden Valley is strongly watched by local druidic circles, and at least one fairy realm is found in its woods.



*Map of the Giants' Cradle and the Hidden Valley*



*A section of the Pierced Crown*

North-west of those valleys, the middle section of the Wyrms' Tail, called the **Pierced Crown**, is found. This mountain range owes its name to the unusual position of its many peaks (some of which reach a height of 15,000'), which form a sort of circular wall around the huge Long Glacier and an adjacent virgin forested valley inhabited by fairy creatures. The Crown is one of the favourite northern haunts of the Wyrms' Tail dragons, but fierce orc tribes are found here aplenty as well. Wandering lynxman and mountain rakasta clans can also be found in these mountains, and even a few clans of snow pardastas.

Further north of the Crown gives sway to another huge valley, called the **Giants' Cradle** after the Antalian myths that held that this was the core realm of the giants. Actually, the Alphatians call this place the Aquelera Valley after one of the settlements they built here during their colonization attempt in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AC. The entire valley, in fact, sports scattered Alphatian ruins tracing back to that age. Giants, apart from a handful of mountain giant families and frost giant raiders from the nearby

Eagles' Barrier, are not prominent here anymore.

The Cradle is crossed by the two huge rivers of this region, the Sabre River to the west, and the Foxes' River to the east; between their courses lies the **Two Rivers' Wood**, of which its northern reaches host an isolated elven Foresthome, while the southern ones a vicious troll clan.

The lower half of the **Foxes' River** is inhabited by many other foxfolk lupins, and the most isolated of the surviving Alphatian domains, the Barony of Nevoshed, is found in the south-eastern corner of the Cradle, nested among the mountains. Its rulers, Rolland and Galathea, manage to keep occasional contacts with Alpha thanks to the wide, navigable Foxes' River. The **Sabre River** flowing to the south-west owes its name to the legend according to which an Alphatian general would have thrown its magical blade into its waters before cursing the river and the land itself. The river runs through a narrow and dark gorge between the Pierced Crown and the Regent's Ridge to the north.

## 8. The Peninsula of Alpha

The most civilized place of all Norwold, the **Peninsula of Alpha** has been one of the first bones of contention between the empires of Thyatis and Alphatia, and is likely to become one again. The fertile plain of the peninsula features a deep water bay at its north-eastern end, which is perfect as a naval harbour. It is here that the Thyatians established Cape Alpha long ago, and it is here that the Kingdom of Norwold's capital and largest city, Alpha, lies. The city has swelled from a modest town to a bustling port within the span of fifteen years, becoming the centre of the Alphatians' renewed colonization attempt. Its most spectacular feature is the huge Royal Palace, which includes one of the modern architectural marvels, the Grand Ballroom.

The rest of the peninsula is dotted by villages, farmlands, and pasturelands, with a couple of other small towns and some defensive keeps here and there. The peninsula enjoys an enviable position from a defensive point of view, being virtually unapproachable from the land. In fact, the peninsula's neck features the steep **Regent's Ridge**, a mountain chain which occupies the whole width of the neck and runs parallel to the Sabre River's course south-westward; some of its peaks reach 8,000' feet in heights. While the range's southern reaches host some sasquatch clans, the northern ones are well-guarded by the king's soldiers, and the only pass through the neck, the Regent Pass, is protected by a mighty fortress.

West of the peninsula, in the waters of the Great Bay, lies the island of **Nordlighavn**,<sup>65</sup> inhabited by fishermen and often used by Ostlander pirates as staging base for raids in the surrounding areas.



<sup>65</sup> The island is called *Nordenhafen* by Heldannics and Known Worlders.

*Map of the Peninsula of Alpha*

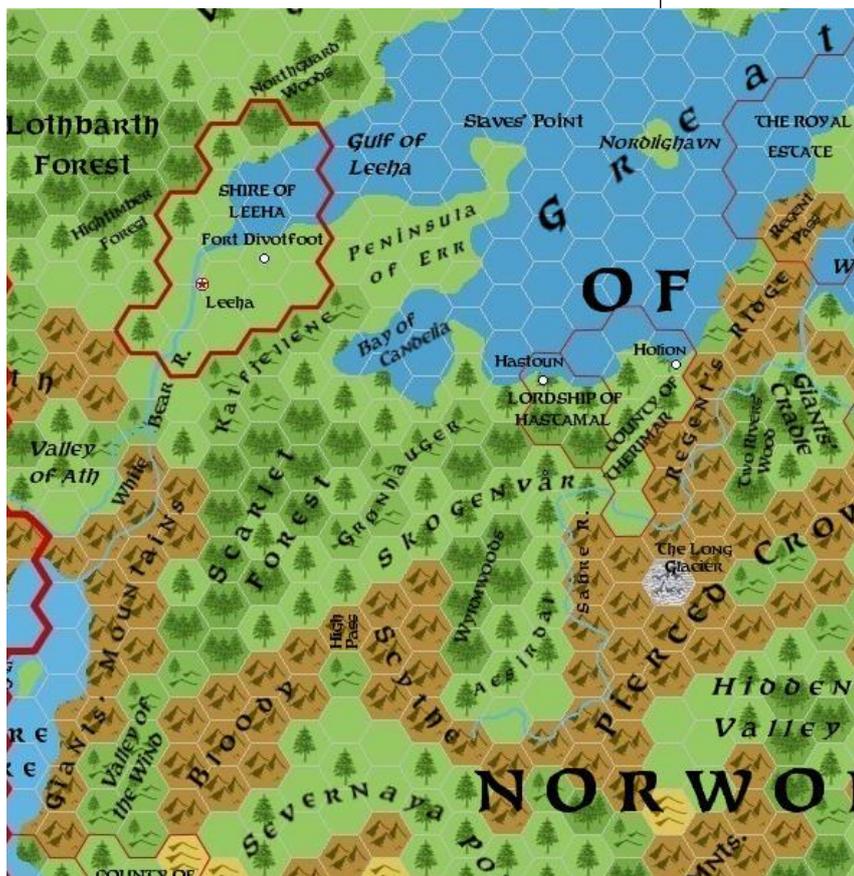
## 9. The Skogenvår, the Scarlet Forest, and the Peninsula of Err

This vast forested region is nearly closed on all sides by mountain ranges and rivers; there, after the ravages of the Great Horde brought on the fall of the Antalian civilization, the Norwolder clans have thrived for centuries, roaming the deep woods of these lush valleys and making this veritable paradise one of the cradles of their culture. Sedentary Norwolder villagers live on the northern shores of this region, while semi-nomadic tribes of their kin dominate the interior. As this area has been colonized by the Alphatians both during Alinor's times and

during the 5<sup>th</sup> century AC, the region is littered with Alphatian ruins.

The north-eastern coast of this region also hosts two rival domains of the Kingdom of Norwold: the County of Therimar, ruled by Count Kerik, one of the surviving Alphatian domains which stretches from the coast to the Sabre River; and the Jarldom of Hastamal, on the coast west of Therimar, ruled by the ruthless Ostlander Asger. The domains' capital towns, Holion and Hastoun, respectively, are the two largest settlements of this area.

The eastern half of this region, from the Sabre River in the east to the **Grønhauger** ("green mounds") - a low line of forest-covered hills, averaging 1,500' in height - is



*Map of the Skogenvår, the Scarlet Forest, and the Peninsula of Err*

called **Skogenvår** ("our woods"), its name likely springing from the ancient time in which the western reaches beyond the hills were still held by the humanoid tribes. It is a large plain area, filled with plant and animal life, ponds, small lakes, rivers, and creeks, which hosts deep woods and large meadows as well. The southern reaches of this region wedges itself between the Pierced Crown and the Bloody Scythe, forming a large valley called the **Aesirdal**, after the Norwolder legends which set there some events of their mythic past. The great forest found in this valley is called the **Wyrnwoods**, and is a dangerous place because of the presence of a ruthless clan of elves who hunt down anyone trespassing across their borders; they are said to be in league with a green dragon who lives in the same woods.

West of the Grønhauger Hills lies the vast and ancient **Scarlet Forest**, which owes its name to the towering red sequoias which make up the bulk of its trees. A scattering of reclusive elven Foresthomes are found in the deepest reaches of this wood, where it is easy to build tree-homes high up on the trees.



*The Sabre River heading toward the Regent's Ridge*

To the north of the Scarlet Forest is found another row of forested hills known as the **Katfjellene**<sup>66</sup> (some scholars say the name means "cats' mountains" after the ancient presence of rakastas in these hills, but this is uncertain because no rakastas at all are to be found here at present). These hills reach a height of 2000' in some points, and are relatively peaceful - were it not for the presence of hill giants and orcs in their southern reaches. In the near past, these creatures, under the leadership of a green dragon, even put Leeha in serious danger. The most interesting, but undiscovered, feature of these hills are the ruins of the ancient capital of Alinor's kingdom, Alpha, a former port city found on the south slopes of the north-eastern part of the range; today the place is almost totally hidden by rubble and by the hillside.

The tongue of land which protrudes east of Leeha is called the **Peninsula of Err** by the native peoples and Caudasteen Peninsula by the halflings, even if the Alphatians insist on calling it Hukenhaal after one of their old domains which was found in this area. The fertile and plain soil of the peninsula make it an ideal place for farming and herding, and many Norwolder villages are found there, among which many halflings are also present. The tip of the peninsula is called Slaves' Point - a forgotten reference to the place where millennia ago the Nithian ships disembarked their halfling slaves brought from the south.

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<sup>66</sup> These hills are called *Catberg* by Heldannics and Known Worlders.

## 10. SEVERNAYA POLOVINA AND THE WYRMSTEETH CORE

The heart of the Wyrksteeth Range is found in this region - a vast, lightly forested valley called the **Severnaya Polovina**, and the ominous mountains to the north and south of it. The Severnaya Polovina (“the northern half”, as opposed to the Ransarn River valley) owes its name to the Vanatic peoples who lived there in the past centuries. Their descendants, the Vrodniki tribes, still roam this region, even if their number has lessened in the last two centuries as a consequence of the increase of draconic activity. The Severnaya Polovina is a highland valley with an average altitude of 3,000 feet,

filled with meadows, grasslands, and small streams. The new Alphatian government has named this region the Four Titans’ Valley, after the four great mountain ranges which mark its borders.

To the north-east the Polovina is connected with the Hidden Valley, while to the south-east a mountain pass called the **King’s Neck** connects to the coastal plain; mount Einsafjall<sup>67</sup> is found in the middle of the Neck. On its eastern end, the Polovina descends gradually to the Vatskiy Rodina.

The Severnaya Polovina’s eastern limit is the majestic range of the **Ironroot Mountains**, the middle section of the Final Range, whose major peaks reach heights of 18,000 feet. The range was one of the centres of the ancient



<sup>67</sup> This mountain peak is called Hochsieger in Heldannic tongue, and Known Worlders use the latter name.

*Map of the Severnaya Polovina and the Wyrksteeth Core*



*The Bloody Scythe, in the Wyrms Tail Range*

giant culture of Norwold, but the Ironroot's mountain giants have decreased in number during the centuries, and those who are left only dwell in the range's highest peaks and on its western slopes. The eastern side of the range, instead, has been settled by a number of dwarven clans, among which the Stormhaven clan is prominent. The dwarves engage in occasional skirmishes against the mountain giants, and are close allies of Oceansend.

South of the Severnaya Polovina sits the imposing massif of the **Wyrms Head Mountains**, which is both part of the Final Range and the core of the Wyrms Teeth Range. This mountain massif, whose many peaks range from 13,000' to 16,000' in height, hosts various glaciers (among which the Great Glacier and the Glacier of Wings are the largest) and a score of caves and lairs in which the majority of the Wyrms Teeth dragons dwell. In the very centre of the massif lies the dragon city of Windreach, which however is nowadays only a pale shadow of the city it was during its days as seat of the Dragon Nation. Windreach is the only place in Norwold where gold dragons are found - even if this is not known to the Norwold people, who think that the gold dragons do not dwell in Norwold altogether.

North of the Severnaya Polovina, another narrow mountain chain belonging to the

Wyrms Tail, the **Bloody Scythe**, is found. The name of the range comes from its shape as well as from the colour that the sky above the range assumes when the volcanoes found in its western reaches are active. Besides dragons, the range is inhabited by tribes of orcs and clans of fire giants, and by a few scattered clans of snow pardastas and lynxmen. The Scythe is almost impassable due to the steepness of its slopes (most of its peaks reach a towering height of 14,000 feet), except for a mountain pass - called the High Pass - in the point where the range is narrower. The pass is infrequently used by the Vrodniki and the Norwolders to the north to trade with one another.<sup>68</sup>

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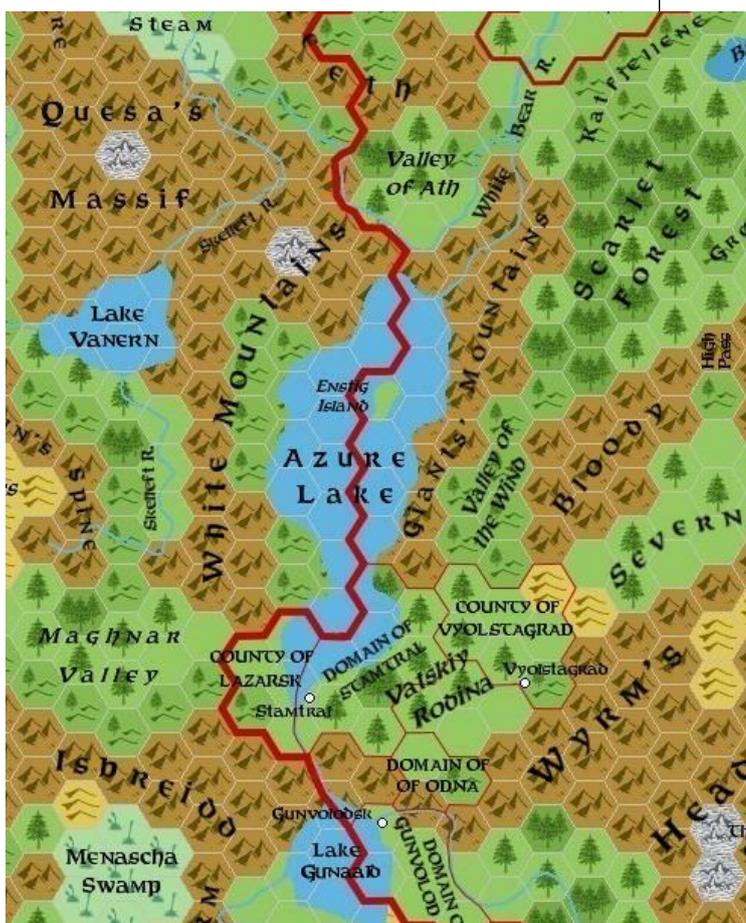
<sup>68</sup> This pass could be the same of the one found in the Two Lakes' Barony, from module CM2 Death's Ride.

## 11. The Azure Lake and the Vatskiy Rodina

The **Azure Lake** is the largest lake of Norwold and one of the largest of Brun as well. Its deep waters are rich with fish, and the lake, thanks to its north-south length, also represents a useful communication route with the Great Bay. The great Ransarn River, coming from Lake Gunaald, flows into the Azure Lake and then connects to the White Bear River, to the north. The hue of the Azure Lake's beautiful waters owes it this name. The small **Enstig Island** lies in the northern half of the lake; it is a place of religious significance for the Norwolders'

traditional religion and a small shrine is found on it.

The lake is surrounded by steep mountain ranges, which makes its cliff-like, rugged shores mostly unsuitable for settlement, apart from the area around the lake's southern tip. To the east rise the **Giants' Mountains**, a comparatively low range (most peaks do not rise over 6,500 feet in height) which has the particularity of being the home of a large number of mountain giant clans. The northernmost tip of the range, topped by the small White Glacier (about 9,500' high) is said to harbour rich, unexploited deposits of gold and precious stones.



*Map of the Azure Lake and the Vatskiy Rodina*



*The northern tip of the Azure Lake, with the Giants' Mountains behind it*

To the east of the Azure Lake are found the **White Mountains**, which are considered the western section of the Icereach Range. The northern massif of the mountains reaches a towering height of 22,590 feet and a large glacier is found beside it. The southern branch of the range is about half the height of the northern massif, and declines less steeply toward the Azure Lake, leaving room for wild wooded hills where strange, crystalline flowers are found in rare spots of the forest.

The **Vatskiy Rodina** ("Vatski homeland") is a large plain valley of woods and meadows, enclosed between the Wyrksteeth Range and the Azure Lake; the region is called Drenan Valley by the Icereachers and the people of the Denagothian Plateau. A wide gap of forested hills between the Giants' Mountains

and the Bloody Scythe called the **Valley of the Wind** connects the Rodina with the Scarlet Forest to the north; the gap is famous for the extremely strong winds and storms which blow through it during the autumn months. The Vatskiy Rodina hosts most of the Vatski principalities, the most important and powerful of which are Vvolstograd, to the north-east, and Stamtral, on the shores of the Azure Lake - their two *knyaz* are bitter rivals and engage in frequent border skirmishes. Other principalities are Odna, near the mountains to the south, and Lazarsk, on the western shores of the Azure Lake. A number of smaller domains ruled by *boyarin* are found between Odna, Vvolstograd, and Stamtral.

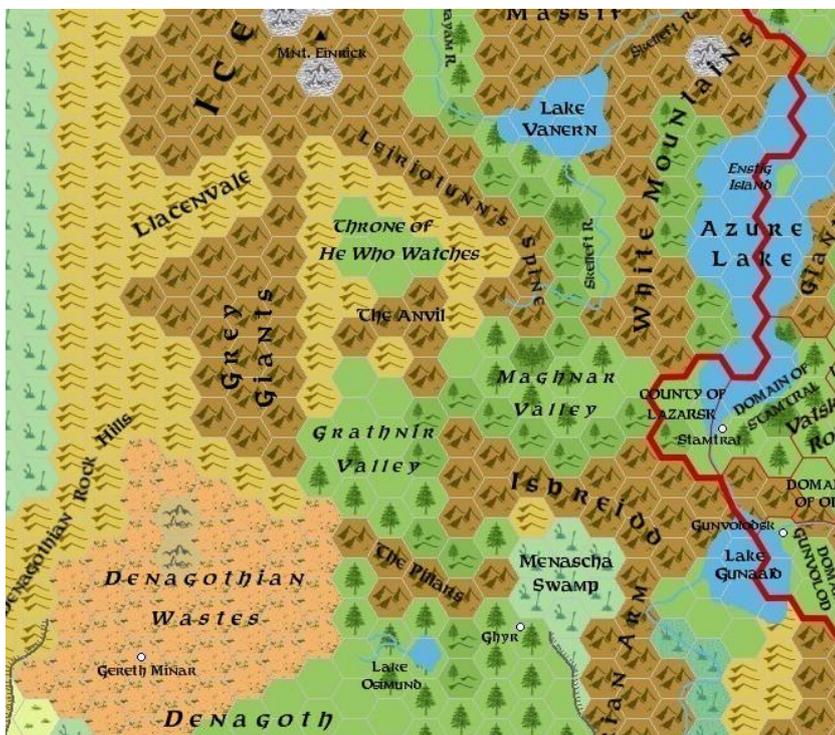
## 12. ENGHERLAND AND the Lower Icereach

**Engherland** is the name commonly given to the three wide valleys which are found at the feet of the southern Icereach Range, due north of the Denagothian Plateau. These valleys sit at a quite high altitude, from the average of 7,000 feet of the Grathnir, to the 8,500 feet of the Throne.

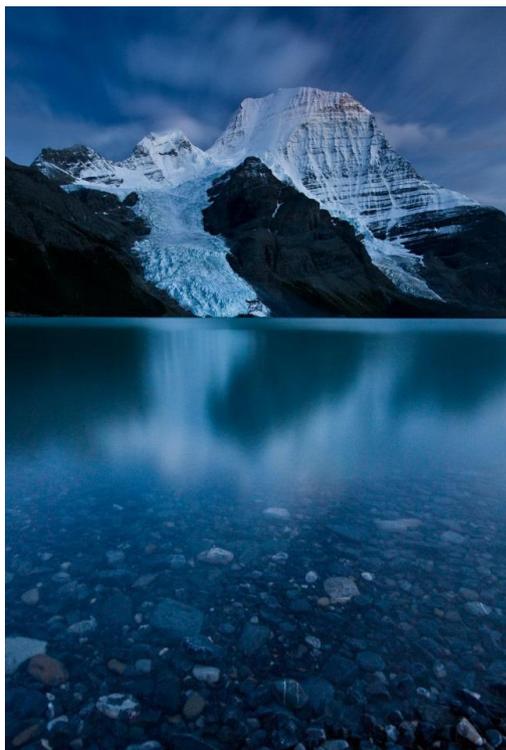
The valleys are the homeland of the semi-nomadic Icereacher clans, called the Engherians in the old Essurian tongue. Being followers of He Who Watches, they are in good standing with the small successor realms of Essuria in the north-eastern corner of the Denagothian Plateau. The rarely used trade route which reaches the domains of the Denagothian Plateau from the Vatskiy Rodina pass through Engherland, and represents a land alternative to the route which goes down the Vinisk River valley.

The **Maghnar Valley** is the easternmost one, bordering the shores of the Azure Lake, where the Vatski principality of Lazarsk is found. The valley gradually descends from an altitude of 7,000 feet to the west up to a mere 2,500 feet in the east. The Maghnar is quite forested, and at least one green dragon is said to dwell in its reaches. To the north a pass high up a steep trail leads to the Skelleft River valley.

South of the Maghnar rise the **Isbreidd**, which are called "Mountains of Ice" by the people of the north-eastern corner of the Denagothian Plateau. These mountains have an average altitude of 10,000 feet and can be considered a continuation of the Essurian Arm range. Frost giants, hobgoblins, and ogres live in the mountains, but also a dwarven clan, the Takkras, have made their home in the slopes which border Lake Gunaald, to the east.



*Map of Engherland and the Lower Icereach*



*View of the Isbreidd from Lake Gunaald*

**Throne of He Who Watches**, to the north-west, is an elevated table plane with an altitude of 8,500 feet, which can be rightfully considered part of the Icereach Range itself. It is a place devoid of most trees, and it is the place where He Who Watches is believed by the Icereachers to sit and observe the lands to the south; as such, it is a sacred and taboo place to them, where only the most sacred or questing people are allowed to climb. The Throne is separated from the Grathnir and Maghnar valleys by a huge, flat-topped mountain called **The Anvil** which reaches 9,500 feet of altitude.

The **Grathnir Valley** is the southern one, where most Icereacher clans and villages are found. The tribes of the Denagothian Wastes and the ogre clans who live on the border between the Grathnir and the plateau often engage in skirmish and raids against the

T h e

Icereachers, and are paid back in turn with the same money.

A huge mountain massif called the **Grey Giants**, which has an average of 13,000 feet of altitude (with peaks towering up to 20,000'), represents the impassable western border of the Throne and of the Grathnir. The name of these mountains - which represent the southern branch of the Icereach Range - derives from their rocky bareness and lack of trees, which only cover their south-eastern lower slopes. Glaciers, where white dragons are said to dwell, are found below the tops of the Grey Giants, and hill giants inhabit the western side of the mountains.

The low range called **the Pillars**, which rises to 9,500 feet, forms the border between the Denagothian Plateau and the Golthan Valley; apart from some bare rocky crags, the Pillars features many mountain passes which enable relatively easy contact between the southern domains and the Icereachers. A forested valley runs in east-west direction between the Isbreidd to the north and the Pillars to the south, reaching the dangerous **Menascha Swamp** - a foggy marsh inhabited by troglodytes and fierce trolls whom the southern folks simply call "the Mist".

South of the Pillars and of the Menascha Swamp are found the petty realms and domains which descend from the old Essurian settlements in this region of the plateau, foremost of whom is the Kingdom of Ghyr. These realms, however, are considered part of the Denagothian Plateau and not of Norwold.

### 13. The Ice Wall and Quesa's Massif

This region represents the true heart of the Icereach Range and the place where Norwold's most majestic and highest mountains are found. To the west, the highest point of the range is the **Ice Wall**, a huge mountain massif with an average altitude of 16,000' and whose major peaks reach even beyond 24,000 feet of height. One of its most famous peaks, if not the highest, is Mount Einrick (alt. 21,050'). Huge glaciers are found in this range's valleys, where white dragons are known to dwell. The slopes between the range's major ridges are the home of many clans of frost,

mountain, and fire giants, who frequently clash against one another; the giants, however, mostly haunt the western slopes of the range, so their presence is felt not that much by the Icereachers. On the other hand, many snow pardasta clans live on the mountains' eastern slopes.

East of the Ice Wall is another large massif of the range, **Quesa's Massif**, which averages 14,000 feet of altitude, with its highest point rising up to 24,000'. In the middle of this massif's ridges lies a vast glacier, where the entrance of the infamous Ice Cave is found. Sasquatches, frost giants, white dragons, and other cold-loving creatures haunt the surroundings of the place. The Ice Cave is a sprawling underground dungeon made of ice



*Map of the Ice Wall and Quesa's Massif*



*Mount Einrick in the Ice Wall*

and rock, which descends into the bellows of the mountain. It was once the seat of power of the Witch-Queen Akra; the Ice Witch kept here all her secret lore, her artefacts, and her treasures. The Ice Cave was also the lair of Akra's ally, the huge white dragon Quesa. When the Witch-Queen was destroyed, Quesa's soul was bound by the Cronos of Crystykk to a gemstone hidden in the mountain's depths; the beast could not go out of the cave and too much away from the stone, lest the tie between his soul and body would break, and the dragon would die. The stone has never been found - despite all attempts by Quesa to locate it. Despite this, the dweomer that binds the dragon to the Ice Cave has weakened during the centuries, allowing Quesa to leave the place for short times and at short distance. This was enough for him to establish a reign of terror over the surrounding Icereacher tribes, who fear him and bring the dragon treasures and sacrifices to appease his wrath. Quesa is likely one of the oldest white dragons of the world, with an age of about a thousand years; he is bitter at his failure to become an immortal dragon guardian, and blames the Cronos of Crystykk for this. He is resigned to the fact that he is

now too old to achieve immortality, but still dreams of one day enacting his revenge on the Cronos.

The Ice Wall and Quesa's Massif are separated by the sparsely-wooded **Timayam River** valley, through which runs the frigid course of one of Norwold's major rivers, which empties in the large **Lake Vanern**, a cold mountain lake nested between the surrounding mountain colossi. The towering slopes of Quesa's Massif and of the White Mountains appears as gigantic stone cliffs as they dive into the lake's waters, which are dark and deep (in fact, the locals call it the "Black Lake"). From the south, the **Skelleft River** also feeds Lake Vanern, then continues its course beyond it though a narrow gorge between the Quesa's Massif and the White Mountains, to reach the White Bear River to the north. The high altitude and inclination of these rivers make them impossible to navigate in an upriver direction.

The Timayam and Skelleft rivers' valleys have an altitude which ranges from 9,000' to 7,000'. Icereacher tribes live in this mountainous and cold place, fending off dragon attacks or submitting to Quesa's might. They are more backward than their cousins to the south, and favour their traditional patrons over He Who Watches. The narrow mountain chain which divides the Throne of He Who Watches to the southwest from the Skelleft valley is called the **Leirjotunn's Spine** and averages 10,000 feet in height.

## 14. The White Bear Valley and the Arch of Fire

The **White Bear River** is one of the widest rivers of Norwold, with its shores being even two miles apart in some points. It forms a veritable barrier between the Icereach Range and the lands to the east. The river's valley runs north-westward up to the Great Circle, where the river has its spring, and it is a good trade route between the Viaskoda tribes of the north-western valleys and the halflings of Leeha. In the course of the centuries, the halflings have established a number of semi-permanent camps along the river's course to supply the boaters who trade with the

Viaskodas and beyond, and secure the trade route. The valley is also the place where ruins dating back to the realm of Alinor can be found.

The lowlands north-east of the White Mountains are called the **Valley of Ath**, and are the westernmost place where the Norwolder semi-nomadic tribes are found. North-west of the valley, the White Banner Viaskodas' territory begins. Beyond the valley is found an area of marshes, called the **Swamp of Steam**, near the point where the Skelleft River joins the White Bear River; the marshes' name is due to the mists which often loom over the area due to the effects of the nearby Arch of Fire's lava flows or



*Map of the White Bear Valley and the Arch of Fire*



*Winter landscape in the Jagged Teeth*

underground lava deposits. North of the swamp, the river's valley continues into the proper territory of the Viaskodas, which is rich in forests and woods.

The main feature of this region is of course the northernmost tip of the Ice reach Range, called the **Arch of Fire**. In this barren stretch of the mountains, two large volcanoes standing 75 miles apart are found; one of them is a gate to the Plane of Fire, the other is a gate from it. Fire elemental matter flows continuously from the mouth of one volcano to another's, forming a breath-taking "arch of fire", 300-feet wide and which reaches a height of 6 miles, visible from about 70 miles away during daylight hours. The land between the two volcanoes is a wasteland filled with rivers of lava, lakes of fire, and many cave complexes. Fire giants, red dragons, and many fire-loving creatures live

in this area; its most fearsome residents are however the fire elemental creatures who have arrived from the Plane of Fire.

A long and narrow mountain range called the **Jagged Teeth**, which reaches 9,000' in height, marks the eastern border of the White Bear River's valley. The range is inhabited by orc, goblin, and hobgoblin tribes, a few mountain giants, and a red dragon. A famous peak of the range is the mountain called **Tokoramses' Watch**, the spot whence the Nithian (Thothian) Pharaoh Tokoramses V is said to have admired the Arch of Fire after a lengthy pilgrimage from the southern lands.

## 15. Leeshashire, the Lothbarth, and the Western Viaskaland

This area includes two of the most important demihuman realms of the whole of Norwold. **Leeshashire**, to the south-east, is the realm of the Norwold halflings. The shire's heart is the town of Leeha, where the representatives of the eight halfling communities of the region - Leeha itself, Highticket, Merrybrook, Nimbleville, Fort Divotfoot, Goodfield, Grassy Knoll, and Port Hinly - gather to set things of common interest to the shire as a whole; a sheriff, at present time the halfling named Collin, manages the day-to-day rule of the shire. The halflings are the main

economic power of this part of Norwold, and carefully control passage along the White Bear River, imposing duties on outsider traders. The town of Leeha, as a side note, is also famous for its many fine inns. The shire's countryside is a mix of fertile and well-tended fields on the southern and eastern reaches, and of woods and forests on the western and northern ones. The halflings are friendly toward foreigners and humans, but want to be left in peace.

West of Leeshashire, some villages of settled Norwolders devoted to farming and mining are found. North of them the fields give way to the great **Lothbarth Forest**, which represents somewhat the border between southern and northern Norwold. The forest



*Map of Leeshashire, the Lothbarth, and the Western Viaskaland*

is a large expanse of old and young trees, whose heart always seems to enjoy a state of perpetual spring - leaves are always green and healthy, flowers blossoms impervious to the winter weather, and so on. This eternal spring effect is the consequence of the blessings of the Immortal Lornasen, who watches over the many elven Foresthomes who are found in the forest. The Lothbarth Forest is considered by the Norwold elves the very heart of their culture in this region as well as of the worship of Immortal Ilsundal. The halflings of Leeha, instead, differentiate the outlying areas of the Lothbarth nearer to their holdings between the **Hightimber Forest**, to the south, and the **Northguard Woods**, to the north.

North of the Lothbarth lies a wide, sparsely-forested plain, interspersed with broken terrain patches, low rocky crags, and ridges, which is called the **Crumpled Lands**. This area is the home of the Red Banner Viaskodas, which stretches further to the

east. The whole region represents the western half of **Viaskaland** (which is called Gharr Thenal by the Viaskodas themselves), the homeland of the semi-nomadic Viaskoda tribes which seasonally migrate from the coastal villages where they anchor their ships to the northern grasslands where they follow the animal herds which provide them food and resources. Centaur tribes are also found in this region.

To the north-west, this region's border is made up by the **Jotunheimr Hills**, a narrow row of low, rugged hills which reach heights of 750'-1,000' on average. The hills are infamous for the presence of giant clans, as well as for a great number of orcs, bugbear, and troll tribes, which represent a continuous threat both to the Viaskodas, to the elves, and to the Vaarana to the north. An area of highland plains connects the Jotunheimr Hills to the Jagged Teeth in the south-west.



*The wide estuary of the White Bear River*

## 16. The Noskumis Plain and the Eastern Viaskaland

This vast region of plains and grasslands stretches from the Jotunheimr Hills to the west up to Littonia in the east. It is divided in two great cultural areas.

To the south-west the eastern half of **Viaskaland** (Gharr Thenal for the Viaskodas) is found. This area is inhabited by the nomadic tribes of the Azure Banner Viaskodas, who roam in the grasslands between the Landrise to the south-east to the taiga forests of Koleamaa to the north-west, following their horse and cattle herds and shunning the sea, as opposite to their Red Banner kin to the south-west. Many centaur tribes live in this region as well.

To the north-east the Noskumis Plain is found, a place of high grasses and beautiful

summer flowers, where the Viaskodas' domain is challenged by wandering goblin and troll tribes, and by occasional, independent Littonian homesteaders. The Noskumis Plain is also dotted with ruins tracing back to a variety of ages - from the nearly-mythic past of Nordenheim to the more recent, but still centuries-old, remnants of the Littonian dominion in these lands.

The plains in the north-western reach of this region are known to the Kaarjalans as **Tuonela** (the "land of the dead"). It is an area of mires and half-frozen bogs, with sparse stands of sick or dead trees, where animal life is scarce or lacking, everything has a sickly appearance, the air has the pall of decay, and sunlight penetrates with much difficulty. Tuonela is quite colder than the surrounding areas. Unknown to all, it is the haunt of the dread undead sorceress called the Rimal Hag.



*Map of the Noskumis Plain and the Eastern Viaskaland*

## 17. The Ljallenvals and the Landrise

The south-eastern stretch of the lands north of the Great Bay rises gradually up to 750'-1,200' over the grasslands of Viaskaland, to form a plateau-like region known as the **Landrise**, which then fall more steeply toward the coastline to the south. The western and southern reaches of the Landrise are forested, while in the rest clear terrain is prevalent; the plain area between the Landrise's fringes and the Ljallenvals Mountains to the south-east is called **Thenak**, while the grasslands further to the northeast are the **Sarkans Plain** (the "red plain"), whose name comes from the bloody battles among the Littonians and the goblins

which took place there. Since those battles, the Sarkans goblins who still live there have become good neighbours of the Littonians, trading with them and providing valuable military aid in time of war.

The region has historically been settled by people of Littonian descent, at times dominated by the Kingdom of Littonia itself, more recently left to take care of themselves due to the realm's declining military power. Villages and hamlets are scattered here and there, and a few elven Foresthomes are found in the western tip of the Landrise.

In the forested hill coast west of the mountains one of the newest domains of the Kingdom of Norwold, the County of Draken, is found. It is a place where Alphatian settlers have mixed with the Littonian natives, ruled



Map of the Ljallenvals and the Landrise



*Sight of the Ljallenvals Mountains from the Sarkans Plain*

by Count Beriak Alanira, a powerful magic-user who also holds the charge of governor for the whole eastern half of the Great Bay.

The south-eastern reaches of the Landrise feature a rocky and rugged chain called the **Ljallenvals Mountains**, which are the home of many orc and troll tribes, sasquatch clans, and even frost giant bands. The Ljallenvals reach heights of 11,000 feet and are said to be rich in untapped mineral resources. Many thunderstorms form above the peaks in the summer months, as well as in the Vētra Hills to the north. Here is also found the hideout of the Ice Witch Frota, who attempted to subjugate Norwold more than one century ago while possessed by the ancient Witch-Queen Akra's spirit, and was defeated. Frota, freed from Akra's control, increased her powers in the last decades, beat the local humanoids into submission, and had them build a sprawling underground complex inside the mountainside called the Ice Tomb. She is now refining the details of her plan to finally bring the whole of Norwold under her heel.

The forested tongue of land east of the Ljallenvals is known as **the Helm**, culminating in its easternmost tip of Closed Cape. Few Littonian homesteaders live in this area.

Two islands of note are found along the Landrise's southern coastline. The westernmost one is **Todstein Island**, a small plain isle where one of the Alphatian lords of the 9<sup>th</sup> century AC, a necromancer named Meredoth, has set his domain. Meredoth disappeared during the Long Winter soon after the dominion's establishment, but some of the worst results of the necromancer's studies are still said to dwell on the island, which is wisely shunned by the natives. The larger **Bergholm Isle**, south of the Ljallenvals, is a barren chunk of rock protruding from the sea. Only sparse fishermen villages are found on the island, which is nevertheless strategically located to block the entrance of the Great Bay.

## 18. Littonia and Itämaa

The eastern coastal region north of the Great Bay is the homeland of the Littonian peoples, and the seat of their modern realm, the small Kingdom of Littonia, whose throne is currently occupied by King Uldis VI. In local usage, “**Littonia**” refers to the area encompassed within the kingdom’s borders - the Littonian culture’s heartland - while natives use the term “Greater Littonia” for the larger area sparsely inhabited by Littonian peoples over which their kings have had a traditional claim, but no control. Greater Littonia includes the Landrise and

the Helm, as well as the Noskumis Plain and even parts of Itämaa and Kaarjala.

Littonia proper is located beyond the easternmost end of the Landrise, where the highlands decline toward the sea. The country lies north of the **Gaudava River**, which flows from the Ljallenvals’ foothills to the sea. A low, crescent-shaped line of hills named **Namejs’ Line** in the south and **Lietuvan Hills** in the north marks the western border of Littonia; these hills’ altitude ranges from 1,100 feet in the south to 700 feet in the north. The land between the hills and the sea features many forests and plains: here the bulk of the Littonian and



*Map of Littonia and Itämaa*



*Sheep grazing on Itämaa coast*

Lietuvan peoples dwell. Many large villages dot the countryside and the coast, but only two settlements - the capital city of Gaudavpils, and the nearby Rezevpils - rank as true towns. The coast of Littonia is also called the **Green Coast** after its verdant forests.

The northern end of Littonia is marked by the **Teici Bog**, a small area of ponds, streams, swamps, and marshes which is covered by abundant snowfall during winter. The bog is said to be haunted by the ghost of an ancient Littonian queen who consorted with evil spirits and was punished by the Immortals because of that.

Further north on the coast lies the region known as **Itämaa** ("east land" in Saamari tongue), where settlers from Kaarjala, Littonia, and even Qeodhar have tried to colonize in the past, with mixed success. The region is often hit by heavy downpours as it lies in the transitional zone between the microclimate generated by Kaarjala's *Great Saampo*, the subarctic and the tundra

climates. Sparse hamlets and tiny villages are found in this area, independent from other realms but ready to join their weak forces in case of outside threat. Itämaa also features the large mouth of the **Landsplit River** (known to the Kaarjalans as the Maanselkä), which marks the border between the lands claimed by the Kingdom of Norwold and the northern tundra. The very wide river course allows small ships and boats to go through it upriver, and to reach the heart of the Kingdom of Kaarjala to trade.

## 19. The Autuasmaa Plain

The subarctic region north of the Great Bay is separated by the arctic tundra by the river system made up by the large Landsplit River to the south, and by the **Tukkijoki**, a river which runs parallel to the north of it before joining the Landsplit in its final rush for the Alphantian Sea. The two rivers - along a myriad of minor ones - feed the three large lakes of the north: **Hämärjärvi**, located near the western border of Kaarjala, **Isojärvi**, the coldest one due to the proximity of Tuonela, and **Pohjanjärvi**, rich in fish and hosting a unique species of seals.

The vast region between the two main rivers is called the **Autuasmaa Plain** that includes swamps, woods, grasslands, and tillable fields which are among the most fertile ones

of the north. The Autuasmaa Plain and vicinities also enjoys a milder climate than the surrounding regions due to the powers of the artefact known as the *Great Saampo*, a huge magical windmill located in the town of Kaarja, a gift of the Saamari's Immortal patron. The plain is filled with a huge number (more than a thousand) of small and tiny lakes and ponds, which makes it a veritable "land of lakes".

The Autuasmaa ("land of bliss" in Saamari tongue) is the home of the Saamari people and it is controlled by their realm, the Kingdom of Kaarjala. Scattered villages and hamlets dot the whole stretch of the plain, with only one true town, the capital of Kaarja, located near the eastern shores of the Hämärjärvi; there, King Kaarlo Taavinen has his seat of power.



Map of the Autuasmaa Plain



*Lake Isojärvi, Kaarjala*

The immediate region to the north of the Tukkiyoki, while under the influence of the *Saampo*, is not completely controlled by the Kaarjalans and is a disputed land where Shonak and tundra humanoid tribes make frequent forays. Instead, the areas claimed by the Kingdom of Kaarjala south of the Landsplit River - mostly around Hämäräjärvi and Isojärvi - are claimed by the Kingdom of Norwold as well, which acknowledges the Landsplit River as its northern border. The remoteness of this region from Alpha has contributed toward avoiding the sparking of conflicts over it.

## 20. KOLEAMAA AND LÄNSIMAA

This vast region of taiga, plains, and swamps is inhabited by the Vaarana semi-nomadic tribes who are related and allied with the Kingdom of Kaarjala. Humanoids from the Jounheimr Hills, from the Everwinter Lands, and from the Winter Peaks often foray into this region and clash with the native folks.

The area found between the Jotunheimr Hills and the Autuasmaa Plain is called **Koleamaa** ("bleak land") by the Kaarjalans, due to its cold climate which falls outside the milding effects of the *Great Saampo*; the Viaskodas call this region the Rith'Them. Koleamaa is a wide expanse of taiga-type forest broken by large stretches of grassy plains. Many swamps and marshes are scattered in the northern part of this land, where many migratory animals dwell. While the end of the taiga to the south-east, where the grasslands begin, is considered the boundary between the Vaarana's and the Azure Banner Viaskodas' lands, the latter often push beyond the forest's limit, which is the cause of skirmishes between the two peoples.



*The Koleamaa taiga with the Karelides in the background*

Some people consider the course of the **Sinijoki** to be the north-western boundary of Koleamaa, while others insist the border coincides with the **Raatovaarat Mountains**, actually a low line of hills about 1,100' high on average, which runs from the Hämäräjärvi toward the Karelides in the south-west. The highest point of the range is found in its south-western reaches, and reaches an altitude of 2,700'. The hills are famous for their ruggedness and for being carved by a huge number of underground caves.

Beyond the Raatovaarat Mountains the taiga and the plains continue to the north-west in a region called **Länsimaa** ("west land"), closed between the Winter Peaks, the Frozen Moors, the **Roaring River**, and the Raatovaarat. Plains of low grasses prevail over the taiga in this region, which is much more exposed than Koleamaa to the humanoid raids coming from the north and the west, as well as to frost giant forays from Frosthaven.



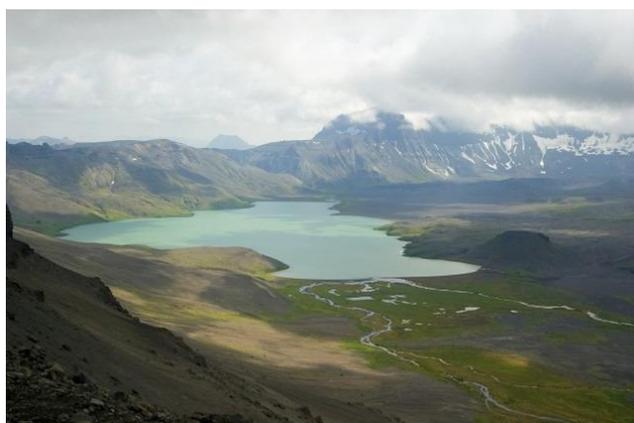
Map of Koleamaa and Länsimaa

The Jotunheimr Hills and the Raatovaarat Mountains are joined by a ridge of hills called the **Pallastunturi Hills**, which give way to a plateau-like region called the **Plain of Skulls**. This highland steppe has an altitude of about 1,000' and is limited to the west by the huge mass of the Karelides. The plain is littered with an incredible score of half-buried bones dating back to a variety of ages, from the most recent to the prehistoric ones; while the peoples to the east think that most of the bones are the remnants of the deceased in the Battle of the Skulls (AC 640), many bones - especially colossal or giant bones belonging to unknown animals or monsters - come from a much older age. Ghosts and solitary undead are said to haunt this place, and no other creatures call it home; small bands of humanoid or White Banner Viaskodas rarely cross the Plain of Skulls at their own risk. Besides, one of the latter's customs is to leave people sentenced for serious crimes or offenses tied to one of the giant bones of the Plain of Skulls - usually, the victim ends up becoming an addition to the place's already-abundant score of bones.

## 21. The Great Circle, the Ostma and Natoka Valleys

This region is made up by three huge valleys which separate the southern Icereach Range from the northern Borean Range. The valleys were likely created by a number of devastating meteor-falls that happened during the prehistoric age.

The largest and southernmost of the three valleys is called **the Great Circle**. The proper Great Circle is the western two-thirds of it, a land of plains, rocky hills, and broken lands, on the west, and of woods and forests to the east. The Circle is surrounded on the north and west sides by the **Thundering Peaks**, which have an average altitude of 11,000 feet and include a very few active volcanoes; the mountains are frequently hit by thunderstorms; a marshy area is found on the western side of the peaks, beyond which giants and ferocious humanoids dwell. To the south, the Circle is limited by the Ice Wall and the Arch of Fire. In the middle of the western part of the Great Circle rises the lonely **Mountain of Steel** (alt. 5,224'), the place where the White Banner Viaskodas



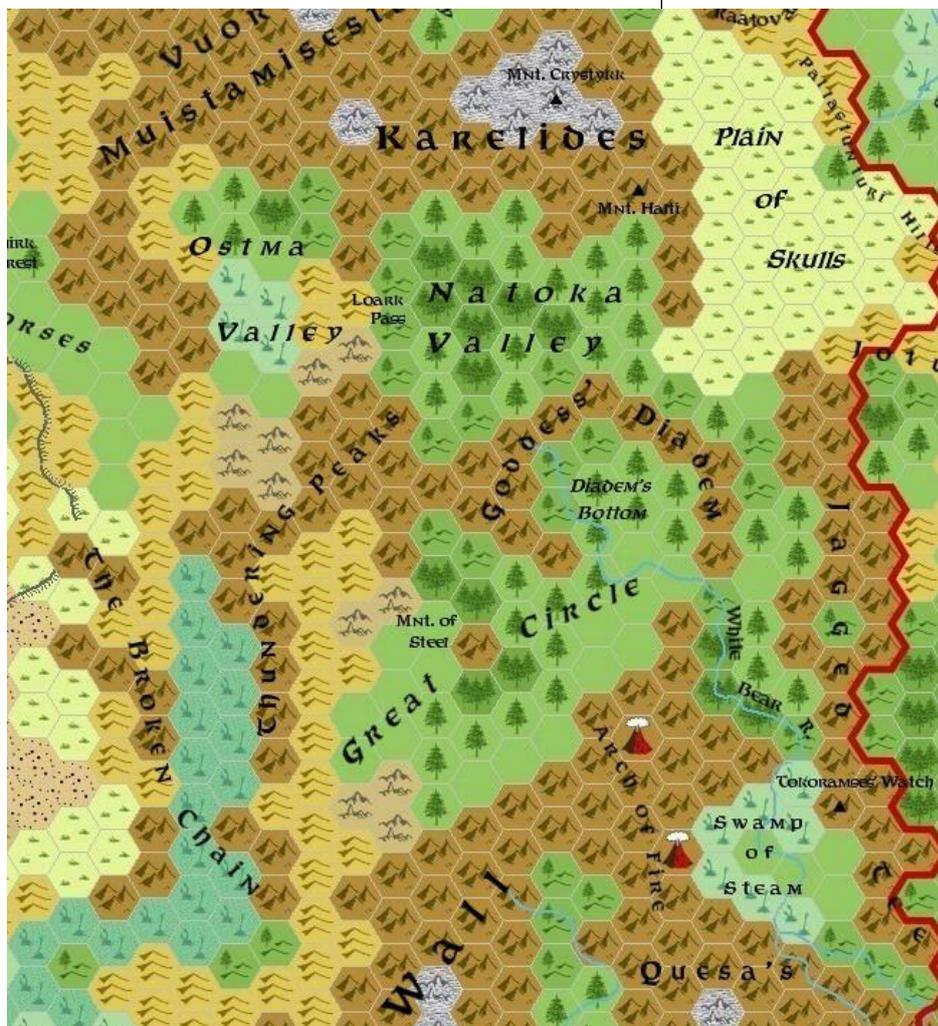
*A lake in the western Great Circle, under the Thundering Peaks*

think their mythological heroes received their weapons from the Immortals. The north-western third of the Great Circle is encircled by a narrow, crescent-shaped mountain ridge called the **Goddess' Diadem**, which has an average altitude of 7,000 feet. The forested valley which lies inside the ridge is simply called the **Diadem's Bottom**, or the Diadem Woods; it is crossed by the course of the White Bear River, which springs from the Goddess' Diadem and flows south-eastward.

Both the parts of the Great Circle were the theatre of the ancient colonization attempt led by Prince Alinor many centuries ago, and

are still littered with ruins dating back to that age; even if most of them have been plundered during the centuries, some might still harbour some magical marvel - weapons, spells, items, constructs. In fact, the broken lands around the Circle (as well as the Broken Chain more to the west) are said to have been caused by the earthquakes following the destruction of the Kingdom of Alpha.

In the Goddess' Diadem's centre, on a low mountain pass, is found the town of Sherselh'ama, the seat of the Najnartas' queen and an unusual sight in this remote region of Norwold. The settlement is built over an old



*Map of the Great Circle, the Ostma and Natoka Valleys*

Alphian ruin in a relatively elegant style - considering the place and the availability of materials. The queen's palace is especially beautiful - in fact, unknown to all, it is a magical flying castle which has laid there inactive since the time of Alinor.

In the uppermost point where the White Bear River is still navigable, the Leehan halfling traders have set up Camp Bravefoot, which marks the north-western limit of their trade influence. The trade route, called the Leehan Trail, continues to the south-west through the Great Circle, and beyond the Thundering Peaks and the Broken Chain, reaching the realms of Borea - but this part of the route is very long and dangerous, and used infrequently and only by the bravest adventurers and merchants.

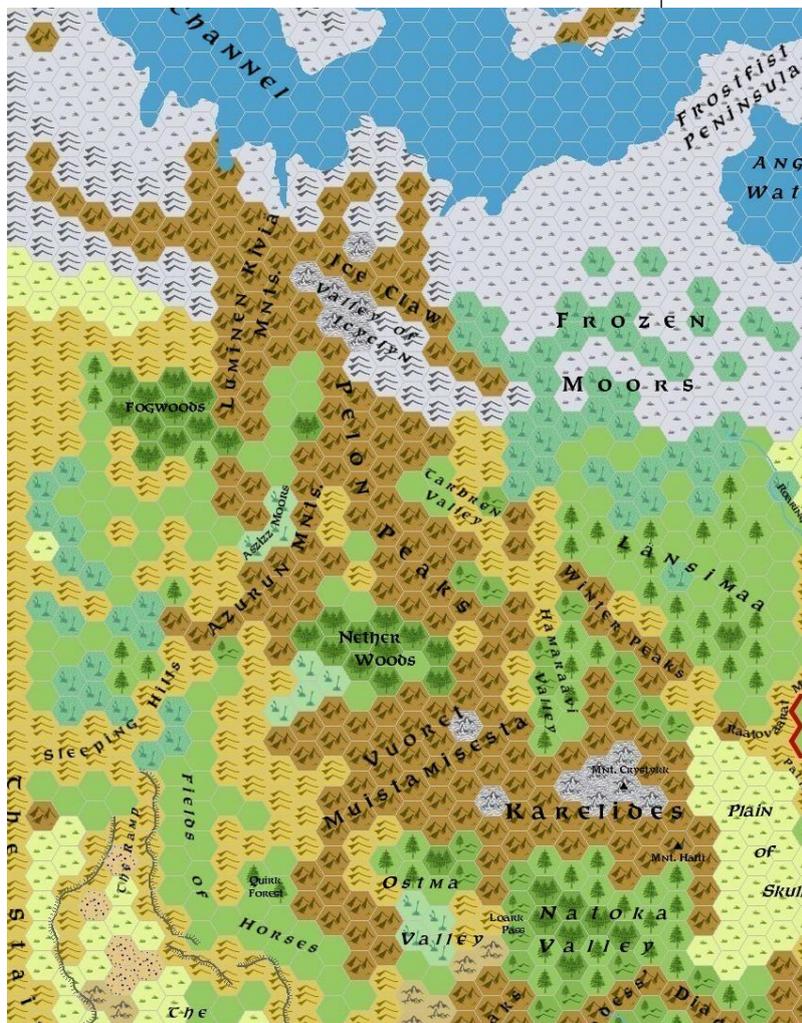
Through a forested valley sandwiched between the Goddess' Diadem and the Jagged Teeth, the White Bear's valley is linked with the large **Natoka Valley** to the north, which lies at the feet of the towering Karelides Mountains and is very heavily forested, with many streams running through it and blessing the valley with plentiful water and ponds. Through a pass opened by a crumbled mountain, called Loark Pass, the Natoka Valley is linked to the smaller **Ostma Valley**, to the west. This highland valley is a place of forests, swamps, meadows, and broken terrain, which gradually descends toward the western plain; the Ostma sees often skirmishes between the White Banner Viaskodas who dwell in the Natoka, and the clans of giants and humanoids - among which there is even a tribe of minotaurs - which dwell beyond the western side of the valley.

Both the Natoka and the eastern Great Circle - as well as the valley which links them on the east - are the home of the White Banner Viaskodas, whose semi-nomadic clans build forest and river villages, and are as adept at trading with the halflings as they are in fighting back the nearby humanoids and the denizens of the Arch of Fire. The Viaskodas do not venture west of the Mountain of Steel or Loark Pass, though. The clans who live near the Goddess' Diadem, moreover, are heavily influenced by the advanced Najnartas of Sher-selh'ama.

## 22. The Borean Range

The Borean Range makes up the north-western border of Norwold and a nearly impassable barrier set between it and Borea, to the west. Separated by the huge valleys of the Great Circle, Ostma, and Natoka from the southern Icereach Range, the Borean Range is also the largest and less known of the mountain chains of Norwold. What is known, though, is that this range is the home of a great number of Snow pardasta clans, and tribes of savage bugbears, ogres, and kobolds are found there as well.

The southern massif of the range is also the largest and highest of it all; it is further subdivided into one western and one eastern bloc. The eastern one is called the **Karelides** and looms over the Plain of Skulls to the east; the massif has an impressive average height of 13,000 feet, and its two highest peaks are Mount Halti (alt. 19,800'), in the south-eastern ridge, and Mount Crystykk (alt. 25,506'), the highest mountain of Norwold, both of which rise above large glaciers. The one of Mount Crystykk is a sprawling mass of ice and frozen snow which spans over much of the centre of the Karelides, and happens



*Map of the Borean Range*

to be the largest glacier of the whole of Norwold. Mount Crystykk also owes its fame to the mysterious seers called the Three Cronos of Crystykk, who call a large ice cavern inside the mountain's bowels their home. The western half of the southern massif is called the **Vuoret Muistamisesta** ("mountains of remembrance") by the Kaarjalans, because these mountains marked their history - the Saamari passed north of it during their flight toward the Autuasmaa Plain, and centuries afterwards the Vaarana passed south of it in their migration toward Kaarjala. These mountains are much lower than the Karelides, averaging 7,500 feet in height; apart from at least one dragon and some snow pardasta tribes, the Vuoret Muistamisesta are not the home of other intelligent creatures, even if a huge number of mountain animals and monsters live there.

North of the Vuoret Muistamisesta the Borean Range continues with a wide ridge running toward the north-west, called the **Pelon Peaks**, a chain averaging 8,500 feet in height, which features some much higher mountains, in its northern end especially. A branch of the Pelon Peaks called the **Azurun Mountains** turns westward, forming a large valley into which the **Nether Woods** are nested; this dense taiga forest hosted for some years the Saamari during their migration from Isanmaa to the Autuasmaa Plain, centuries ago. North-west of the Azurun Mountains is said to lay the realm of the ice-skating northern gnomes, centred over a great forest called the Fogwoods.

The northernmost ridge of the Borean Range is called the **Luminen Kiviä Mountains** ("snowy rocks"), which are relatively low if compared to other mountain ranges of Norwold, ranging from 5,500' to 8,500' in



*The Valley of Icyclyn*

height. The many valleys of this chain are the home of various different cold creatures, including sasquatches, snow pardastas, white dragons, and frost giants. A narrow and jagged mountain chain protrudes from the Luminen Kiviä eastward, and is called the **Ice Claw**. Between it, the Luminen Kiviä, and the Pelon lies a very long and wide valley, with a huge glacier at its north-western end - it is the **Valley of Icyclyn**, which owes its name to the very old huge white dragon who lives there.

North-east of the Karelides a lesser mountain range called the **Winter Peaks** (or Raanivaara Mountains by the Kaarjalans), connected to the Raatovaarat Mountains to the south-east and to the great mountains of the Borean Range. The peaks average 12,000' in height and are the home of many hostile hobgoblins, goblins, and trolls. Clustered between the Winter Peaks and the Borean Range are two great valleys: the southernmost one is called **Hamaraavi Valley**, while the one further to the north-west is called **Tarbren Valley**.

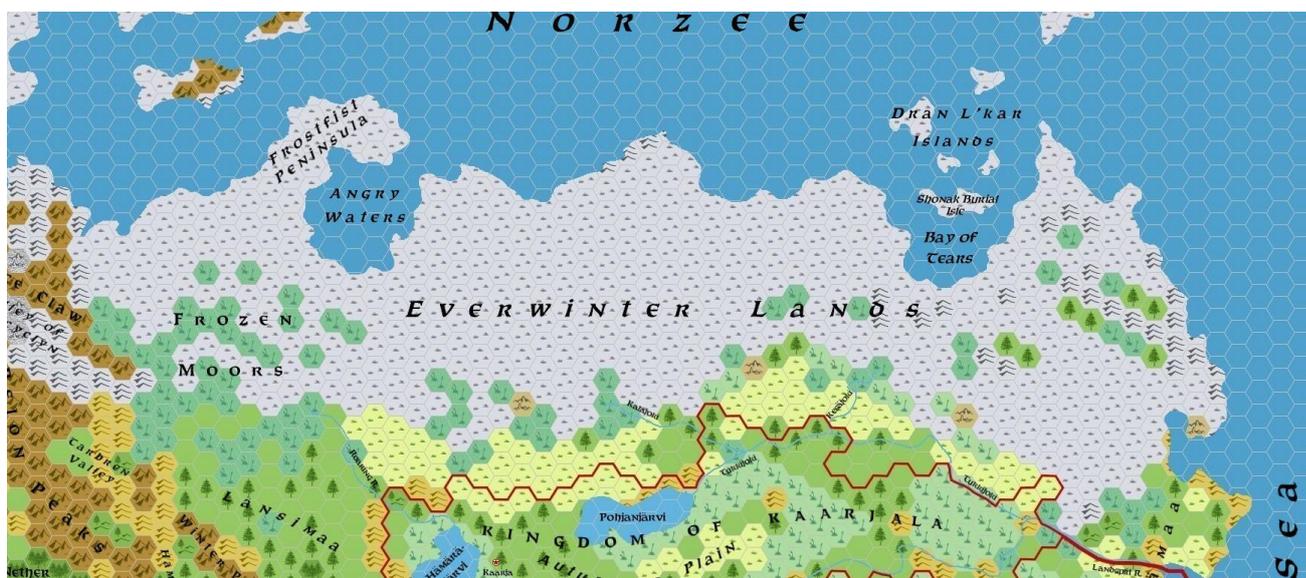
## 23. The Everwinter Lands

**Everwinter Lands** is the name that indicates the vast tundra country which extends in the extreme north, between Norzee to the north and Länsimaa, the Autuasmaa Plain, and Itamaa to the south. The Kaarjalans call this region Pohjola ("land of the north"). It is a desolate set of tundra and rock outcroppings, almost completely turned into a frozen snowfield during winter. The region experiences extended polar nights with total darkness during the winter months, with the southern areas affected by a twilight condition during most of this time, with only a few days of complete night.

The Everwinter Lands are the home of the nomadic Shonak human tribes, who have to contend for the few resources of this region with other hostile neighbours - humanoids of various species (orcs, goblins, bugbears, trolls), the Norwold malamute and foxfolk lupins, the lynxman rakastas, and the frost

giants of Frosthaven. Many creatures which love the freezing climate of the tundra also dwell here, and mysterious remains of ancient civilizations are said to lay buried under the tundra's carpet.

The unforgiving climate of the Everwinter Lands is made more tolerable in a couple of spots in the region's eastern reaches, where hot springs come out of the soil, allowing the growth of some more plants and trees in the surroundings. In the western end of the Everwinter Lands lies the **Frozen Moors**, a large area in which the tundra mixes with local marshy lands, turning the whole region into a dangerous place both in the summer - when safe passage through it is nearly impossible due to the marshes - and in the winter - when the water freezes over, becoming slippery and too fragile in some points. The Frozen Moors were sparsely inhabited during the age of Blackmoor, and local folk tell tales about the angry spirits of "the People Before" which still haunt the place.



*Map of the Everwinter Lands*



*Summer in the Everwinter Lands*

In the north-western tip of the Everwinter Lands, a hook-shaped tongue of land called the **Frostfist Peninsula**, lies a crater-like formation which nearly encloses a gulf called **Angry Waters**. The latter receives its name because of the huge Whirlpool found at the centre of the gulf, which seems a never-ending water vortex. Actually, the Whirlpool is a gate to the Elemental Plane of Water, and some planar water creatures are to be found in the Whirlpool's vicinities.

## 24. Frosthaven and the Norzee Islands

A number of large and small islands dot the Norzee (or White Sea), the arctic sea that washes the northern coast of Norwold.<sup>69</sup> Norzee is a very cold sea, which is often very rough and stormy; during nearly half of the year, it completely freezes over, becoming a bleak wasteland of ice which is walked over by arctic animals and creatures - such as lynxman rakastas, Norwold malamute lupins, and most of all the frost giants.

The latter come mainly from a huge island in the western Norzee, called **Frosthaven**, a barren land of rocks and ice; the only plants found there are mosses and fungi which grow in the southern tundra-like shores. The island is swept by icy winds and blizzards for

<sup>69</sup> The descriptions of Crystlyne, Sklogtir, and the Shonak Burial Isle are drawn from *Adventures in the Frozen North*, by M. Fleet, in "Threshold" issue no. 2, page 129 and followings.



*Map of Frosthaven and the Norzee Islands*



*Frosthaven's southern coast during summer*

three-quarters of the year - which makes it an ideal place for the home of one of the largest frost giant populations on Mystara. Some thousands of frost giants live there, under the rule of a powerful warrior king named Brunnkarth, dwelling in a number of huge caverns carved into the ice of the local glaciers, and connected by a complicated series of tunnels. Small bands of frost giant raiders usually attack the human and humanoid tribes who live in the Everwinter Lands, often going as far as Kaarjala to plunder and loot. Once every five years, however, the frost giants gather most of their warriors and mount a huge raiding party which has been known to come as far south as the Great Bay; the giants' army retreats back to Frosthaven before spring comes. Many cryion clans also live on Frosthaven.

Among the islands of Norzee - most of which are bare chunks of rock, covered by ice year-round, or uninteresting stretches of tundra - some are to be noted. The northernmost one, **Crystlyne Island**, is actually part of the polar icecap and totally covered by ice. This uninhabitable island is nevertheless the home of many crystal dragons, led by an ancient exemplar of their species, Shardarath.

To the south-east lies **Sklogtir Island**, the second largest island of Norzee after Frosthaven. Sklogtir features tundra and icy hills, and is only the home of dangerous creatures like ice wolves, frost salamanders, and northern trolls. The island hosts an underground arcane research facility, whose members are led by the wizard Avernius, from the Isle of Dawn.

The group of small islands found in the Bay of Tears, south of Sklogtir Island, is called the **Dran L'kar Islands**; the isles are flat expanses of tundra, and little else is found there. The southernmost of them is known as the **Shonak Burial Isle**, and is the place where the Shonak tribes who roam the Everwinter Lands bury their most distinguished dead; an eerie silence haunts the place, and the Shonaks insist that one can hear the dead whisper on the island.

## SURROUNDING LANDS

Now that we have given a thorough look at Norwold, we will briefly cast our attention over the lands and realms which surround this vast and untamed land.

*Norwold and its surroundings*



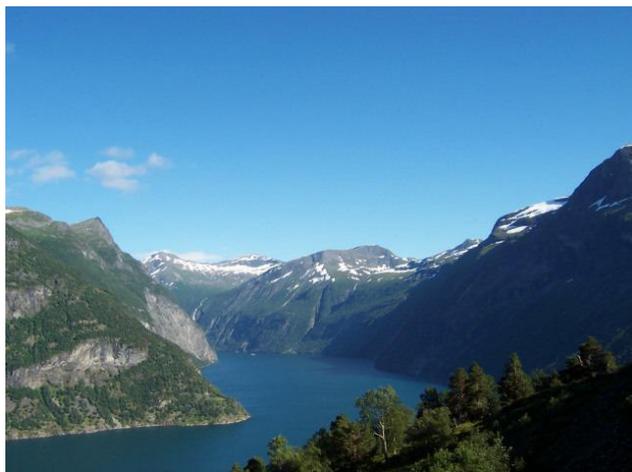
## The Northern Reaches: Ostland, Soderfjord, Vestland

The peoples of the three realms of the Northern Reaches descend from the ancient Antalians who once ruled Norwold, and feel some kind of very distant affinity with the Norwolders, but consider them backward and crude at best.

**Ostland** is the most powerful of the three realms, ruled by a strong traditional Northman dynasty in the person of King Hord Dark-Eye, still practicing some customs which are considered barbaric, and able to field a fearsome longship fleet. Its clans normally practice reaving against many coastal countries of the nearby areas - Norwold included. The kingdom's close alliance with the Thyatian Empire prevents Ostland's targets from taking direct action against it.

**Vestland** is younger, having won its independence from Ostland about four centuries ago. Under the rule of King Harald Gudmundson, the kingdom is trying to become a modern nation like its Known World counterparts through the creation of feudal nobility and the fostering of trade, with mixed success. Practices which are commonplace in Ostland - like seaborne raiding and slavery - have been banned from Vestland. Trolls and humanoids plague Vestland's western borders.

**Soderfjord** - or the Nordhartar Defence League as it should be more properly called - is a loose confederation of weak, quarrelsome, and hidebound jarls that have difficulty agreeing over something even when attacked by Ostlander pirates, gnolls from the southern foothills, or giants from the



*Nordersfjord in Vestland*

Makkres Mountains. Some jarls still practice slavery and raiding, while others do not, but all would like to become the rulers of the country - and prevent anyone else from succeeding in the task. The current War Leader of the League is Ragnar 'the Stout', Jarl of Soderfjord.

## The Northern Isle of Dawn: Dunadale, Helskir, Westrouрке

The northern fourth of the Isle of Dawn has had much to share with Norwold during its history, since the time when these regions were inhabited by the same Antalians who ruled Norwold; later, various Dawner cultures thrived there, and the coastal areas also fell for some time under the Nithian (Thothian) dominion. During their history, the isle's different cultures have been most often dominated by Thyatis or Alphatia. Three main realms are found in this northern part of the Isle of Dawn.

The eastern part is the Confederacy of **Dunadale**, a huge plain country whose interior is filled with marshes, bogs, and swamps (the region is indeed often called "Bogland"). A branch of the Dawners called the Dunaels is the dominant culture here, with a sizeable minority of Alphatians, and some Thyatians as well. Dunadale is a subject realm of the Alphatian Empire, but is actually a confederation of many different autonomous clans, cities, and dominions, which elect one person to represent their "king" in front of the Alphatian throne - currently this duty falls on the wizard Tastagarth Lunn. In the past the confederacy was more tightly united, but since the last century it has fallen gradually into decline as rivalries and intrigues between the various domains which make Dunadale up emerged.

West of Dunadale, across an arid plateau called the Dust Reaches, lies the Grand Duchy of **Westrouрке**, a semi-autonomous realm within the Thyatian Empire. Centuries ago this region was part of Dunadale, but the wars between the two empires caused the latter's division. Dawner-descended peoples are found in the southern half of the realm,



*A moor in Dunadale*

alongside a large number of Thyatian immigrants, while the northern half, filled with plains and woods, is dominated by folk of Northman descent, migrated there during the course of the centuries. The duchy is divided into many feudal dominions, most of which are ruled by former adventurers loyal to the Archduke Donegal Firestorm. A large stretch of swamps and plains between Westrouрке and Heskir is called the Northern Territories of Dawn and is a Thyatian province ruled by a governor-general.

**Heskir**, on the northern tip of the Isle of Dawn, is a fishing town which is rapidly growing into a true trade city thanks to the energetic rule of its king. The city's population is predominantly Alphatian, with minorities coming from all the surrounding countries and Thyatis. In the last decade, Heskir represented a bone of contention between Thyatis and Alphatia; it was part of Ericall's Kingdom of Norwold until AC 999, when its governor, Eruul Zaar, tired of seeing his city occupied by the imperial armies, proclaimed Heskir's independence, with himself as king. It is still to be seen if the city will be able to preserve its freedom.

## The Heldannic Territories

The **Heldannic Territories** are found over the lands of Nordurland, more recently called the Heldann Freeholds. This region's petty domains were conquered about fifty years ago by a warlike military order from Hattias, devoted to the Immortal Vanya: the Order of Vanya or Heldannic Knights, as they now call themselves. The local Heldanner

population is now ruled with an iron fist by the Hattian minority which fills the ranks of the order. With its small but very powerful army and navy, the Heldannic Knights have crushed a couple of uprising attempts by the native Heldanners and their Grand Master Wulf von Klagendorf is now looking for the right time to honour his Immortal patroness through an invasion of Ethengar or Norwold. It is known that the Heldannic Knights have a small flotilla of flying vessels, but some suspect that the range of their aerial activities may be much wider than the size of their dominion on land would let some suppose.

## The Denagothian Plateau

This huge plateau is found to the south-west of Norwold and effectively marks its south-western border. The plateau is a 6,000' high, mostly flat tableland, covered by abundant forests in its southern and eastern reaches, plains and grasslands in its centre, and arid badlands to the north-west. The plateau is completely surrounded by high mountains where many savage humanoid clans live, which makes it very difficult to reach this land and has created a reputation of dark mystery over it.

A wide variety of races dwell on the plateau, including a huge number of humanoids which migrated there in the course of the centuries. Two main human cultures are found there: the Denagothians of the western and northern half, a dark-mooded folk who worship the evil Immortal Idris, and the Essurians of the eastern half, a people descended from the Icereacher tribes who mixed with local peoples. The two cultures



*View of the Mengul Mountains from the ridge of the Denagothian Plateau*

each had their own kingdoms of Denagoth and Essuria in the past; the latter had crushed its rival and had become quite powerful two centuries ago - but both realms fell and fragmented during the course of the 9<sup>th</sup> century AC. In the near past, much of the plateau was under the control of a powerful warlord and sorcerer named the Shadowlord, who was however ultimately destroyed by heroes from Wendar some decades ago.

To the south, the **Great Forest of Geffron** is inhabited by an ancient clan of mysterious elves, sheltered by their powerful magics but continuously engaged in skirmishes against the surrounding humanoids. Elves also dwelled in the western **Lothenar Forest**, but were exterminated by the Shadowlord a century ago.

The centre of the plateau is called the **Plains of Avien** and inhabited by settled and semi-nomadic human clans. North and west of them, the historical heart of **Denagoth** is found, by now fragmented into a number of small domains and clans which the Church of Idris tries to keep together. The north-western area of the plateau is known as the

**Denagothian Wastes** and is a barren place inhabited by hordes of savage barbarians who are fanatical cultists of Idris and seem to have many things in common with the humanoids.

The south-eastern fringe of the plateau once was the heart of the Kingdom of **Essuria**, but now is littered with ruins (including those of Drax Tallen, the realm's capital) and fallen into complete anarchy. In the north-eastern corner of the plateau, the last vestiges of the Essurian culture survive: there a number of colonies established by Essuria managed to endure the kingdom's fall, and despite times of hardships and internal wars, still exist to this day. One of those domains, the Kingdom of **Ghyr**,<sup>70</sup> has risen to prominence in the last decades, and represents the strongest regional power of this area; these domains worship the Immortal patron of Essuria, He Who Watches, and are valiant enemies of all worshippers of Idris.



*A road to the City of Wendar from the north*

## The Kingdom of Wendar and the Northern Wildlands

The peaceful realm of **Wendar** lies at the south-western fringes of Norwold, beyond the barrier represented by the Denagothian Plateau. It is a vast valley of plains and deep woods, called Genalleth by the natives, inhabited by Antalian-descended humans and many elven clans; the two peoples have lived here in harmony for many centuries, until they united a century ago in one kingdom under the rule of King Gylharen, an elven wizard who saved the valley a couple of times from the hordes of Denagoth thanks to a powerful artefact called the *Elvenstar*. Surrounded by natural barriers on three sides, Wendar is a relatively secluded realm, which only in the last century and half has increased its sparse contacts with the outside world.

North-west of Wendar lay the **Northern Wildlands**, a vast expanse of plains, moors, badlands, and woodlands whose southern half is the home of many tribes of hostile humanoids and frogfolk, while the northern

<sup>70</sup> I did not use for this article the placement of Ghyr devised in [GAZF4 The Hidden Treasure of Ghyr](#), and [GAZF5 The Western Alliance](#) (both by JTR), because I did not feel comfortable both with the location of an Essurian colony beyond the Denagothian Wastes, and the history of a Thyatian dominion in that far northern and inland area. So I chose to put Ghyr in a more reasonable position for an Essurian settlement that is in the north-western corner of the Denagothian Plateau. This, in my opinion, also helps tying better the history of Ghyr with that of Denagoth and Essuria, as well with that of Norwold.

one is roamed by semi-nomadic human barbarian clans. In the past, the elves of Genalleth established a number of realms and settlements in this region, but none of them survive to this day, and their ruins litter the southern reaches of the Northern Wildlands.

## Beyond the Icereach and Borean Ranges

The Icereach and Borean ranges form a huge natural barrier between Norwold and the lands of **Borea**, to the west, a wide region of grasslands, steppes, and tundra inhabited by countless humanoid tribes, human tundra folk (the Shonaks), and other unnameable dangers.

Between Borea proper and the Borean Range lies a wide highland region of plains, hills, and steppes, separated by Borea proper by a long hill ridge called the Staircase (or Roaguncal by the native peoples), which rises by about 2,000' over the steppes up to the highlands to the east. The highlands above the Staircase feature the homeland of cold-loving gnomes in the north (the **Fogwoods**), then the **Fields of Horses** in the central part, where many giant clans live, and the arid **Shattered Plateau** further south, a huge tableland whose centre collapsed ages ago, creating this strange crater-like region inhabited by fierce orc tribes.

South of the highlands marked by the Staircase lies a huge marsh called the **Swamp of the Beast**, likely the largest swamp system on Brun, inhabited by many monsters and sparse tribes of trolls, troglodytes, and goblins. Centuries ago, a Denagothian



*Swamp of the Beast landscape*

warlord named Maggorath managed to carve a large dominion over the swamp and the hill country to the east and north, but his realm fell some centuries later, leaving only some ruins to testify to its former existence.<sup>71</sup> Hill giants and goblins live in the hills which divide the swamp from the Icereach Range.

North-west of the Swamp of the Beast a huge forested area called the Great Olde Woode is found, whose southern half is a wide, wooded range of hills known as the Hills of Parthenal. Wild elves, humans, kobolds, and gnomes live in this region, collectively known as the **Grindol**.

The plains and steppes found between the Staircase and the Grindol are known by different names - the Plains of Khavasz, the Flatlands, and the Straithgledd in the north. They are inhabited by a human culture called the Roags, which has ties with the ancient Dunharian tribes. Some Roags are settled farmers, while others are semi-nomadic

<sup>71</sup> The story of Maggorath is found in [Marshes of Maggorath](#) (by R. Burns), and is further detailed in [GAZF4 The Hidden Treasure of Ghyr](#) (by JTR).

herders and hunters. Tales of travellers and merchants also relate of a number of human feudal realms which would be found in the plains, but those rumours are unconfirmed.<sup>72</sup>

## The Island of Qeodhar

Across the Alphatian Sea, east of the upper eastern coast of Norwold, lies the large island of **Qeodhar**, a mostly bare and rocky place, north of which extend the cold waters of Norzee. Qeodhar is sparsely populated, and its northern and eastern shores are locked in ice during the heart of winter.

The island was originally settled by Antalians from Norwold, who established there the realm of Ystmarhavn, but Yanifey peoples displaced by the Alphatians came north centuries later and invaded the island they called Northrock. About 500 years ago, a Yanifey chief called Qeodhar unified his people's clans and introduced the Alphatian culture there; the island assumed the name of this character, and since then Qeodhar has been an allied kingdom of the Alphatian Empire.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> See footnote 65, above. The feudal realms hinted at in the text would be those found in GAZF4-5. An alternative origin for these realms - for those who, like me, are not pleased by the presence of Essurians or Known Worlders in this far northern and inland region - could be having them as colonies of the Kingdom of Galannor, found to the south-west of the Swamp of the Beast and certainly in a better position to expand in this region. See [The Midlands](#) (by J. Mishler)], [The High Borean Valley and the Midlands](#) (by M. Fleet), and [Detailed Map of Northeast Brun](#) (by R. Dijkema).

<sup>73</sup> The story of Qeodhar is briefly told in "Qeodhar (Kingdom of)" entry, in Poor Wizard's Almanac I, pages 70-71. The story



*The Qeodim Mountains in Qeodhar*

Qeodhar's main activities are seal-trapping, fishing, and whaling. Qeodharan boats venture as far as the Isles of the Strand in Norwold, and often engage in raiding activities against local villages as well. The current king of Qeodhar, Norlan, is an ambitious man who wants to improve his island's status and is looking at Norwold as a possible field of expansion. He is rumoured to have secret deals with the Thonians of north-western Skothar, the Minaean pirates, as well as with the Thyatian Empire.<sup>74</sup>

of Ystmarhavn is found in [The Jarldom of Ystmarhavn](#) (by G. Gander)].

<sup>74</sup> Norlan's plots are unveiled in module M2 Vengeance of Alphaks.

## Alphatia's Western Coast: Frisland, Limn, Stonewall

On the other side of the Alphatian Sea lies the Alphatian continent, facing Norwold's eastern coast. This side of the Alphatian mainland is characterized by a narrow or nearly non-existent coastline, behind which rise the towering Kerothar Mountains, which have an average height of nearly 20,000 feet and represent a truly impassable barrier. Most of the range falls within the borders of the Kingdom of **Stoutfellow**, and is sparsely inhabited by dwarves, gnomes, and halflings. Three main kingdoms control the western coast of Alphatia.

The northernmost one is the Kingdom of **Frisland**, and includes all Alphatia's north-western corner. The Ystmarhavners established colonies on the western coast of the region many centuries ago, and the mountain valleys are rumoured to be the home of an evil people of herders who worship alien entities and practice gruesome rituals. During its history, Frisland was a battleground between native people and the various kingdoms that the Alphatian subsequently established there. Much of the kingdom is an agricultural land, but the realm's poor soil does not allow for abundant crops; goat herding is widespread, and the realm produces excellent varieties of cheese. Many small towns dot the western



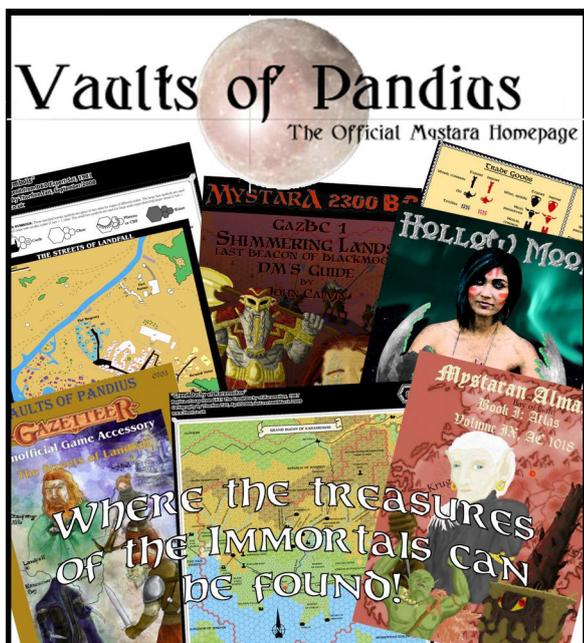
*View of the Kerothar Mountains from the Sound of Ishme, Limn*

coast, focusing their economy on fishing, whaling, shipbuilding, and some trade. King Edjer 'the Twisted', an Alphatian wizard, rules this vast, cold, poor, and backward land.

South of Frisland lies **Limn**, a very small kingdom by Alphatian standard, but indeed a very special one. In fact, during the centuries the Alphatian Empire allowed many unusual and monstrous races to dwell in this stretch of land, to see if they were able to build their own multiracial society still based on the supremacy of magic-users, like the rest of Alphatia; for many centuries the place was left as a protectorate, but one century ago it was awarded kingdom status under the rule of an elf-king, Drushiye, and a dryad-queen, Mellora. The result is a mishmash of extremely different intelligent races who strive to obey the kingdom's laws and try to give vent to their bloodlusts (if any) in the wilderness areas of the realm. The majority of Limn's population is made up of woodland races (centaurs and dryads,

mostly), demihumans, giants, and humanoids (especially goblins, orcs, and trolls), but many more monster races can be found wandering in the streets of the capital, Trollhattan, or in the countryside - even lycanthropes and intelligent undead monsters are tolerated here! Humans, while present, are a minority.

Further south of Limn lies another small realm, the Kingdom of **Stonewall**, one of the most friendly realms of Alphatia as well as one of the most densely-populated; the kingdom's capital, Draco, is the largest city of the empire. Differently from most other places in the Alphatian mainland, Stonewall's non-magical population is not oppressed by the ruling spellcasters, and can lead a decent life there. The kingdom, ruled by King Koblan Dracodon with an easy hand, is nevertheless one of the bases of the Alphatian military, and the city is also the main port from which migration to Norwold is taking place.



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# The Great Land Rush of Norwold

by Simone Neri (Zendrolion)

## SPRINGTIME IN ALPHA!

The 21<sup>st</sup> of Thaumont 1002 AC is nearing, and the city of Alpha prepares for the famous two-weeks long Spring Fair, the great festival taking place in the capital of the young Kingdom of Norwold each year. People from all over the region of the Great Bay attend the fair, as the city - still experiencing the late thaw - is adorned with colorful flowers, garlands, and lights, making Alpha the most sought out destination of merchants from all over the north, trading the most exotic merchandise brought from throughout the Known World and Alphatia, with raw materials from Norwold. These are two weeks of bustling in Alpha, with merchants, simple local traders, and farmers crowding the streets, and incessant arrivals of ships in the port. Additionally, one can find jugglers and thespians entertaining bystanders, cutpurses lurking about for easy pickings among alleyways, adventurers and mercenaries seeking out patrons, and knights eager for the joust, among noblemen and courtiers attending feasts beset with intrigue.

But this year's Spring Fair commemorates much more. In the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Kingdom of Norwold, King Ericall decreed the start of the Great Land Rush, an ambitious program of colonization devised for the near wilderness land he rules. A land-grabbing opportunity for all sorts of characters from across the Known World and the Alphatian Empire, undoubtedly bringing many more people than is usual to Alpha.

## Why this date?

The month and day of the Spring Fair was taken from module CM1 Test of the Warlords; even if the spring equinox in the Known World is celebrated on the 1<sup>st</sup> of Thaumont, the Fair celebrates the actual coming of the spring season, and so it is likely held toward the end of the first spring month (in the last two weeks, to be precise). The year 1002 AC was chosen because the events of CM1 happen ten years after Ericall took the throne in Alpha; this way, the Great Land Rush is conveniently set in the future compared to 1000 AC (the time in which the GAZ series is set), allowing for a still-wilderness Norwold in the latter year and for eventual PCs to take part to the land-grabbing event. Note that setting the Great Land Rush in 1002 AC causes an irremediable inconsistency with the canon timing of module M5 Talons of Night, during which the Pharaoh Ramenhotep XXIII of Thothia dies and is replaced by his son Ramenhotep XXIV, who is crowned in 1002 AC according to the Joshuan's Almanac & Book of Facts. M5, however, should be set at least some years after the end of CM1, when the PCs have become well-established lords of Norwold and the region has already been a battleground between the empires of Thyatis and Alphatia. The only way to reconcile the two modules would be moving one of the two dates - Ramenhotep XXIV's ascension in the future, or the Great Land Rush back before 1000 AC. In this article I made the former choice, thus allowing DMs who set their campaign in 1000 AC to use the material presented here without any need of change.



*A view of the Spring Fair lists*

In the first part of this article, we will take a look at the procedures and events regarding the Great Land Rush, as well as learning how the Kingdom of Norwold is organized from an institutional point of view, and what sets it apart from its mother empire. In the next issue, we will get to know some of the most important political players in the Norwold stage, that is the members of the royal court and the dominion rulers already in place before the AC 1002.

## THE GREAT LAND RUSH

King Ericall was granted the crown of Norwold in 992 AC, at least in name. He effectively controls only the Alphan Peninsula and a few lands along the Great Bay and Norwold's eastern coast - the rest defies Ericall's rule. The halfling Shire of Leeha was independent as it always had been, King Yarrvik of Oceansend refused to

acknowledge the king's authority, and the human, humanoid, dwarven, and elven tribes and clans scattered all over the interior ignored the king's claim over their ancestral territories. Ericall was disappointed when he realized how little he controlled of his realm's land. Thus, he devised a grand colonization plan to tame the wilderness and establish Alpha's effective control over the whole kingdom.

The king has been preparing his realm for the Great Land Rush since two years ago. Ericall wants to attract new, enthusiastic, trusted, and brave characters who may consider settling the wilderness of Norwold as the opportunity of their life. If deemed worthy, the king will grant them lands within his kingdom, alongside a nobility rank. Ericall's wish is to make the deal advantageous for valourous commoner adventurers, members of the lesser gentry and aristocracy, younger sons and daughters

of noble families with no chance to inherit ancestral lands, and people barred from reaching the upper classes by their country's customs or laws (such as mainland Alphatia or Glantri).

King Ericall ensured that word of the Great Land Rush and of the opportunities provided by his realm reached all the corners of the surrounding lands, instructing messengers and heralds to spread the news abroad, and also sending special representatives to chosen famous adventurers and characters the king has heard about, and who in his opinion would be intrigued by the offer. It's about two years since Ericall started to publicize the event, and now the king is ready to gather the fruits of his work.



*A section of the Long Gallery in the Royal Palace, Alpha*

## RUNNING THE LAND GRANTS

In the first few days of the Spring Fair, King Ericall - assisted by his closest advisors, Count Beriak of Draken and the wizard Madiera - will meet privately with each one of the characters who attend the festival in Alpha and show interest in claiming a dominion. The meeting will mostly concern the candidate's motivations, expectations, and future plans for his dominion should he or she get one; if the candidate has some proposal for the king (i.e. gifts of money, troops, magical items, or whatever), this is the moment to put those things to fruition. The king will also make clear what he does expect from the deal - utter loyalty, regular payment of taxes (albeit with a two-years exemption if the candidate gets a dominion in a wilderness area), and assurance that the candidate has nothing to do with Thyatis and that empire's allies.

Beriak and Madiera will speak little, but will not use mind-reading or other divination spells during the meetings; instead, they will gather opinions about the candidates which they will discuss with Ericall later, reserving the right to use those spells during the next few days on the claimants they found less convincing or openly suspect.

During the meeting the king will also ask each character in which area of the Kingdom of Norwold he or she would like to establish his or her dominion; the king will take note of their choice. Their wish might not correspond to what they will get, but will be useful for Ericall and his advisors to get an idea of how the prospecting lords will be spread among his lands.

The king will work hard to meet most of the claimants in the first week of the Spring Fair, in fact, during the second week Ericall's attention will switch to the tournament which will take place in Alpha. The tournament will feature a grand joust, melee fights, arcane magic contests, wrestling matches, archery and shooting contests, and other minor competitions in which knights, adventurers, and claimants can test their mettle and valor. The king expects each claimant to take part in at least one of the competitions; he will carefully watch the claimants' behavior in the contests, not only from the point of martial prowess, but also from that of personal honor, courtesy, and unselfishness.

During the course of the tournament competitions the claimants, as well as many other adventurers and knights who came to participate but who will not ask the king for a dominion, will be hosted at the Royal Palace, where banquets, celebrations (with magical fireworks!), aristocratic entertainments (display of magic arts, recitation of poems, concerts, drama, and gambling), and balls will go on for the whole length of the festival.

The tournament and the stay at the Royal Palace, with all the connected social events, should be the time for each claimant to get to know some of the fellow would-be lords, the members of the royal court, and any other relevant NPC the DM would like to throw in. Friendships, alliances, rivalries, enmities, and hatreds will be born in this context. Also, this will be a time of harsh intrigue and subtlety, during which each claimant will try to get the eye of the king, of his advisors, and of potential allies, to gather information about



*A knight is hardly hit during the lists*

the other claimants, and to put eventual enemies and rivals in bad light; how each claimant will achieve this depends on his or her own personality and goals, but the whole process is likely to include secret agreements, deception, bribes, blackmails, and unscrupulous use of spells - even if plots including open violence will be avoided in this phase as too risky.

### The King's Favor Rating

As a DM, you could have great fun in roleplaying the Spring Fair events and tournament, but you may have to focus on some of the numerous characters present at best, limiting actual roleplaying to a handful of the events and NPCs who are of any

interest for the player characters. To speed up the whole process and determine how each claimant performed in the competitions, you may use the King's Favor Rating system presented here.

The King's Favor Rating measures how favorable an impression each claimant made upon King Ericall and his staff during the whole two weeks of the Spring Fair - including the initial meeting, the tournament, and the social events. Basically, higher the rating is, better are the claimant's chances to get a dominion and to choose its location before the others.

The King's Favor is made up of various factors which produce Favor Points, calculated as follows.

**One: Reputation**

Each claimant who has reached at least 15<sup>th</sup>-level - or the maximum level allowed for his or her class (such as 10<sup>th</sup>-level for the Elf class, for example) if that is lower than fifteenth - scores a number of Favor Points equal to his level; demihuman characters get an additional Favor Point for every Attack Rank they have achieved beyond the first (A for the Halfling class, C for the Dwarf and Elf class). Characters below 15<sup>th</sup>-level score 0 Favor Points for reputation if they are lower than 9<sup>th</sup>-level, and their level minus eight in Favor Points if their level falls between 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Two: Private Dealings with the King**

Each claimant adds together his or her ability modifiers for Intelligence, Wisdom, and

Charisma, and scores the result in Favor Points.

Then make a normal reaction roll adding as usual the character's Charisma modifier and - *only if the character appears as a human or elf female* - a further modifier due to the character's appearance (according to her description), as follows: +0 if she is attractive or pretty, +1 if she is good-looking, comely,



*A lady and her attendants*

or beautiful, +2 if she is very beautiful or gorgeous.

Compare the modified reaction roll result with Table 1 (below) to see how many additional Favor Points the claimant scores (or loses):

Table 1

Modified Reaction Roll Result	Effect
3 or less	Lose 3 Favor Points
4-6	Lose 1 Favor Point
7-9	None
10-11	Gain 2 Favor Points
12 or more	Gain 5 Favor Points

Lastly, if the claimant has some further leverage to get the favor or the attention of the king, he or she gets some bonus points. Leverage means gifts (money, magic items) or interesting prospects which may open up thanks to the claimant (i.e. ready-to-use or cheap mercenary troops, trade routes to be opened, alliances or agreements with foreign powers to be signed, the support of a powerful church, and so on).

As a DM, you will have to evaluate how favorable is the leverage proposed for the king, founding the decision on certainty, actual usefulness, risk, and readiness of the thing offered or promised; in the end, you should assign a number of additional Favor Points ranging from 1 to 5, with 1 being an interesting prospect which is risky or unlikely to succeed, and 5 a very useful, cheap, and ready-to-use thing.

Regarding gifts, use this rule of thumb: for every 15,000 gp in cash (money, gems, jewelry) or for every 15,000 gp of a magic

item's enchantment cost, the claimant gains 1 additional Favor Point. As you may see, gifts repay less than other leverages in terms of favor from the king, as Ericall does not want to give the impression that his favor goes to the claimants who bribe him.

### Three: The Tournament

The claimants will have to enter at least one of the competitions of the tournament to gain additional favor from the king. Indeed, the claimants who choose not to take part in any of the tournament's competitions lose 5 Favor Points.

Competitions include the joust (classical knight vs knight with lances and heavy armor on horseback), the melee list (single one vs one foot combat, any melee weapon and armor allowed), the shooting list (participants shoot with bow or crossbow at targets set at various distances), the wrestling list (single one vs one foot combat, unarmed and unarmored), and the arcane competition (a match in which magic-users challenge each other to display their most powerful or spectacular spells). Using magic items of any



*The winner's strike during a jousting competition*

Table 2

Competition	Clerics	Fighters	Magic-Users	Thieves
Arcane	0	0	1/3 level + Int	-
Joust*	.**	1/3 level + Str or Dex	-	-
Melee	1/4 level + Str, Dex or Con	1/3 level + 2 + Str, Dex or Con	1/3 level - 1 + Str, Dex or Con	1/4 level + Str, Dex or Con
Shooting§	-#	1/3 level + Dex	0	1/4 level + Dex
Wrestling	1/4 level + Str	1/3 level + Str	1/3 level - 1 + Str	1/4 level + Str

\* In order to participate to the joust, a character must be able to ride a horse, wear heavy armor and shield, and wield a lance.

\*\* Unless the Cleric is allowed to use lances (such as clerics of Vanya); in this case, the character can take part in the joust, using as modifier on the roll (1/4 level + Str or Dex).

§ In order to take part in the shooting competition, a character must be able to use to some degree a bow or a crossbow of some type.

# Unless the Cleric is allowed to use bows or crossbows (such as clerics of Karaash); in this case, the character can take part in the shooting competition, using as modifier on the roll (1/4 level + Dex).

sort in any of the competitions is forbidden and considered extremely unfair (should a character be discovered while using some, he or she will be thrown out of the tournament and will suffer a ten-points loss in Favor Points); in case a character does not have normal gear available, the tournament's organizers will provide him or her with what is needed.

To see how a claimant performs in a competition, he or she must roll 1d20 and add the modifiers found in the Table 2 (above) by crossing his class with the competition he or she chose (always round fractions up). When an ability score is

featured, add that score's modifier to the roll; when multiple abilities are listed, separated by an 'or', it means that the character may choose which one of them to use for the roll.

Standard demihuman classes (Dwarf, Elf, and Halfling) use the Fighter column, counting each Attack Rank achieved beyond the first as an additional level.<sup>1</sup> Elves can also take part

<sup>1</sup> Non-standard demihuman classes have multiple abilities, but those who can cast spells from a divine sources - just like Clerics - cannot take part in the Arcane competition. For other competitions, Halfling Masters (from GAZ8 The Five Shires) and Dwarf Clerics (from GAZ6 The Dwarves of

in the Arcane competition (without counting Attack Ranks, obviously). However, Dwarves and halflings cannot take part in the joust, and suffer respectively a -1 and a -4 penalty to the roll for the wrestling list. The DM should use these guidelines to determine how each of the non-standard classes - if featured among the claimants - rolls for its performance.

Also, a participant gets a +1 bonus on the die roll for each Weapon Mastery rank attained beyond Basic in a weapon appropriate to the competition (lance for the joust, a close-combat weapon for the melee, bow or crossbow for the shooting list, and an unarmed combat style for the wrestling competition).<sup>2</sup> If an NPC's Weapon Masteries are not listed but the character's description mentions he or she can use a certain weapon with a given degree of skill, the DM should anyway assign him or her a bonus ranging from +1 to +4.

A character who gets a modified result lower than 10 in any one competition loses 1 Favor Point; if he gets a natural 1 on the d20 roll, this is an automatic failure (regardless of the modifier) and he loses an additional 2 Favor Points (for a total of 3). If the claimant's

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Rockhome) use the rule as given above; Elf Wizards (from GAZ5 The Elves of Alfheim) use the Fighter column up to 10th-level, and this is the best bonus they can get for combat abilities - a 16th-level Elf Wizard still gets the bonus of a 10th-level Elf (and he does not get the bonus for Attack Rank, either). Other non-standard demihuman classes should be assigned by the DM a bonus accordingly to their fighting abilities.  
<sup>2</sup> If Weapon Mastery rules are not used in the campaign, simply add a further +2 bonus to a roll for the joust and shooting competitions if the participant belongs to the Fighter class.



*Jousting knights*

modified result is 15 or more, the character gets a number of Favor Points equal to (modified roll - 14).

Each claimant may take part in one or more competitions, but will get Favor Points only for the one in which he obtains the better results. On the other hand, loss of Favor Points for all competitions are cumulative - making participation in all available competitions risky at best..

Of course the DM is free to add other modifiers he sees fit due to the character's description or skills. For example, a knight with a very high score in the Riding (Horses) General Skill might get a further bonus of the roll for the joust.

#### **Four: Social Events**

Finally, a claimant's skill in getting along with important people, members of the court, and potential allies, in dodging rivalries and enmities, and in showing oneself's social etiquette, courtesy, culture, and grace will constitute a part of King Ericall's final opinion about him or her.



*Court scene in the Royal Palace's gardens*

Each claimants again gains (or loses) a number of Favor Points equal to his or her Intelligence and Wisdom modifiers. Moreover, each one gains (or loses) a number of Favor Points equal to his full Charisma score minus 11. Any character (regardless of gender) with a human- or elven-like appearance also gains (or loses) a number of Favor Points dependant on his appearance, as in Table 3 (refer to the character's description to adjudicate the claimant's appearance).

During this step, the claimants will also be subject to magical and non-magical secret scrutiny by Beriak, Madiera, and the king's other advisors. If a claimant is hiding some secrets which could damage his reputation in front of Ericall, he or she will have to do a saving throw vs Spells, using his Wisdom modifier as usual as well as bonuses due to magic items or other special abilities. If the claimant's save fails, his innermost secrets

Appearance	Favor Points
Hideous	-4
Ugly	-2
Unattractive	-1
Average	0
Attractive, pretty	+1
Handsome, beautiful, good-looking, comely	+2
Very beautiful, very handsome, gorgeous	+4

*Table 3*

will not have been fully discovered, but he or she will have drawn on himself some suspicion; in this case, the claimant will lose 1d4+1 Favor Points.

### Totalling the Results

Once the claimant has passed through the four steps, it is time to total all the Favor Points he or she has received during the previous phases. The king will consider a claimant worthy to receive a dominion from him if he has at least totalled 15 Favor Points; claimants earning a lower number of Favor Points will politely be informed after the end of the festival by one of the king's advisors that His Majesty has deemed him or her still unsuited to rule a dominion. The claimants who have totalled 15 or more Favor Points will instead be summoned one at a time by the king - starting with the claimant who got the highest Favor Point total and going down from him or her - and allowed to choose a dominion in his Kingdom of Norwold, in the area they wish (see the next paragraph). If two or more candidates have got the same number of Favor Points, the king will choose as first the claimant who earned the higher

number of Favor Points in the individual four steps of the preceding process, in this order:

- (a) the tournament;
- (b) private dealings with the king;
- (c) reputation;
- (d) social events.

If two claimants are still drawing after confronting what they earned in (d), choose randomly among them who gets the first choice for a dominion.



*The winner's reward*

**Example:**

*At the end of Step 4, Fergus the Justifier and Bardeen Longwalker have the same number of Favor Points, that is 21. The king looks at their performance in the tournament, and sees that both took part in the joust, scoring the same amount of Favor Points (six). Then, Ericall considers the private dealings he had with both, and sees that Bardeen got 3 Favor Points and Fergus only 2 - so the king allows Bardeen to choose his dominion before Fergus, who goes after him.*

## CHOOSING A LOCATION

After the choice order has been determined according to the abovementioned four steps, King Ericall will proceed to award dominions to the claimants who have gathered the due amount of Favor Points during the Spring Fair.

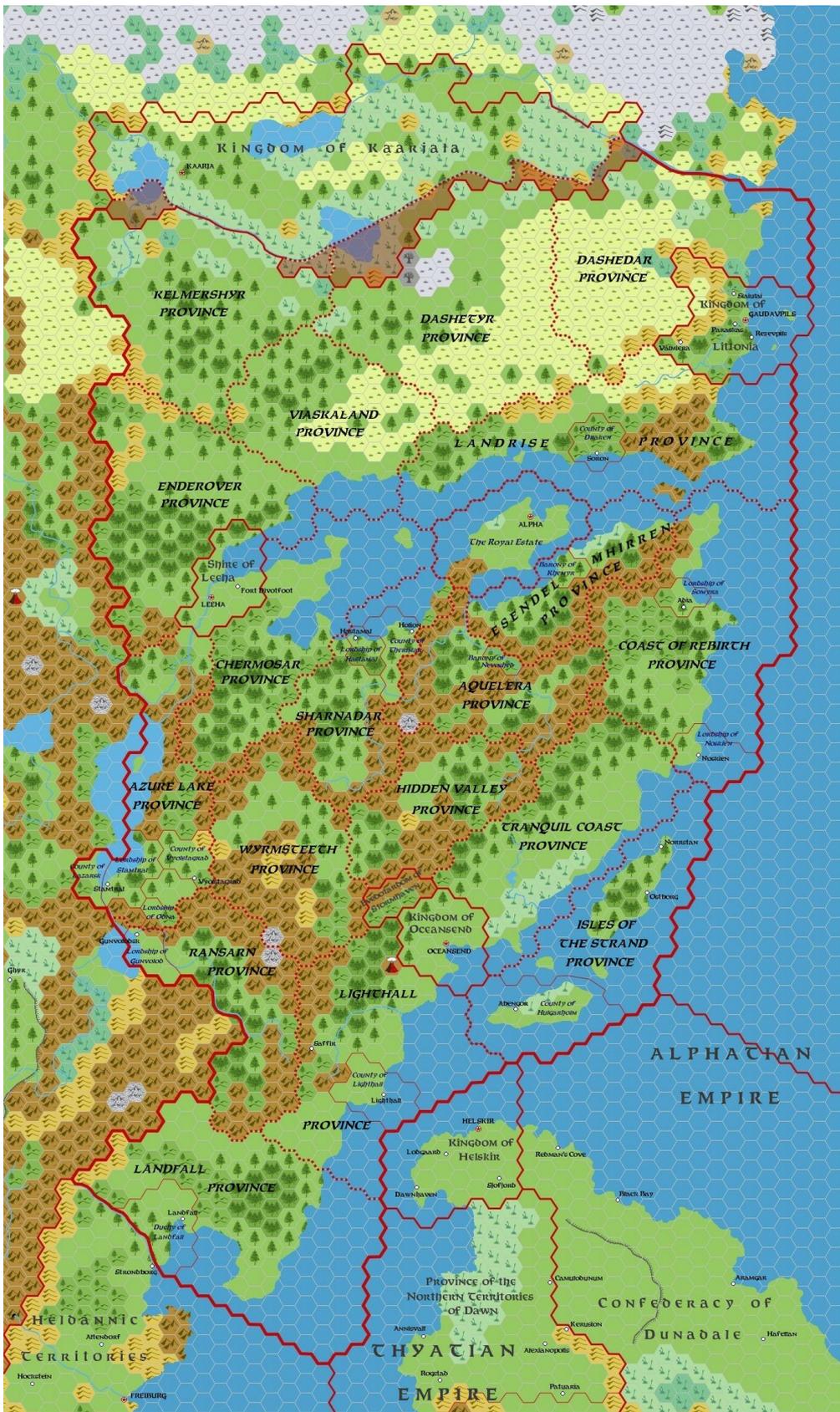
King Ericall's officers have never done a complete survey of the lands which fall within the borders of their liege's kingdom; what kind and number of actual resources are to be found in the most remote corners of the Kingdom of Norwold is something which is up to a claimant to discover.

The king's officers simply marked out a series of dominion borders on their own copy of the official map of Norwold. In game terms, each dominion includes an average of three 24-mile hexes on the Norwold map included in this article. All the domain's hexes must rest inside the borders of the Kingdom of Norwold featured in the map, and no hex may be found inside the borders of one of the independent realms (such as Oceansend, Littonia or Leeha) or of one of the fiefs already in existence before the Great Land Rush. They can, however, be found over one of the northernmost hexes whose control is contested by the Kingdom of Kaarjala.<sup>3</sup>

Allow each claimant to pick one of the domains, centered on one of the available hexes featured on the map (we will call this the "core" hex), and then to choose another two hexes around it; each additional chosen hex must be adjacent to the "core" hex. Royal officers have ascertained (most often guessed) that each hex may harbor two-three

<sup>3</sup> These are the areas overshadowed in red in the uppermost part of the map.

# The Great Land Rush of Norwold



*The provinces of the Kingdom of Norwold*

resources on average; when the claimant rolls 1d10 per hex to determine its resources,<sup>4</sup> he or she might come up with less or more actual resources, depending on the result of the dice rolls.<sup>5</sup>

## Finishing Up the Details

At the end of this process you should have your 24-mile per hex map of Norwold dotted with newly-established dominions. Likely, you will end up having some areas clustered with new dominions, and some areas mostly devoid of it. There is nothing wrong with this - King Ericall knows that some regions of his kingdom are more sought after than others, so he expects having more dominions along the eastern coast and the Great Bay than in

the interior between the Final Range and the great lakes, or in the cold lands north of the Great Bay.

Also, make sure that hatreds and enmities develop between characters and NPC claimants over dominions coveted by both, as well as a wish for revenge on the part of those NPCs (if any) who were excluded by the king from the choice of a dominion due to their poor performance during the Spring Fair - such characters will certainly cause trouble against the king and his loyal vassals in the near future.

## THE KINGDOM OF NORWOLD

King Ericall has ruled for ten years, a large stretch of this vast and wilderness subcontinent. In those ten years, Ericall has gathered a number of advisors and bureaucrats to help him manage the burden of ruling this huge and diverse land, divided by massive geographical barriers - the powerful rivers, the deep forests, the highest mountains, and the cold tundras. Despite the king's efforts, however, his success in this process has been partial at best - also due to the young Ericall's naivety, idealism, and lack of experience.

The official borders of the Kingdom of Norwold are shown in the accompanying map, above, alongside independent realms found within or at the borders of the kingdom, the borders of the kingdom's provinces, and those of existing fiefs before the Great Land Rush.

<sup>4</sup> As per BECMI dominion rules; see *Rules Cyclopedia*, page 40.

<sup>5</sup> CM1 Test of the Warlords describes a different way to determine a dominion's size and number of resources, which follows these steps: (a) roll 1d6+6 to determine the total number of resources found in each dominion; (b) choose one hex of the 24-miles per hex map of Norwold; (c) roll for resources using the standard 1d10 method; (d) if the result is less than the number of total resources you got on step (a), choose an adjacent hex and repeat this process until you have got at least 7 resources; in no way can a dominion get more than the number of resources determined in step (a). This method is as good as any, but I would suggest to use the alternative method described in the article, because the CM1 method assumes that the king already made a general survey of the resources found in each hex (which is quite unlikely) or that the land granted by the king will be adjusted in size according to what the claimant finds in his newly-assigned domain (also unlikely, as the king wants colonization to start as soon as possible, and this process would cause a big delay).

## The Independent Realms

Ericall's military and financial weakness is one of the main reasons behind his lack of control over his kingdom. Since his mother, Empress Eriadna, gave Norwold the status of an autonomous kingdom within the empire and withdrew the few Alphatian troops stationed there, the chance to keep full control over the small realms of the region - who were grudgingly accepting the Alphatian protectorate - has slipped out of Ericall's hands.



*Oceansend's Castle*

Among the small realms which do not acknowledge Ericall's authority as King of Norwold is the King of **Oceansend**, Yarrvik the Just, ruler of this proud city - a flourishing trade hub in the north as well as a mighty fortress. The city is allied with the Stormhaven clans of dwarves who dwell in the Ironroot Mountains to the west, and many demihumans (dwarves, elves, and halflings) live within its walls. Yarrvik might even swear fealty to Ericall, if Eriadna's son allowed him to keep his title of king - but Ericall has no intention to do so, thus Yarrvik continues to make a show of listening to Thyatian proposals of alliance.

In the western Great Bay, the allied halfling clans who make up the Shire of **Leeha**, at the mouth of the great White Bear River, politely ignore Ericall's claim over the region. They are friendly toward the newly-arrived foreign humans and willing to trade with them, or even to ally with them against a greater threat (humanoids and giants included), but want to preserve their independence.

North of the Great Bay, the small but ancient Kingdom of **Littonia** lies on Norwold's eastern coast. The current Littonian king, Uldis VI, is considered nothing more than a barbarian leader and thus of little importance by the Alphatian Empire and to a lesser extent by Ericall as well. Uldis VI has no intention of giving up his independence to Ericall, and the latter resents the presence of another ruler defying his authority, but at the moment he is not willing to send a military expedition to claim Littonia. Littonia is also plagued by raiders and fishermen foraging into Littonian waters from Qeodhar, and Uldis might find an ally in Ericall if the Kingdom of Norwold was threatened by the northern island realm as well.



*The Gaudava River crossing the Veči Forest, Littonia*

At the far northern border of the Kingdom of Norwold, the Kingdom of **Kaarjala** lays, nestled in the Autuasmaa Plain between the great rivers, the southernmost of which is called Landsplit River in official court records. Ericall consider the northern kingdom, ruled by King Kaarlo Taavinen, a barbarian realm and has entertained himself with the idea of asking him to swear fealty to the crown of Norwold - but has not made any formal advance in that direction. The fact that Kaarjala's borders encompass the northernmost part of Ericall's claim on Norwold does not make things easier; Ericall, in fact, will not abstain from sending there those among the claimants who will ask to set their dominions near the northern border.



*A Kaarjalan landscape*

Lastly, on the northern tip of the Isle of Dawn, the Kingdom of **Helskir** is found, ruled by King Eruul Zaar, a former governor of the town of Helskir who in the past years turned it into a bustling trade city. Control of Helskir was granted by Empress Eriadna to Ericall back in 992 AC, and Zaar has harbored resentment against Ericall and Alphatia ever since - to the point that a few years ago (999 AC), after the city had seen its share of battles between Alphatia and Thyatis to win its control, Eruul declared Helskir's

independence from Norwold and both empires. Since then, the Strait of Helskir has been unsafe for Alphatian and Norwold ships, but Eruul's recent approaches with Thyatis has hampered any attempt to retake the city through military means.



*The Dalselva River flowing through the Oppland Hills, Westrouke*

Of course this does not mean that the rest of the Kingdom of Norwold is controlled by the king, quite the contrary. The realms mentioned above are those which are acknowledged as such by Ericall's court, but there are plenty of demihuman clans (mostly elves and some dwarves), human and humanoid tribes who have not even heard about Ericall, let alone submitted to his rule.

### The Government of Norwold

King Ericall rules his vast kingdom from the marvellous Royal Palace, in the heart of the city of Alpha, in the Great Bay. He is advised by a collegial body, the **Royal Council**, which is a group of trusted individuals who help the king take important decisions; the Council customarily includes a selection of

the king's closest familiars (the queen, adult sons, siblings, and so on, but even trusted friends) and the top-ranking officers of the realm (see below), but since admission to the Council stems from the king's will, the crown can virtually call anyone to become a member of the Council. Usually the Royal Council should include between six and twelve members. The Council is also charged with assuming the regency of the realm should the king die prematurely leaving behind an heir too young to rule.

Decisions taken by the king and by the Royal Council are effectively carried out by the **Crown Officers**, who act as a sort of ministers, each with its own field of action. These officers, in order of descending rank, are:

The Lord **High Steward** is considered the king's closest advisor and the most powerful man of the court after the king himself; the High Steward has a number of duties, which range from acting as deputy of the king when the monarch is not present, to heading the travelling magistrates of Norwold. In modern terms, the High Steward acts both as a minister of the Interior and of Justice. The Governors of the kingdom's provinces also report to the High Steward.

The Lord **High Chancellor** oversees all the correspondence to and from the crown, both with the kingdom's lords and with foreign powers, and is the keeper of the royal seal which is used to sign (and validate) all official documents and decrees; emissaries and ambassadors sent on missions by the crown also report to the High Chancellor.

The Lord **High General** is the supreme chief of the army of Norwold, who advises the king on all things regarding the military; the king is indeed the supreme commander of the realm's army, and can choose to lead the army himself on the battlefield - but if he does not, supreme command goes to the High General.

The Lord **High Admiral** leads Norwold's fleet during wars and is the supreme commander of the navy; the kingdom's navy at the moment is small, but is tasked with the challenging duty of protecting the Great Bay (the key to the capital city) and the Strait of Helskir (the "door" to the Alphatian Sea).

The Lord **High Treasurer** manages the kingdom's treasury and is responsible for all financial issues involving the king's household or the kingdom as a whole; handling the payment of debts, enforcing the crown's credits, and tax collection are among his duties. Provincial reeves and provosts answer to him.

The five Lords listed above are known as the "Great Officers" and are also usually included among the Royal Council's members. They also automatically receive the rank of *lords* in the Norwold hierarchy (see below).

Below them are the "Lesser Officers", a number of still important functionaries who originates directly from the crown, but hold a lower rank than the five above. Among the Lesser Officers are worth mentioning the Captain of the Knight Protectors (the king's bodyguard) , the Master of the King's Horse, the Royal Chaplain, the Court Magist, the Master of the Royal Palace, and the Governors of the Provinces.

Each of the Great and Lesser Officers is flanked by one or more deputies and, especially for administrative roles, by a staff of lower officers and by a small chancery. Most of these offices would usually be filled by landed nobles, but in Ericall's young kingdom most dominion rulers have to oversee the management of their lands and have little spare time to devote to court duties; thus, Ericall's staff includes also some individuals belonging to the gentry or to the lesser aristocracy.

A word must be spent about the **Governors of the Provinces**; these individuals are appointed by the king and tasked with the government of one of the vast provinces in which the Kingdom of Norwold is divided. A Governor has duties which are both civil - such as overseeing the construction and maintenance of the province's roads, bridges, mills, docks, and public buildings -, juridical - he heads the province's court (an appeal court which ranks above the dominion rulers' own courts) and sheriffs who administer the king's law -, and military - the organization of the province's levy, the recruitment of the provincial army, and coordination of the individual dominion rulers' armies. Various officers appointed by the crown flank and help the Governor in his duties: a chief magistrate and the sheriffs for juridical duties, a reeve and the provosts for tax collection. Each Governor usually has also a personal staff of his own, or more

Province	Governor
Aquelera*	Aendim
Azure Lake	-
Chermosar*	Podo Hornblower
Coast of Rebirth*	Alvaden Wildgaze
Dashedar	0
Dashetyr	-
Enderover	-
Esendel-Mhirren*	Kerana N'Jozee
Hidden Valley	-
Isles of the Strand	Tralkar Fenn, Count of Hulgarmholm
Kelmershyr	-
Landfall	Lernal 'the Swill', Duke of Landfall
Landrise	Beriak Alanira, Count of Draken
Lighthall	Theobold Redbeard, Count of Lighthall
Ransarn	-
Sharnadar	Kerik, Count of Therimar
Tranquil Coast*	Teskithan
Viaskaland	-
Wymsteeth	-

Table 4: Norwold Provinces and their Governors

commonly - if he is also a local dominion ruler - has his dominion's staff double as the Governor's.

A Governor might theoretically not even be a dominion ruler, but the current state of things in Norwold usually requires that Ericall appoint as Governor of a Province its most faithful, important, or powerful dominion ruler. Unfortunately, as most of Norwold is still a wilderness land, a number of Provinces (those marked with an asterisk in the table 4) are actually only borders drawn on a map, with the title of their Governor being an empty one, and in such cases the governorship is temporarily held by one of Ericall's officers since there are no suitable or available dominion rulers there.

Some areas are so remote and uninhabited that a Governor was never appointed for them. Of course, this state of things is likely to change some time after the Great Land Rush - or so Ericall hopes - also depending on how the current temporary governors will have performed.

Currently, there are nineteen provinces (in addition to the Royal Estate, which encompasses the Peninsula of Alpha), whose borders are featured on the map included in this article, above. Their governors are listed in Table 4 (preceding page).<sup>6</sup>

### A Note About Status, Slavery, AND MARRIAGE

The first thing an Alphatian will note upon arriving in Norwold is that, well, Norwold is *not* Alphatia. In Norwold magic-users are only given a vague respect due to their alleged powers, and non-spellcasters are

<sup>6</sup> These characters will be described in the second part of this article, featured in the next issue of "Threshold".

much more numerous than spellcasters in the aristocracy; the king himself - as well as most of his noblemen - is unable to learn magic. This means also that an Alphatian wizard in Norwold had better not treat every commoner (i.e non-noble) as trash or a slave, as often happens in Alphatia.

### Rank and Status in Norwold

Regarding **status**, the noble ranks currently recognized by the Norwold law are shown in Table 5 (below).

Currently, before the Land Rush, Norwold features only one duke (Landfall), four counts (Draken, Hulgarholm, Lighthall, and Therimar), and two barons (Khemyr and Nevoshed). The other three domains (Hastamal, Noskien, and Somyra) are lordships. To be added to these numbers are the Vatski principalities - two of which rank as full counties, while the other three - which are allies of the Kingdom of Norwold, and not vassals of it - are considered mere lordships.

Title	Status	Style of Address	Who May Grant It
King	Hereditary	Your (Royal) Majesty	The Alphatian Emperor
Duke	Hereditary	Your Grace	King
Count	Hereditary	Your Lordship/Ladyship	King, Duke
Baron	Hereditary	Your Lordship/ Ladyship	King, Duke, Count
Lord (Landed)	Hereditary	Sir/Dame	King, Duke, Count, Baron
Lord	Non-hereditary	Sir/Dame	King, Duke, Count, Baron
Knight	Non-hereditary	Sir/Dame	King, Duke, Count, Baron

Table 5: Noble ranks recognised by Norwold law

*Lord* is a catch-all rank for whichever title of lesser nobility might be granted by the king or one of his noblemen of baron or higher rank - titles such as *jarl*, *baronet*, and the like fall into this category; the title of lord may or may not come with some lands, and in the latter case it is not hereditary and assigned to important officers or ministers of the crown or of a landed nobleman.

The crown's Great Officers automatically receive the rank of lords, but are addressed as "Your Excellency" in account for their political role. The Lesser Officers are usually granted the title of lords as well, but they keep their normal style of address.



*King Ericall  
knighting a squire,  
from an  
illuminated  
manuscript*

*Knight* is a non-hereditary title of lesser nobility granted to those who show unquestionable loyalty, honor, virtue, or performed relevant deeds for the crown or the kingdom, and possess good fighting abilities (battle spellcasting included). It is the lowest order of nobility, which is usually granted by the king or by one of his noblemen to individuals who performed well on the battlefield or did some special service for them. Anyway, a knight who does not possess some deal of battlefield skills will be looked down upon by other knights. Often,

the rank of knight is associated with membership in a knightly order (currently the crown supports only one such order, the Knight Protectors - i.e. the bodyguards of the king - but new orders may be created in the near future by the king or by one of his noblemen).

King Ericall is a good man and sincerely believes that random ability to learn magic should not hamper a worthy person's social rise - in his opinion, a nobleman is such because of his or her own virtues and merits (or because of those of his or her ancestors). Thus, an Alphatian aristocrat (i.e. a spellcaster) in Norwold could expect to be treated with the respect due to a non-landed lord in most populous areas where the Alphatian culture is dominant (like Alpha), but only as a particularly wise or skilled commoner in other places. On the other hand, an Alphatian lord would receive the treatment due to a baron. Exceptions exist - e.g. powerful Alphatian lords might be considered counts or even dukes in the Norwold hierarchy.

### Slavery in the Kingdom

For the same reason, Ericall frowns upon **slavery** - he has seen the misery of the slave class in Alphatia, and does not want something like that going on in his realm. Nevertheless, Alphatians are not the only ones to have slaves, since slave-owning is a practice deeply-rooted in the culture of Thyatians and northern peoples: Northmen, Heldanners, Vatski, and the barbarian peoples of Norwold all keep slaves, *thralls* or serfs in one way or another. Ericall would have liked to outlaw slavery, but his councillors warned him that in a young

kingdom such sudden changes might result in great troubles, and advised him to wait; also, slave labor might turn useful in the improvement of Norwold's infrastructures in the near future, and the trade of slaves taken from defeated barbarian tribes might also bring some riches to Alpha's coffers. At last, the warning of Empress Eriadna herself made Ericall ultimately recede from his goal.

Ericall has nevertheless copied part of the Thyatian slavery laws, and outlawed the mistreatment and killing of slaves, introduced a series of laws to protect slaves from their owners, and does not permit the employment of slaves for court service in the Royal Palace as well as in every office directly dependent from the crown. Individual lords behave as they prefer about the latter point, but the king will not look kindly on anyone among his noblemen who makes large use of slaves or habitually practices slave trade; the king tolerates the enslavement of war prisoners, but will rather ask a ransom for them as first choice. This obsession for slavery, anyway, is only another example of the king's idealized approach to ruling; in fact, while it is true that slavery in Norwold has existed since ancient times, at present the slavery issue is definitely not a major one (like it is in Alphatia), as the northern *thrall*-keeping practice is quite different from outright Alphatian slavery, and most Alphatian lords coming from the mainland will likely have a handful of household slaves only, and not a large number of farm-slaves like in their homeland.



*Alphatian noblemen consider their purchase*

### The Marriage Issue

A last thing has to be noted about **marriage**. Each of Norwold's different peoples has its own custom for marriage and family-raising; only the Alphatians among the known peoples do not recognize marriage as a social institution. Other peoples see the social anarchy produced by their custom as decadent and debauched. To put himself in a better light before his subjects, Ericall decided to distance his kingdom from its mother empire over the issue of marriage as well, and even decided he himself would marry in the near future.

Ericall introduced the institution of marriage into the Norwold law, as well as regulations regarding the reciprocal obligations between the bride and the groom, succession, and the maintenance of children. The marriage law introduced the concept that only children born in a married couple can apply to receive a part of their parents' inheritance; other children are considered illegitimate and a special permission of the king is required if a parent wants to pass his or her inheritance to such children. Regarding succession, the law states that the parents' inheritance goes to the children; the parents can divide the inheritance among the living legitimate children as they see fit, with the clause that at least one-twentieth of the inheritance must go to each one of them (male or female it does not matter) and that noble titles and the lands eventually associated with them cannot be split among heirs. Anyway, the choice of the son or daughter that will inherit a noble title (and lands) is free - the parents are not bound to choose the firstborn.

In order for the law to apply to the native peoples of the kingdom's borderlands and to overcome cultural boundaries, the king's law applies its definition of marriage (with all its obligations and regulations) to any heterosexual couple where both partners have affirmed their status as husband and wife. As the Alphatians living in Norwold in most cases had already informally adopted some marriage practices due to their integration with the native peoples, Ericall's law has at the moment little effect on the habits of the Alphatians coming from the mainland - unless they want to make children with a partner who is a native of Norwold: in this case the mate is likely to ask the would-be partner to marry him or her according to Norwold law, in order to share the same obligations toward children and succession.



*A marriage feast*

# The Skaufskogr and Beyond

## A Gazetteer of Southern Norwold

by Giampaolo Agosta (Agathokles)

This article, and its companion map on page 161, introduces the Skaufskogr region, set in southern Norwold, between Landfall and Lighthall, as well as the human and non-human tribes that live there and in the neighbouring Ransarn-Vinisk valleys, such as the Vatski and Vrodniki.

### DWELLERS OF THE SKAUFSKOGR

This section describes the native people, human and non-human, of the Skaufskogr forest and the neighbouring provinces, including the Ransarn-Vinisk valley north-west of the Final Range.

#### Elves of the Foresthomes

The Foresthome elves left Alphatia when the major clans of that land merged into the Shiye-Lawr monarchy – they were an independent minded people, and cared little for politics. A few small clans live in the Skaufskogr. Like most Foresthome elves, they worship Ilsundal, Zirchev, and the hero-queen Lornasen, who brought a branch of the Tree of Life to Norwold. Eyrindul is also worshipped by most as the father of the Shiye elves.

### NPC Statistics

Capsule statistics for the main NPCs of the region are provided using both the AD&D 2e rules, including character kits (mostly from The Savage Coast Campaign Setting), and BECMI, including optional classes (see my “Adventuring in the Northlands” article in Threshold Issue 6 for an overview of BECMI classes in Norwold). The AD&D versions of the NPCs are designed for a relatively low-level campaign, whereas the BECMI D&D versions are designed to be compatible with the classic Norwold adventures, and in particular with CM1 “Test of the Warlords”. Thus, instead of using the standard conversion rules between AD&D 2e and BECMI D&D, most NPCs have a wider level difference between the two versions (10 levels, except for a few cases where it does not make sense).

There are 7 small elven clans in the Skaufskogr. They tend to keep to themselves, but recognize the need to cooperate, especially given that the small forest does not allow them more than a single Tree of Life. The Tree is held by the Fainrus clan, which is therefore somewhat more prestigious than the others. However, each clan provides a priest to the Treekeepers' council (not all of these priests are really Treekeepers, though the majority are – some are priests of Lornasen or Eiryndul, or even Balancer followers of Zirchev). The Fainrus clanmaster, currently the Elf woman Nirwen, is the informal leader of the clanmasters' council, the major government body of the Foresthome. In addition to clanmaster and treekeeper, each clan has a third official, the clanholder, generally a middle-aged warrior or wizard who is in charge of the clan defenses.

### LINEAGE OF THE FAINRUS TREE OF LIFE

The elven clans of the Norwold Foresthomes are a dissident branch of the Shiye of Alphatia. They were exiled from the Kingdom of Shiye-Lawr for refusing to turn from Ilsundal to the worship of Eiryndul. Lornasen, the most powerful among the exiles, petitioned Ilsundal for Immortality on Catspaw Mountain, and created the Lothbarth Forest, where she planted her clan's Tree of Life.

Faeralas, who would be later known as the Treebringer in the Skaufskogr, was Lornasen's youngest son. He explored Norwold, finding more of the Shiye-Lawr exiles in smaller Foresthomes. Later in his life, he became the mate of Nirwen, the clanmistress of Taur Fainrus. He brought there a branch of Lornasen's Tree of Life, which is currently the only Tree of Life in the Skaufskogr.



*The Sirraen*

### *History of the Skaufskogr and the Ransarn Valley*

Compatibility Note: this timeline is generally compatible with the history of Norwold as exposed in "A Traveller's Guide to Norwold" in this same Issue of Threshold. Specific incompatible events are noted as such.

#### **Prehistory**

**1725-1709 BC** The Great Horde crushes the Antalian civilization in Norwold. First settlement at Midway Haven is destroyed. The goblinoids sacrifice dozens of captured Antalians to dark powers.

**1200 BC** The Helskir land bridge collapses, isolating the Skaufskogr and Heldland regions from the Isle of Dawn.

**1000 BC** Foxfolk from the Yalu Sea region cross Wendar and Heldann, settling in the Skaufskogr Hills. They have learned the Antalian language from Yalu Sea tribes and Wendarians, but stay aloof from the more primitive Heldanners.

#### **Foundation of the Foresthomes**

**ca. 600 BC** Many Shiye Elves migrate to Norwold, founding the first Foresthomes.

**ca. 500 BC** Shiye clans, led by Fainrus the Old, settle in the Skaufskogr. At the same time, the ancestors of the Heldann Shepherd Lupins migrate north from the Darokin plains.

**ca. 490 BC** Gnomes fleeing the Hardanger reach the Heldland, settling the Schnauzwald.

#### **Fainrus**

Population: 260

Location: Fainrus, Skaufskogr Hills

Clanmaster: Nirwen Demris, the Weeping Queen (AD&D: e,f,B2/Minstrel; BECMI: Elf Wizard 12)

Treekeeper: Himind (AD&D: e,f,P7 of Ilsundal; BECMI: Elf Treekeeper 17)

Clanholder: Callondir (AD&D: e,m,F7/Defender of Lornasen; BECMI: Elf Paladin 10/E)

Typical NPC: Defender of Lornasen

The Fainrus ("white fox") clan was the family of Fainrus the Old, the founder of the Skaufskogr Foresthome (known as *Fainrus Tauramar* in the elven tongue). Fainrus was actually very young as a clanmaster when he led the clans out of Shiye-Lawr, and became known as "the Old" because he ruled for centuries. The clan was later ruled by one of his granddaughters, who was for a long time the mate of the northern elf Faeralas Treebringer, son of the Immortal Lornasen, who brought a branch of his mother's Tree of Life to the Skaufskogr. The clanmaster of Fainrus is considered a *primus inter pares* among the clanmasters of the Fainrus Tauramar.

**Daemar**

Population: 170

Location: Daemar, Frodhulf Vale

Clanmaster: Cumbrethil (AD&D: e,f,T4/Scout; BECMI: Elf Lord 10/C)

Treekeeper: Fergalas (AD&D: e,m,P5 of Eiryndul; BECMI: Elf Cleric 15)

Clanholder: Maegaith (AD&D: e,m,F4/T4; BECMI: Elf Lord 10/D)

Typical NPC: Scout.

The Daemar (“shadow home”) clan lives on the north-eastern border of the Skaufskogr, nearest to the human lands. The Daemar have perfected the art of disappearing in the woods, and keep the border secure by means of stealth (and with some help from the local druids). They are also the only elves known to the people of Frodhulf Vale and Midway Haven – the local Heldanners know there are elves in the woods, but most think it is a single clan.

**0 AC** The Treaty of Edairo establishes Norwold as a neutral buffer territory between Alphatia and Thyatis. Foundation of the Empire of Thyatis.

**ca. 15 AC** Alphatia instigates Qeodharan raiders to destroy Cape Alpha, a recently-built Thyatian outpost in Norwold. Thyatis retaliates by attacking Alphatian holdings on the Isle of Dawn, leading to the Bog Wars.

**ca. 100 AC** Faeralas Treebringer brings a branch of Lornasen’s Tree of Life to the Skaufskogr.

**322-336 AC** Reign of the Ice Queen, Akra, in central Norwold.

**ca. 400 AC** Death of Fainrus. The clan elders choose Talagan as the next Clan Holder of Taur Fainrus. Meanwhile, Ostland raiders threaten the coasts.

**First Alphatian Colonization**

**450-510 AC** Alphatian Emperor Volospin III sends a first colonial expedition to Norwold. The attempt fails after the Alphatians are defeated by barbarian forces.

**596 AC** King Nebunar founds Essuria.

**640 AC** The Battle of the Skulls along the White Bear River pits the forces of Frosthaven and Pojaara against a coalition of Kaarjalan and Littonian forces.

**648 AC** Battle of Naga River. Nordurlander Jarls defeat the Essurian army of King Arus, halting the eastward expansion of the Kingdom of Essuria.

**793 AC** Talagan dies, his daughter Nirwen becomes Clan Holder of the Skaufskogr elves.

**Foundation of the Vatski Rodina and Second Alphatian Colonization**

**828 AC** The blue dragon king of Wurmsteeth ascends to Immortality. The king's son, Dominagon, resettles in the Lirovka's Alps. Released vassals battle for supremacy, causing the Vatski to flee from the Wurmsteeth foothills. Influenced by the mystical aura of the ascended dragon king leads them to leave their nomadic ways and look for a land to settle.

**830 AC** Vatski from the Wurmsteeth cross the mountains at Ershal-Kur and invade the plains south-east of the Final Range.

**834 AC** After four years of conflict, the Vatski invaders are rooted. Their leader, knyaz Volodymyr, is killed in single combat by the Shepherd hero, Hrotgarmr. Some of the fleeing Vatski settle along the Saffir Stream, most flee back beyond the Final Range.

**840 AC** A son of Volodymyr, Volodya Volodymyrovic, settles along the coast of the Azure Lake. It is the birth of the Duchy of Vyoistagrad, and of the Vatski Rodina.

**ca. 860 AC** Foundation of Niður (on the site of Landfall) as a trade port for Essuria's merchant king Gallathon.

**868 AC** Second Alphatian colonization attempt in Norwold. Meredoth becomes Lord of Todstein. Prince Gaernil of Shiye Lawr guides the Alphatian attempt to colonize southern Norwold. The Old Fort is built.

**869 AC** Battle of Frodhulf Creek (Alphatians led by Prince Gaernil of Shiye-Lawr vs. Heldanners and Heldann

**Glirvaen**

Population: 120

Location: Fainrus, Skaufskogr Hills

Clanmaster: Handhol (AD&D: e,m,W2/Mystic; BECMI: Elf Wizard 12)

Treekeeper: Laerant (AD&D: e,m,P4 of Ilsundal; BECMI: Elf Treekeeper 14)

Clanholder: Glirbrennil (AD&D: he,f,B8/Meistersinger; BECMI: Demi-elf Bard 18<sup>1</sup>)

Typical NPC: Minstrel or Meistersinger.

<sup>1</sup> Using demi-elf/half-elf rules from Dragon Magazine 178, and Bard rules from Dragon Magazine 177.

The Glirvaen ("song skilled") elves are a music-loving folk, living in the deep woods. They are friendly with the Foxfolk and the Little People. The Glirvaen are also the only clan to have a halfbreed clanholder, the demi-elf Glirbrennil (or Brennil for short). This minstrel is a wonderful musician, able to calm even raging beasts with her lute.

**Brandaras**

Population: 140

Location: Fainrus, Habadorn

Clanmaster: Hilmarad the Young (AD&D: e,m,F3/W2; BECMI: Elf Lord 10/C)

Treekeeper: Alphnir (AD&D: e,m,P4 of Zirchev; BECMI: Elf Cleric 14)

Clanholder: Gaelthor (AD&D: e,m,F5/Archer; BECMI: Elf Lord 10/D)

Typical NPC: Archer or Ranger.

The second “clanmaster” of Fainrus Tauramar, Hilmarad the Hunter, came from this clan, from which many good archers arise. Clanmaster Hilmarad “the Young” is actually almost 600 years old, and is a grandson of the original Hilmarad. Brandaras (“noble deer”) clanmembers worship Eiryndul and even the Korrigan more than Lornasen or Ilsundal, and there is some old attrition over Hilmarad’s loss of prestige when Faeralas brought the a branch of Lornasen’s Tree to the Skaufskogr.

Shepherds). Nirwen refuses to send help to Gaernil, who dies in battle. Nirwen becomes known as Demris, the Weeping Queen. The Old Fort is reduced to ruins.

**870 AC** The Long Winter: one of the coldest winters ever seen hits Norwold as Frota, the second Ice Queen, begins her reign. The winter exhausts the resources of the few Alphatian colonies in the Oceansend area, many colonists die. The Mists draw Meredoth into Ravenloft.

**874 AC** The Ice Queen is defeated by a Norwolder rebellion.

**900 AC** Thyatian settlers create the colony of Oceansend.

**ca. 900 AC** Vatski tribes south-west of Vyolstograd are united into the Duchy of Stamtral by knyagynia Rada, a warrior woman devoted to the dragon god, Volos.

**915 AC** Prism Wars in Ghyr, unrest among the goblinoid tribes. Fighting between Shepherd and Foxfolk clans and Mengul ogres and orcs. A warband of Heldann Shepherd becomes known as Hrotgarmr-klo, the Fang of Hrotgarmr.

**ca. 940 AC** The Zhucharnov boyars conquer the western coast of the Azure Lake, founding the Duchy of Lazarsk.

**950 AC** Conquest of Haldisvall (Freiburg) by the Heldannic Knights.

**960 AC** The Spike Assault hits Thyatis. Oceansend claims independence. Thyatis relinquishes control of Landfall and other Norwold holdings. The Thieves’ Guild emerges as the main power. Refugees from the Heldann Freeholds flood into Heldland.

977 AC The boyar Stano rebels against knyaz Boroda of Stamtral, kills him and takes his throne with the help of Heldanner mercenaries.

978 AC Altendorf Rebellion. More refugees flee to Norwold. Elsewhere, Eruul Zaar takes control of the village of Helskir. The town will pass from Alphatian to Thyatian control several times in the following years, but Zaar always manages to stay on top.

980 AC Heldanner warbands settle along the eastern coast of Lake Gunaald, subjugating the Vatski boyars and founding the Duchy of Gunnvolod.

### Third Alphatian Colonization

985 AC Alphatian settlers and soldiers cross the Western Sea of Dawn from Helskir and begin the construction of the port of Lighthall and the city of Alpha. Elsewhere, heroes undertake the Quest for the Heartstone. Guildmaster Dahnakriss dies and is replaced by Guildmaster Prosper at the head of Landfall's Thieves' Guild.

989 AC Nevik becomes knyaz of Vyolstograd, taking the place of his father Volodya III.

990 AC Midway Haven is founded as an Alphatian waypoint between Lighthall and Landfall. Construction of the Royal Palace of Alpha begins.

992 AC Ericall is appointed King of Norwold, but his authority only extends as far as the Alphatian army can reach – Alpha and the surrounding region, plus a

### Aglarant

Population: 150

Location: Fainrus, Cirlad

Clanmaster: Bragolaith (AD&D: e,m,F3/W3; BECMI: Elf Lord 10/C)

Treekeeper: Angolbarth (AD&D: e,m,P4 of Ilsundal; BECMI: Elf Treekeeper 14)

Clanholder: Adunoth (AD&D: e,m,W6/War Wizard; BECMI: Elf Wizard 16)

Typical NPC: War Wizard.

The Aglarant (“glorious gift”) clan is more militant than most, harboring several war wizards and fighters. Clanmaster Bragolath, an old warrior, is more hotheaded than most, often favoring direct solutions to whatever problem the clanmasters’ council has. His treekeeper, Angolbarth, lends some strategic thought, but generally agrees with the clanmaster when he calls for straightforward actions.

## Sirraen

Population: 120

Location: Sirraen, Skaufskogr Hills

Clanmaster: Thoronthel (AD&D: e,f,R6/Local Hero; BECMI: Elf Paladin 10/E)

Treekeeper: Faelos (AD&D: e,f,P4 of Lornasen; BECMI: Elf Cleric 14)

Clanholder: the Clanmaster himself is the clanholder here; his second in command is Rhiwol (e,m,R3/Wilderness Warrior; BECMI: Elf Paladin 10/C)

Typical NPC: Wilderness Warrior.

number of ports, including Lighthall and Midway Haven. In retaliation against Alphatia's bid in Norwold, Thyatis occupies Helskir, with Eruul Zaar's help.

**995 AC** Lernal the Swill named Governor of Landfall.

**997 AC** Alphatian commander Theobold Redbeard, a Dunadale native, is named Governor of Lighthall.

**999 AC** Goblinoids from the Mengul Mountains invade the Skarsholm region. Helskir declares independence from Norwold.

**1000 AC** The present.

A wilder (and smaller) clan, the Sirraen ("crooked river") live along the Sirraen river, on the northern border of the Skaufskogr. They tend to keep to themselves, and apparently enjoy the Foxfolk company as much as that of their fellow elves. Most members of this clan are simple hunters. Even their clanmasters are chosen more for hunting and foresting skills than for wisdom or experience. Clanmistress Thoronthel is quite young for her job, and holds the position of clanholder as well.

## Gaerlind

Population: 210

Location: Cirlad, Habadorn

Clanmaster: Fannelor (AD&D e,f,0-level;  
BECMI: Elf 9)

Treekeeper: Sidhiel (AD&D: e,f,P3 of  
Lornasen; BECMI: Elf Cleric 13)

Clanholder: Eithel (AD&D: e,f,W6/Water  
Elementalist; BECMI: Elf Wizard 16)

Typical NPC: Water Elementalist or  
Archer.

The Gaerlind (“sea song”) elves were the ones who built and sailed the ships that led the Skaufskogr elves from Alphatia to Norwold. While they build large ships no more, the Gaerlind are still wise in the ways of the sea, living as fishermen as well as woodsmen. They use light, easily carried boats made of bark, flexible branches and leather, so that they do not need ports – actually, the Cirlad coast doesn’t appear to house any coastal community, and that’s a testament to the elven ability to live in harmony with the land.

## The Foxfolk



*Foxfolk*

The heavily forested Skaufskogr hills are the home of a large Foxfolk tribe. These white-furred Lupins look remarkably like humanoid foxes. While they have absorbed civilization from the neighbouring elves and humans, their strong druidic faith keeps them close to nature. A friendly folk learned in the way of the forest, the Foxfolk hold the path of the druid as the highest, deferring all major decisions to the leader of the local druidic circle (which is part of the Druidic Circle of Norwold). The Foxfolk druids are

Balancers, worshipping a pantheon composed of Zirchev, Skauf-halli (Korotiku) and the Night Hunter (Saimpt Loup). Interaction with the local human communities brought also the worship of Frey and Freya.

Their small villages dot the area, and a major druidic site can be found at the heart of the Skaufskogr Hills. The remaining Foxfolk live within the Taur Fainrus forest, or along the course of the Sirraen. Each village takes the name of a totem tree (e.g., the Birch village or the Ash village).

### Society

Within each village, the Lupins are divided into four patrilineal exogamic groups (the Fire, Earth, Water and Sky clans). Members of each clan cannot marry into their clan, into the clan of the opposite element, or into the clan of their mother. So, the son of a Fire father and Earth mother must marry into the Water clan, but his sons will have to marry into the Earth clan.

Moreover, the village is divided into five totemic clans, the Salmon, Eagle, Hare, Snake and Elk. Totemic clan membership is inherited from the parent of the same gender, and members of a clan cannot eat the totem animal, nor any animal of the same type (fish, birds, small mammals, reptiles, large mammals). However, only a member of the Eagle clan can, by decree of the druids, raise or hunt birds, and so on for the other totems. This way, each clan provides its totem animal to the others in exchange for foods they can eat, but must not overhunt, since each animal killed weakens the clan.

The druids here are the upper caste, but they are considered outside the exogamic clans – a druid must respect his or her parents' clan constraints, but a son or daughter of two druids can marry into any clan. Anyone becoming a druid loses his exogamic clan name, and replaces it with the name of his native village tree totem.

Membership in a totemic clan restricts the allowed professions – a beginning character should take one non-weapon proficiency related to his clan, and should avoid those specific of other clans:

- Salmon** fisherman, boat builder, weaver, gardener
- Eagle** bird breeder, fletcher, bowmaker, carpenter
- Hare** hunter, trapper, tanner
- Snake** herbalist, scout
- Elk** herdsman, big game hunter, tanner

Each totemic clan also favors some classes. Characters wishing to play Foxfolk Defenders or Wizards should select a patron or specialization appropriate to their totemic clan:

- Salmon** Defender of Freya, Abjurer
- Eagle** Bard, Defender of Frey, Diviner
- Hare** Filcher, Defender of Korotiku, Mage
- Snake** Scout, Defender of Saimpt Loup, Necromancer
- Elk** Wilderness Warrior, Defender of Zirchev, Invoker

Foxfolk Druids usually become Totemic Druids, choosing the totem animal of their clan (except the Salmon druids). Local Heroes and Pacifists are also frequent, especially among the Salmon clan, where Totemic Druids are not present.

Skaufskogr Foxfolk can become Shamans<sup>1</sup>, able to contact the spirits of their totem animal, tree and element, but Shamans are much less common than druids.

### Settlements and Prominent NPCs

Three Foxfolk villages, Elm, Oak, and Spruce, are found within the borders of Taur Fainrus. Jogvan Fire-Elk (AD&D: m R8/Wilderness Warrior; BECMI: Lupin Ranger 18<sup>2</sup>) of Oak Village is the war leader of the Fainrus Foxfolk, while Grimur Fire-Eagle (AD&D: m B7/Skald; BECMI: Lupin Bard 17) of Spruce Village is their loremaster.

The villages of Birch, Ash, and Poplar, are located upstream from the Sirraen clanhold. Rannva Water-Snake (AD&D: f T9/Scout; BECMI: Lupin Thief 19), Arnleyg Water-Salmon (AD&D f P7/Shaman; BECMI: Lupin Shaman 17), and Bjarni Sky-Snake (AD&D: m T7/Scout; BECMI: Lupin Thief 17) are the leaders of these three villages.

Foxfolk villages in the Skaufskogr Hills proper include Fir, Hickory, Walnut, Larch, Maple, and Locust, while Pine village is the major Foxfolk settlement in the Western Skaufskogr hills.

<sup>1</sup> For Classic D&D, use the Shaman class from GAZ12 "The Golden Khan of Ethengar".

<sup>2</sup> Using the Ranger class from F-GAZ9 "The Free City of Oceansend".

Drifvita Eagle-Larch (AD&D: f D10/Totemic; BECMI: Lupin Druid 20) is the Druid in charge of the Final Range area, from the forest borders to the south-west to the Final Range and up to Oceansend. She reports to Archdruid Tarn Oakleaf<sup>3</sup>, the leader of the Druidic Circle of Norwold, and is on friendly terms with her neighbours, Geoffrey of Heldann to the South and Yarovoj of the White Banner to the north-west. Since she has a large territory, she relies on Ingolvur Elk-Fir (AD&D: m D8/Totemic; BECMI: Lupin Druid 18), a powerful follower of the Way of the Druid, to keep tabs on local events in the Skaufskogr.

Other notable Lupins of the Skaufskogr hills include Kjeld Earth-Hare (m R9/Local Hero), huntmaster of Walnut Village, Eydhun Earth-Snake (AD&D: m F7/Defender of Saimpt Loup; BECMI: Lupin Paladin 17), the chief warrior of Hickory Village, Oddvor Sky-Salmon (AD&D: f F7/Defender of Freyja; BECMI: Lupin Druidic Knight 17) of Maple Village, and Steintor Fire-Salmon (AD&D: m W6/Wokan; BECMI: Lupin Hakomon 16) of Locust Village, one of the most powerful Foxfolk wizards. Hedhin Sky-Hare (AD&D: m F8/Defender of Korotiku; BECMI: Lupin Avenger 18), of Pine Village, is the leader of the Western Skaufskogr Foxfolk.

<sup>3</sup> Or whoever is the Archdruid in charge of Norwold, if in your campaign Tarn is lower than level 30 -- in particular in CM1, Tarn is only level 24, and he is not the Archdruid.

## The Vatski and the Vrodniki

Holding the valleys between the Wurmsteeth and the Icereach Range are the Vatski, and the related Vrodniki. The Vatski share similar looks with the Heldanner, but have a different culture and language. Less civilized than the coastlanders, these warring tribes have a long history of unrest – their *knyazbestvo*, or principalities, are often dictatorships that last as long as the current *knyaz* (duke) is able to control his vassals by showing his strength – both personal and military. The presence of the Wurmsteeth dragons – and their mysterious kingdom – is thought to be the reason why the Vatski rarely mount raids against the coastal settlements.



*A bard entertains Vatski warriors*

The Vrodniki are a semi-nomadic branch of the Viatski. Somewhat less belligerent, and more primitive, than their city-dwelling cousins, these nomads are rarely seen east of the Final Range. Together, Vatski and Vrodniki are referred to as Vanatics, although this term is only used by outsiders, such as Heldannic or Thyatian explorers.

## Society

The Vantalian peoples of Norwold are among the more primitive of their kind – while the Zuyevan descendants of the Yevo horde have brushed with civilization for centuries, the Norwold Vantalian have only recently started a process of nation building, and then only among the western tribes. These Vantalian, who go under the name of Vatski, have formed two principalities, Vyolstograd and Stamtral, after being chased from the Wurmsteeth Range less than two centuries ago.

The two principalities have fared quite differently. While both are semi-barbaric at best, Vyolstograd has enjoyed a stable government, with the exception of the brief reign of Yarak the Usurper, a powerful boyar who managed to take control of the duchy for a few years after the death of knyaz Volodya II, who left no direct heir.

On the other hand, Stamtral's even shorter history has been plagued by several bloody coups that brought to power treacherous boyarin and generals, as the line of the founder, knyagynia Rada, quickly died out. An ambitious boyar, Yaro, took power after murdering Rada's weak son, only to be assassinated a few years later. His widow and later his son Zivon carried on Yaro's claim to the throne against a cadet branch of Rada's family, until the militia general Boroda ousted Zivon and named himself knyaz with the help of a contingent of Heldanner mercenaries who had left the Freeholds after the fall of Haldisvall. His autocratic rule lasted for more than twenty years thanks to the support of the large military class, but when Boroda became old, the boyars and the mercenary captains plotted against him,



*Knyaz Stano of Stamtral*

bringing one of the most powerful boyars, Stano (AD&D: m,h,F12 Myrmidon; BECMI: F22/Dominion Ruler), to the throne.

The society of the principalities is simple enough – the knyaz is at the head of the nation, helped by his *druzhina*, a warband of knights (*muzbi*) and veteran infantrymen (*druzbinnik*). Below him, the *boyarin* (barons) – leaders of noble families – hold large territories (*volosts*) and keep their own armed retainers. Retainers sometimes change masters, but this is not considered a betrayal.

Below the boyars are the *okolnichy* (landed lords), lesser landed nobility holding only small patches of land. The *okolnichy* and boyars form the *Duma*, an advisory council similar to the Thing of the Heldanners. In Stamtral, the *hofdbingi*, mercenary captains of Heldanner origin, are also part of the nobility and take part in the *Duma*, while in Vyolstograd some fiefs and most towns and villages are administered by appointed officials (*namestniks* and *mechniks*). In Vyolstograd, a small craftsman class is emerging, forming a trade guild led by a Guildmaster (*starosta*, or elder).

The Vatski occupy the lands around the Azure lake, south of the Giants’ Mountains and the White Mountains, as well as the eastern coast of Lake Gunaald. Besides the two major principalities of Vyolstograd and Stamtral, three other small duchies, Gunvolod, Odna and Lazarsk are present in the area, and many freeholds are located in the neutral territory south of Vyolstograd and east of Stamtral. The minor duchies have been established in the last century. Gunvolod is ruled by a Heldanner dynasty, related to the *hofdbingi* of Stamtral. Odna is the smallest duchy, but controls a critical asset, the mines of Zmeynk. A sizable dwarven population is found here, and the knyaz of Odna are rumored to have dealings with the Wyrksteeth to protect their territory from Stamtral’s encroaching. Finally, Lazarsk is an agrarian dominion, which pays tributes to Stamtral and to the green dragon kingdom of Zilantsk to the west<sup>4</sup>.



*Three knights from Stamtral*

The Vrodniki, on the other hand, are still nomadic, following the migrations of large

<sup>4</sup> With the last Alphatian colonization, Lazarsk’s ruling Zhucharnov family aligns itself with Ericall as a way to reduce the influence of Stamtral.

cattle herds across vast territories in the Ransarn Valley and north-west of the Wyrksteeth. They are divided into three *voyskos* (hosts, or banners), the White, Red and Blue Banners<sup>5</sup>. Each *voysko* is composed of many different tribes, each lead by a *starosta* (tribal chief or elder), but all defer to a single *knyaz*. In wartime, each tribe may also elect a *voyevod*, or war leader, if the peacetime chief is considered too weak to lead in war. *Knyaz Barkal* of the Red Banner (AD&D: m,h,F12 Wilderness Warrior; BECMI: F22) is currently the most powerful Vrodnik leader, as well as one of the most accomplished warriors.

### Religion

The Vanatics worship a pantheon of powerful Immortals – they respect only power, in mortals and in Immortals as well<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The three banners and Barkal are canonical elements from CM1 Test of the Warlords. Note that in the article “A Traveller’s Guide to Norwold”, these elements are associated with the Viaskoda, an M-Uralic nomadic people east of the Icereach Range. The option presented here allows involvement of the three banners and Barkal in a Skaufskogr campaign, whereas the one presented in “A Traveller’s Guide to Norwold” may be more useful if the campaign is set near the Great Bay. Note also that the Viaskoda were originally introduced in the Mystaran Almanac as the “Norwold Barbarians”, and set in the same area where the Vrodniki of this article are based. The Viaskoda were moved north of the Great Bay in later works to fit with the presence of a barbarian fleet belonging to the Red Banner on the northern shores of the Great Bay in M2 (page 23).

<sup>6</sup> Note that the pantheon proposed here is different from the one proposed in Marco Dalmonte’s Codex Immortalis, volume 2. The differences are primarily due to the fact that

In Vanatic theology, *Dazbbog* (Ixion) is the Lord of the Sun, eternally locked in a conflict with the Dark Lord, *Chernobog* (Thanatos), lord of winter. *Volos* (Pearl), the dragon god of earth and water, and *Perun* (Thor), the thundering god of sky and fire, complete the pantheon. The sedentary Vatski also worship the divine twins, *Yaro* (Frey) and *Yara* (Freyja) as patrons of crops and agriculture.

The clergy among the Vatski is usually very militant – powerful priests set themselves up as boyarin, with lesser priests and defenders as their *druzhina*. Within the household of a priest of a given Immortal, worship of any other Immortal is usually forbidden. Priests of all four main gods are equally common, though in Vyolstograd worship of Chernobog is discouraged by the local rulers.

On the other hand, there is no hierarchy beyond that of the clan – unless a powerful priest manages to set himself as *knyaz*, the principalities are generally not very religious. A few Heldanner clans in Stamtral and Gunvolod still worship Odin, Thor and Frey, but most Heldanner-descended Vatski simply follow the teachings of Perun and Yaro.

The Vrodniki worship the same powers as the Vatski, but put more emphasis on Perun and Volos, considering *Dazhbog* and *Chernobog* more like natural forces than actual Immortals. On the other hand, they offer much respect to some powers borrowed from their neighbours, including *Zirchev* (the Eagle Spirit) and *Saimpt Loup*

the Three Banners are not related to a Slavic-inspired culture in the Codex. Also, the version presented here tends to borrow Immortals from neighbouring peoples, avoiding unrelated Immortals such as Halav.

(the Wolf Spirit), as well as to a number of other animal spirits. Finally, the Vrodniki also fear *Mara* (Hel), goddess of death and witchcraft and worship *Zemlya* (Terra), the Mother Earth, and *Semargl* (Simurgh), the god of travellers and guardians.

The typical Vrodnik priest is a shaman (focusing on animal spirits) or a druid, often with an animal totem. Vrodnik priests are less involved in the political life of their tribes than Vatski priests – they are never clan leaders, as a shaman or druid always leaves his family when starting his training, and rarely pursue power, though they are always available to help their tribe with advice and magic.

## The Mountain Rakasta

Small Mountain Rakasta clans can be found almost anywhere in the foothills and slopes of the Final Range, the mountain chain that runs parallel to the Norwold coast. They are most common on Lirovka's Alps.

These Mountain Rakasta call themselves *Chize Chogh* (Mountain Rakasta), or *Chogh Dene* (mountain folk). Semi-nomadic hunters and herders, they live in small clan units, numbering less than fifty rakasta, though some sedentary groups, settled in villages in the high valleys of the Final Range can also be found.

Princes of Stamtral	
Rada	900-927
Radoslav I	927-928 (son)
Yaro	928-931 (usurper)
Sveta	931-935 (widow of Yaro)
Radoslav II	935-943 (cousin of Radoslav I)
Zivon	943-953 (son of Yaro and Sveta)
Boroda	953-977 (usurper)
Stano	977-current (usurper)

Princes of Vyolstgrad	
Volodya I	840-856
Volodymyr I	856-879 (son)
Volodya II	879-896 (son)
Yarok	896-899 (usurper)
Nevik I	899-915 (nephew of Volodya II)
Volodymyr II	915-942 (son)
Viacheslav	942-954 (grandson)
Vladimira	954-963 (daughter)
Volodya III	963-989 (son)
Nevik II	989-current (son)

Table 1: Genealogy of the Vatski princes of Vyolstgrad and Stamtral



*Mountain Rakasta*

Mountain Rakasta clans take names from specific habits – clothing or weapons, e.g. “Red Knives” or “Long Coats”, or by a tribal totem animal – generally given by neighbouring clans whose habits are different.

About one half of the Chíze Chogh in the Lirovka’s Alps are sedentary, living in the villages of Hhaiyé, Tazé, Ttizi, and Holuké. The people of the villages are divided into five clans: the Delk’oske (red shoes clan), Delgaike (white shoes), Delzenke (black shoes), Deltseske (brown shoes), and Delbaike (grey shoes) Chíze. Most clans get their living from river fishing, small game hunting (birds and hares, mostly), as well as mountain goat herding.

Nomadic Mountain Rakasta are divided in six tribes: the Yáhtóe (deer clan), Sastses (bear), Dlíe (squirrel), Taá (beaver), Gah (rabbit), and Dzen (muskrat) Chíze. The clans wander through the high mountains, hunting small and large game.

Each tribe is led by an elder (*Setsíe*), and the council of all eleven elders rules the entire mountain range – or at least, the part controlled by the Chíze Chogh, for about one half of the area is controlled by goblinoid tribes (mostly goblins and hobgoblins, with many bugbears).

## The Centaur Hetmanates

Centaur are common in the forests and plains of Norwold. They usually live in semi-nomadic clans of hunters and shepherds. The clans in a given region recognize a single ruler, called the *betman*, while individual clan leaders are called *otamans*. In the area north of Lighthall and east of the Skejdar river, two *Hetmanates* vie for control of the windswept coastal regions -- the territory of the Kabarda Hetmanate -- and the woodland -- the home ground of the Peseny Hetmanate. Both groups belong to the same culture, which is related to both the Centaurs of the



*A Strelets Centaur of the Vinisk Valley*

Ethengar plains<sup>7</sup>, and to the centaur Hetmanates of the Vinisk valley.

The Vinisk centaurs, however, have dealt extensively with the Kingdom of Essuria in the past, as well as with the Vatski and Vrodniki of the Ransarn valley. At the height of Essuria, the Vinisk Hetmanates were vassals of the Essurian Kings, charged with the protection of the Vinisk valley trade routes to Heldland and to the north. The language of the Strelets and Kosh centaurs of the Vinisk valley shows a significant amount of loan-words from the Vanatic and Essurian languages, and their equipment is also influenced by their neighbours, as well as the need to fight off resilient opponents such as trolls and yowlers: in particular, Strelets centaurs favor a long hafted axe (or short pole-axe) in melee combat, and the Kosh employ sabers, whereas Kabard and Peseny centaurs wield spears. Of course, the short bow is employed by all centaur Hetmanate troops.

Clan leadership is usually passed within the clan in patrilineal agnatic succession -- the eldest surviving son of any past *otaman* becomes the new chief at the death or retirement of the previous one. Thus, typically the clan leadership is passed from elder brother to younger brother, or between cousins of the same generation, rather than from father to son. The Hetman is an elective position among the Kosh, with a yearly term, but is linked to “royal” clans in the other Hetmanates -- so the clan leader of the royal clan automatically becomes the Hetman, which in this case is a position held for life.

<sup>7</sup> See PC1 Tall Tales of the Wee Folk.

The centaurs follow the teachings of the Druidic Circle of Norwold, and have their own druidic initiates. Occasionally, a high level centaur initiate manages to become a true Druid. Due to their druidic faith, most centaur clans are aggressive towards those who would despoil the land. In the Vinisk valley, the moor trolls are the primary enemies of the Strelets and Kosh Hetmanates, as their hunger is considered unnatural and wasteful of resources. Along the coast, the Kabarda are wary of human colonists, and defend their territory from encroaching homesteaders from Lighthall, as well as from the Alphatian pretenders during years following the Land Grab<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> If Brogahn, Allisa Patrician, or Winnifred of the Lake, who have an Ethengarian background, receive a barony in the Kabarda territory, they may be able to strike a deal with the centaurs. Other Barons are likely to be less compatible with the Hetmanate. See “Rogues, Barons and Pretenders”, to appear in Issue 8 of Threshold Magazine, for more details on these NPCs.

# The Skaufskogr and Beyond



Map of the Skaufskogr and the Ransarn-Vinisk Valley

## ATLAS OF THE SKAUFSKOGR AND THE RANSARN-VINISK VALLEY

This section describes the Skaufskogr region and its major subdivisions.

### The Skaufskogr Forest and Hills

In the deepest reaches of the Skaufskogr, majestic trees house the elven clans of the Fainrus Foresthome. The magic of the only Tree of Life of the area blesses the forest and its dwellers, who are all elves, Foxfolk lupins, and faeries.

The northern border of the Skaufskogr is crossed by the course of the Sirraen. A small elven clan and several lupin tribes lives along the creek. Home of the Daemar clan, the north-eastern border of the Skaufskogr forest, Taur Daemar is an heavily wooded region. The elves do not allow trespassing, so little is known of the area.

In the southern reaches of the Skaufskogr, the regions known as Habadorn and Cirlad are inhabited by elves, though they make themselves almost invisible, attracting no attention from Landfall or the Helskirian and Ostlander raiders. The Brandaras and Aglarant elven clans have their strongholds in Habadorn and Cirlad respectively.

To the northwest, the ground raises into the Skaufskogr Hills, which are the homeland of most Foxfolk lupins of the region. Many

lupin villages are found in the wooded hills, and one major druidic site near the Hoegtoenn peak is the primary ceremonial center of the Druidic Circle in the coastal area between Landfall and Oceansend.

### Dyrland and Kloskagi

The tongue of land that closes the Kamminer Bay is swept constantly by the winds. Heldanner and Halfling shepherds and fishermen dwell here in small villages and isolated farms. At least one pirate cove is thought to exist in the area, probably used by Ostlander raiders as a support for extended raids against the Alphatian colonies.

### Lirovka's Alps

The mountain range north of the Skaufskogr is mainly inhabited by mountain rakasta (the Chogh Dene) and goblinoids (the eastern Gnomstal goblins), although a small dwarven clan, the Syrrak, has established a mining outpost in the area. The highest peak of the Lirovka's Alps is Catspaw Mountain, known for being the place where Lornasen first contacted her Immortal sponsor. Elven clerics of Lornasen sometimes make a pilgrimage from the Lothbarth Forest to the mountain, seeking illumination and communion with the Immortals.

### The Gnomstal Forest

The heart of the Gnomstal Forest is patrolled by a clan of warped, aggressive gakaraks. Other dangerous plants, such as killer trees, thrive in the forest, making it dangerous for

humanoids and animals alike. It is not known what warped the gakaraks -- Vrodniki tales tell that, before their time, the gakaraks were a gentle folk, but then, Vrodniki tales do not distinguish between gakaraks and treants. Even older legends connect the corruption of the Gnomstal Gakaraks with the disappearance of Olen the Warden, an actaeon who was the guardian of the forest, and point to the hag Koldunya as the party responsible for both events.<sup>9</sup>

## The Skarsholm

Both Upper and Lower Skarsholm have been invaded by goblinoids from the Mengul Mountains one year ago. In the past, the area had a bad reputation – several of the lower wetlands were thought to hide the lair of Skars, some kind of ogress (possibly even a hag) feared by the few Heldanners and Heldann Shepherds who lived here.

## Shepherd Tribelands and the Frothulf Battlefield

These plains, to the west, north and east of the Skaufskogr forest, are home to large grazing cattle, herded by the local Heldann Shepherd lupin and Heldanner population.

The Eastern Shepherd Tribeland is a large stretch of plains, alternating grasslands and rolling hills, which lies between the Frothulf

valley and the Alphatian colony of Lighthall. The Southern Shepherd Tribelands are part of the Dominion of Landfall, west of the Skaufskogr hills. Both areas are sparsely populated by nomadic Heldann Shepherd clans. These Lupins herd a rough breed of sheep, which gives a dense, flavorful milk as well as wool and meat, thus fulfilling most needs of the clans.

The Western Shepherd Tribelands used to be quite similar to their eastern and southern counterparts. However, the recent occupation of the Skarsholm by goblinoid tribes has led to overcrowding, with different tribes and clans competing for the same resources.

The upper section of the Frothulf creek runs through the northernmost tip of the Skaufskogr, after merging with the Sirraen. The Sirraen lake, surrounded by bogland, is not popular with the superstitious Heldanners, but the area is regularly crossed by Shepherd tribes moving from the Western to the Eastern tribelands. Due to the fact that several of the largest battles of the area have been fought on the banks of the lake, the area is considered haunted by the dead soldiers, and even the Heldann Shepherds don't stop here, preferring to cross quickly.

An old, ruined Alphatian fort (generally called the "Old Fort" by the locals) is still visible on one of a group of low hills east of the lake. The fort is built over an ancient giantish barrow. A few other barrows dot the eastern part of the province.

<sup>9</sup> This event may have happened at any time between the fall of the Antalian civilization (before 1700 BC) and the first Alphatian colonization attempt (450 AC). The actual date can be selected based on campaign needs, but is probably best set before the crowning of the first Emperor of Thyatis.

## Midway Haven and the Frothulf Vale

A recent Alphatian foundation, built over the ruins of an ancient Antalian town (Kunghaven). This colony is ruled by an Alphatian military governor, Zalosar (AD&D: m,h,F9 Myrmidon; BECMI: Knight 14), supported by some 50 troops, mostly heavy marines from the Imperial Army.

The two other main power blocks in town are the Heldanner natives, led by the priesthood of Odin – in the person of Asmundur the Raven (AD&D: m,h,P7 of Odin; BECMI: Cleric 12 of Odin) – and the local branch of the Landfall Thieves' Guild, headed by Larus of Landfall (AD&D: m,h,T7 Fence; BECMI: T12).

### Midway Haven

Population: 1700 Humans, 200 Lupins, 100 others (Elves, Halflings, Gnomes, Dwarves)

Settlements: Midway Haven (500), Nýkunghavn (200), several smaller villages, homesteads and some nomadic tribes

Alphatian Troops: Alphatian Garrison (20 Heavy Infantry/Crossbowmen), Dunadale Rangers (10), Constabulary (20 officers)

There is a second major village in the area, Nýkunghavn, less than one day north of Midway Haven. It is much older than Midway Haven, having been built by survivors of the fall of Kunghaven centuries ago. A half-dozen

smaller villages and many homesteads dot the countryside of this area, the most civilized along the coast between Landfall and Lighthall.

The middle section of the Frodhulf creek is settled by a dozen Heldanner families or so, as well as a few Heldann Shepherd clans. A small outpost has been recently built by Alphatians from Midway Haven.

### Frothulf Vale

Population: 500 Humans, 250 Heldann Shepherds, 60 Foxfolk, 20 Elves

Settlements: Frodhulf Outpost (40), many homesteads and several nomadic tribes.

### Local Tribes and Bandits

The local elves belong to the Daemar clan that lives further west into the forest. They are in charge of keeping the humans from entering the Skaufskogr, and are led by Feredir (AD&D: m,e,R3 Wilderness Runner; BECMI: Elf Druidic Knight 10/C), a capable forester, assisted by his mate Eirien (AD&D: f,e,F2 Defender of Lornasen; BECMI: Elf Paladin 10/C).

Four Heldann Shepherd tribes move through the eastern reaches of the region. They are similar in most respects to those of the Eastern Shepherd Tribelands. Their strongest leader is Armann Ofrhugi ("Armann the Fearless", AD&D: m,lu,F6 Barbarian; BECMI: Lupin F16), a courageous warrior, but the wisest clan chief is Hinrik Raudhr (AD&D: m,lu,P4 Shaman of Korotiku; BECMI: Lupin

Shaman 14), a Lupin well known and easily spotted for his red-dyed fur. The richest tribe, though, is led by of Rurik Fedrjugr (AD&D: m,lu,F5 Barbarian; BECMI: Lupin Fighter 15).

Jorunn Aegirdottir (AD&D: f,h,T5 Bandit; BECMI: Thief 15) leads a gang of some 25 bandits hiding in the southern reaches of the forest. Jorunn and her bandits have proven too strong and crafty for the thin elven forces in this part of the forest, and have been able to establish a fortified hideout.

## The Schnauzwald

The forested area west of the Heldland river and north of the Forton river is mostly inhabited by forest gnomes and Gnomish Snoutzer lupins, although Heldanner settlements are also present along the trade routes and the Forton river itself. The largest human community is the village of Isodhur, which also has a sizable lupin population. Gnome settlements are found in the hills north of the village.

## The Wolkenberg

This mountain range, known as Skýfjall to the local Antalian-descended folk, is connected to Lirovka's Alps by a large tract of rough, hilly, and heavily forested territory. The area between the Wolkenberg and Lirovka's Alps is lightly inhabited by an independent, hardy folk of Heldanner origins. The town of Saffir, nested in a very defensible position in one of the valleys on the flanks of Lirovka's Alps, is the only major settlement of the region. It is a remnant of



*The Wolkenberg*

the second Alphantian colonization, and it is populated by a mix of Heldanners, Alphantians, and sedentary Vrodniki from the Ransarn valley.

## The Finsterwald

The Finsterwald (Mørkskog in the local Norwolder language, Morkskogr in Heldanner) is one of the major forests in Norwold. This dense woodland is only sparsely populated by centaurs of the Peseny Hetmanate, who sometimes cross the Skejdar river to hunt, and by Shiye elves. Small clans of bugbears challenge the elves for dominance of the woods, in an eternal contest of stealth and archery prowess.

## The Ransarn Valley

One of the largest rivers in Norwold, the Ransarn is partly navigable. Barbarian Vrodniki tribes live along the river, hunting in the forests, fishing in the Ransarn and herding cattle. They move seasonally from the higher lands near Lirovka's Alps to the

lower lands near the Duchy of Gunvolod. They also sometimes cross the pass at Ershal-Kur to sell furs and cattle in Saffir. Along the course of the Ransarn, in one of the denser parts of the woods, the Serdste Les, is the headquarters of the Vrodniki druids, led by Yarovoi of the White Banner. Northwards, near the foothills of the Wyrms' Head Mountains, the Witchwood is rumored to be the lair of many lesser hags and witches.

## The Vinisk Valley

The Vinisk river flows through a cold moorland nestled between the Hettafjall Mountains and the Essurian Arm. Mostly uninhabited by humans and demi-humans, the Vinisk valley is the domain of dangerous monsters, such as the Rock Trolls and the Yowlers, and the more civilized, but still quite barbarous centaur Hetmanates. Few traders attempt to cross the valley, and those who do make a point of avoiding the estuary of the Vinisk and the Troll meeting grounds. The Gate of Henadin, while still rather dangerous due to the presence of goblinoid raiders, is relatively safer, and armed caravans periodically cross the Harfara and Lagfara passes in summer. The Strelets Hetmanate also maintains a steady, if small, trade with the Duchy of Gunvolod.

## The Vatski Rodina

The homeland of the Vatski is a vast swath of land between the Azure Lake and the Wyrms' Head Range. It has increasingly become settled in the last centuries, with states (called "knyazhestvo" in the Vatski language, and variously translated as duchies

or principalities in Thyatian) forming around the leadership of strong land-owning families. The heartlands of the Vatski Freeholds, clustered around the Blessed Hills, still resist the push towards the formation of a national state.

## Ruins and Lairs

### Heldolanum

This ruined Thyatian castrum was built at the estuary of the Heldland river around 900 AC, and destroyed by Alphatian forces only months before the Spike Assault. It was originally designed to control the bridge over the Heldland river. Nowadays, it mostly hosts brigands and marauders who prey upon the travellers from Strondborg to Landfall.

### Castra Lucina

A ruin on the northern border of the Dominion of Lighthall, Castra Lucina is a Thyatian foundation. It was settled multiple times before being finally abandoned in 960 AC. The town was razed and burned down by Alphatian forces, but extensive underground works had been created by the Thyatians, and may survive to this day.

### Ur-Edin

Only a day or so of march north of Nykunghavn, Ur-Edin was founded by the Alphatian colonists under prince Gaernil of Shiye-Lawr. It was abandoned by its defenders during the Long Winter, crippling the supply lines for the Alphatian forces further inland. Later, it was razed by Vrodniki

raiders, although several buildings still stand, possibly defended by Alphatian magic.

### Ekur-Naram

On the Wolkenberg foothills rises this ominous fortress. It was built by a Blackheart wizard during the last Alphatian colonization attempt. The magician later disappeared -- although it is unknown whether he went back to Alphatia or was killed by enemies. The fortress became the hideout of a powerful Ice Witch, until the fall of the second Ice Queen forced the Sisterhood to withdraw northwards. Recent rumors picture it as the lair of a witch coven.

### Ershal-Kur

This ruin was once part of the line of fortifications built by the Alphatians to prevent attacks on their coastal colonies by barbarians and humanoids from the inland regions. It was abandoned after the demise of Prince Gaernil for lack of personnel. The last defenders set up a number of traps to prevent outsiders from entering the keep and its dungeons, and retreated to Saffir.

### Ruins of Drax Galathon

A town built around a caravanserai along the trade route from Drax Tallen to Landfall, Drax Galathon fell to humanoid hordes during the reign of Landryn Teriak. Following the Prism Wars, the Kingdom of Ghyr<sup>10</sup> built a new, fortified caravanserai at a short distance from the ruins.

<sup>10</sup> See XL1 "Quest for the Heartstone" for more information on the Prism Wars.

### Lair of Koldunya

An ancient Black Hag, Koldunya (AD&D: Hag, Annis; BECMI: Black Hag, 20 HD) lives in a sprawling cave system, which was originally used as a necropolis by the Antalian civilization. Koldunya surrounds herself with undead she raises from the Antalian corpses stored in the crypts. Her draugir patrol the area around the lair, which was rendered dead long ago when Koldunya raised several Odics to fight the Alphatian invaders. The hag preys equally upon the Vrodniki, who fear her as a servant of Mara, the goddess of death and witchcraft, and on the goblinoids of Lepa Krak.

### Hamarki's Cave

Hamarki is a mountain giant who lives in the peaks of Lirovka's Alps. This grumpy loner is not aggressive, and is on relatively good terms with both the Mountain Rakasta and the Syrrak Dwarves. A renowned trainer of giant eagles, Hamarki is often visited by Cloud and Storm Giant customers. He is wary of the blue dragon, Dominagon, to the east.

### Lair of Nykur

Nykur, a feared Nuckalavee, spreads terror along the western banks of Lake Gunaald and the estuary of the Vinisk River. Considered a death god by the centaurs of the Strelets Hetmanate, Nykur's evil influence extends to bands of savage centaur outcasts. The expansion of Nykur's influence is currently held in check by the *Hoof of Zirchev*, a Chevall living among the centaurs of the Strelets Hetmanate, and by the Lady of

Gunaald, a Fairy Queen who holds court in the depths of Lake Gunaald.

### Forge of Kuznets Svarozhich

This volcanic area in the Hettafjall Mountains is the home of Kuznets Svarozhich, an Hephaeston<sup>11</sup>. This gigantic being is reputed by the Vrodniki and Vatski to be the smith of the gods, and is in particular connected with Dazhbog and Perun. A small number of fire giants serve Kuznets as assistants and apprentices.

### Palace of Koshchey the Deathless



*Koshchey the Deathless*

The ancient sorcerer Koshchey has built a magnificent palace on the mountain spur overlooking the Sineva Gorge, from which the excess waters of Lake Gunaald flow into the lower Azure Lake. The opulent and extravagantly decorated palace of Koshchey starkly contrasts with the lack of wildlife and even vegetation in the surrounding mountains. It is rumored that Koshchey maintains his seemingly eternal life by

<sup>11</sup> Hephaestons appear in AD&D in the Mystara Monstrous Compendium Appendix, under the Giant, Hephaeston entry.

consuming that of beautiful women -- although speculations vary regarding whether he needs to do so yearly, or on every solstice, or according to some mysterious schedule. Powers attributed to the sorcerer include a nightmare mount as well as shapeshifting and poison magic. Koshchey is actually a Lich, and a sworn enemy of the black hag, Koldunya, as well as of the Wurmsteeth dragons.

#### Koshchey the Deathless

AD&D: Lich 11 HD; Salient abilities: Fool's Feast, Meta-polymorph; Spellcasting as 18th level Mage

BECMI: Magic-User Lich 28

### Haunt of the Seryy Mudrets

Up in the reaches of this small valley sits Okhrana, once a hermitage for solitary Vatski priests, now a dungeon inhabited by foul undead. It is said that in the depths of the dungeon, a Gray Philosopher sits, pondering for eternity. The legend of Andrej Nutov, the Seryy Mudrets, tells its sad tale.

### Dragon Lairs

The dragon lairs marked on the map refer only to huge dragons, whose ascension has caused major upheavals in a large area around the lair. There are, of course, hundreds more large and small dragons in the Wurmsteeth. At least one dragon ascended to the status of Immortal Guardian in the Vatski Rodina area, causing the transition of the Vatski to a sedentary lifestyle. Due to the large number of dragons

## Legend of the Seryy Mudrets

Vatski legends tell of a priest, Andrej Nutov, who was a member of a new cult, one brought by foreign missionaries. The cult philosophy purported that there was only one true Immortal -- the cult's patron -- an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent god, whereas all other Immortals were actually evil demons, or servants of the one true Immortal.

Andrej had been attracted to the cult, for he longed for a deeper understanding of the world, and the missionaries had knowledge that the Vatski did not. However, when Andrej started preaching the creed of the cult, a wandering, one-eyed skald from the distant coast came to the Vatski Rodina. He heard of Andrej, and visited him, and heard him expose his philosophy.

The skald then said, with a voice full of scorn: "Oh, philosopher, tell me, if there is one omnipotent and omniscient god, and he is as benevolent as you say, why then are the innocent killed at the whim of the warlords? Either your god is not so benevolent as you say, or he is not as powerful and all-knowing."

Andrej, struck by the one-eyed skald's words, pondered the question for days. Unable to find a solution, he retreated to a secluded hermitage, Okhrana, where he continued meditating on the skald's question for years.

As he grew older, Andrej despaired finding a solution to the skald's question -- his time was running out, he had consulted all the

sources he could gather in the Vatski lands, had spoken at length with all the sages and elders who, in the years, had visited him, and had even read books written by philosophers from distant lands such as Essuria and Alphatia, to no avail.

Then, when age was about to take its toll, two shady peddlers came to Andrej's refuge, bringing with them a pouch of black powder -- the pollen of the dreaded black lotus, which gives dreams and death. They told Andrej the powder would allow him the time he needed to finally solve his life-quest. Andrej dropped a pinch of the black powder into his pipe, drowning in the poisoned dreams of the black lotus. In that altered state of mind, he saw truth -- there could be no benevolent god. Good, all good, was merely there to allow mortals to perceive the unavoidable evil that would, sooner or later, meet them.

Pondering the many faces of evil, the drugged priest did not even notice his own death. It is told that he still sits on his stone siege deep in the dungeon of Okhrana, thinking thoughts of evil, which boil out of his undead mind as foul vapors raising from his nostrils and pipe.

The legends portray Andrej Nutov, now known as the Seryy Mudrets ("Gray Philosopher"), as the desiccated corpse of a once stout, tonsured, long-bearded warrior-priest, covered in moldy furs.

# The Skaufskogr and Beyond



Map of the Skaufskogr and the Ransarn-Vinisk Valley, Draconic Omens of Coming

in the Wyrksteeth, major storms and unusual weather patterns frequently hit the region as a consequence of small dragons becoming large. The lair of Khukh, a huge blue dragon, contains a portal to Yggdrasil, whereas the lair of the red dragon Raruk lies in a network of huge volcanic passages that lead all the way down to the Hollow World, in the frozen lands north of the Beastman Wastes.

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# Land and Races of Leeha

by JTR

## THE LAND

Leeha and its fellow halfling holdings are situated around the westernmost extent of the Great Bay of Norwold. It is a beautiful region of gently rolling hills, forested plains, and meadows populated by the shortfolk, sedentary and semi-nomadic humans, and scores or hundreds of humanoid and giant tribes.

Most of the area is part of the Great Bay's Coastal Plain Lowlands, which extend over 150 miles westward. The Lowlands normally run from sea-level to 150 feet in elevation, but the western portions reach 200-300 feet before yielding to the hills and mountains of the Icereach. In addition, cliffs line several segments of the coast, and local rises and depressions are common.

The southern and western Lowlands are moderately fertile. There is a healthy glacial deposit layer on the surface, and the soil is capable of sustained agriculture. The lowlands south of the Catbergs are particularly rich, but the capabilities of the local humans are too primitive to make much use of them. The northern Lowlands are much less supportive and yield only a subsistence-level of productivity.

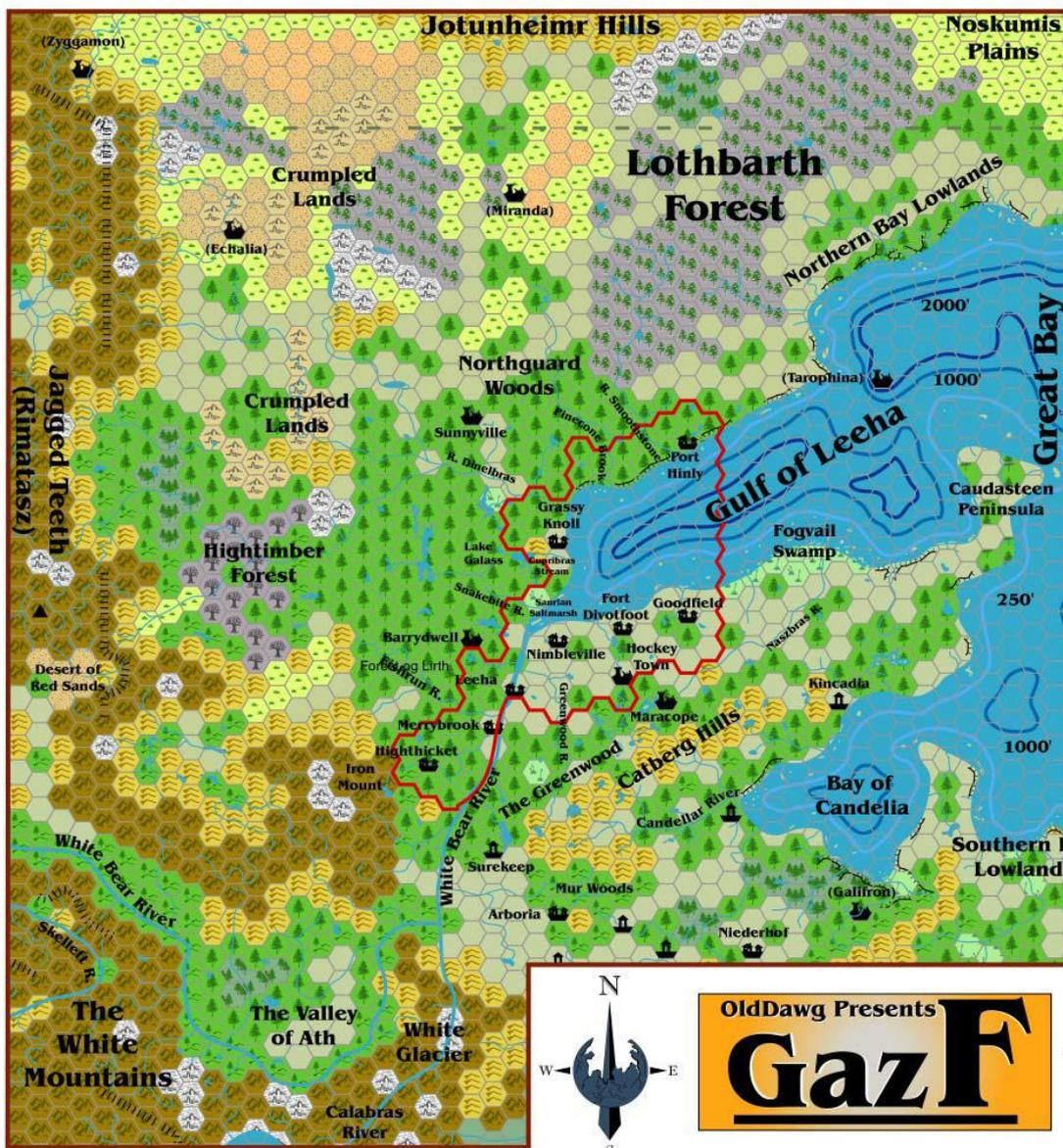


*Low tide in the Bay near Grassy Knoll*

The most notable feature of the Lowlands is the narrow Caudasteen Peninsula that curves out into the Bay. The halfings control the region of the peninsula north of the Catberg Hills. The eastern tip has a very sandy soil, and its coastline is steadily eroding without adequate coverage by trees and grass. Near the middle of the Caudasteen, fields, meadows, and short-cycle farmland replace the cattails and scrublands. The farms along this fertile strip generate sizeable crops, and the halfings tend to imported fruit trees that are kept in special baffler orchards that partially deflect wind and precipitation and trap heat.

Snow tulips are a flower unique to Leehashire, blossoming in both summer and first spring (see Climate and Environmental Notes). They appear in a variety of hues that form intricate designs, with colors ranging from snow-white to yellow, orange, pink, red, and deep blue.

# LEEHASHIRE and THE WESTERN BAY AREA



Leeshashire and the Western Great Bay is based upon: Thorfinn Tait's 24mph replica of CM1-M2 Norwold (2005, originally by Diesel, 1984, and David C. Sutherland III, 1986); Dan Eustace's 4mph Leeshashire (2001), Geoff Gander's 24mph The Dominions of Norwold, AC 1015 (1999); the Italian MMB's 24mph Region of Norwold (2007); Andrea Francolini's Central Norwold AC 1160 (2009)

Cartography by JTR, based in part on Illustrator images originally created by Thorfinn Tait  
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## HILLS AND MOUNTAINS

High elevation terrain brackets the Gulf region on all three sides. The closest of these formations are the Catberg Hills along the southern end of Leeshire. The Catbergs are a minor ridgeline on the Caudasteen that makes a useful natural marker for the halflings' borderland territory. The Hills are a conglomerate of sandstone and shocked quartz whose formation is relatively recent – an extrusion dating to the destruction of Alpha<sup>1</sup>. Its elevation varies between 300 and 760 feet.



*White Bear river and Catsbergs hills at Sunset*

The Catbergs are infested with goblins and hill giants. Orcs are also present to a lesser extent, but that population is still recovering from its defeat at Lake Glasst. Furthermore, there are a number of wildcats, pumas, and

<sup>1</sup> The alphantian kingdom founded in Norwold by Alinor, as explained in “The History of Leeha” by JTR, page 25, in issue #6 of Threshold magazine and in “A Traveler’s guide to Norwold” by Simone Neri in this same issue.

ebon tigers in the Hills for which the region took its name.

According to the barbarian nomads, the northern Jotunheimr are an ancient haven of giant clans (hill and frost) and unallied humanoid tribes (mostly trolls, bugbears and orcs). Like the Catbergs, these hills are a mixture of sandstone and shocked quartz, but within its caverns are also deposits of lead, coal, and a strange powdery mineral which the locals know to give off a strange sickness. The elevation runs from 210 feet in the east to 1300 feet in the west.

The Icereach Range is a complex and daunting system of mountains to the west. It is often subdivided into several smaller systems, beginning on the Denagothian Plateau in the distant south and ending just short of the frigid waters along the continent’s northern coastline.

Those mountains north of the White Bear River are called the Rimatasz (literally, the Jagged Teeth). The major divides exceed 9,000 feet, but even the unstructured south tops 8,200 feet. The southern peaks block the strong and chilly northern winds, so the surrounding foothills and lowlands suffer less from the snow blizzards so common to the rest of the area; however, these areas are at risk for avalanches.

Platinum exists in the northern third of the Rimatasz, silver and electrum are plentiful in the middle, and gold lodes are common in the south. The extreme southern end of the Teeth is ruled by Kiriakiss, a huge female red dragon. She is served by hill giants, orcs and goblins.



*The Jagged Teeth as seen from the end of LeeHa Shire*

South of the White Bear are the White Mountains, one of the largest sub-divisions of the Icereach. These mountains continue into the south and west for many leagues, and the local mountains surpass 16,000 feet. A few mountain giants live within the obscured highlands, but frost and fire giants are more common. The White Glacier is an ice covered valley that opens out to the northern face of the eastern mountains. These mountains are particularly rich in gold and precious stones, but the local dragons are extremely territorial. Humans and halflings alike have tales of parties that ventured too close to the peaks near the White Glacier and suffered a cruel demise at the claws of the beasts.

There are also dozens of migratory dragons in the White Mountains that fly down into the White Bear River Valley and the lowlands south of the Catbergs during late spring and summer, although those that stray into Kiriakiss's domain are typically slain by the large female.

Finally, the Crumpled Lands are fractured terrain between the Jotunheimr Hills and the Rimatasz that were produced during the

destruction of Alphaia. The southern portions of this feature have been slowly eroded down to undulating hills over the centuries, but the north still bears its jagged scars. Both rock and sand deserts fill much of the span between the Crumpled Lands and the hill country, but some grassland and woodlands have taken root. This region also contains lowland glaciers whose migration speeds decelerated over the past millennium. Today their edges are shrinking annually.

## FORESTS

A thin woodland system covers the Lowlands well into the mountain foothills. The densest area is directly west of the halfling settlements. The trees are broken frequently by small meadows, glens or herbaceous fields. In addition, thousands of small lakes are scattered about, testifying to the historic presence of glaciers.

The Greenwood consists of the forest tract north of the Catberg Hills. Currently the only concern for travelers is the abundant wildlife, but in times past, the Greenwood has been the site of many battles with the Catberg orcs and their allies. The Greenwood is considered the halflings' borderland territory.

The woods of the White Bear River Valley (Ath) can be particularly thick, with a multitude of young trees crowding the river shore. There are areas of older and larger trees further upriver and in the highlands of the Rimatasz.

The woodlands due west of the Gulf are traditionally thought of as two or three

distinct forests. The Hightimber is the forest between the Rivers Dinelbras and White Bear. Its oldest section is directly north of Leeha, and little underbrush save moss and a carpet of needles can be found between the tall evergreens. The remainder of the southern forest is thick with smaller trees and ground cover comprised of thickets, brambles and ferns. The Hightimber continues up into the Jagged Teeth, but a recent forest fire left millions of acres of land burnt. It is doubtful that this section will recover, and hardy grasses have already colonized some of the exposed areas.

The Hightimber continues above the River Dinelbras under the name of the Northguard Woods. This is a young stretch of woodland, and the small trees are densely packed as they compete to establish themselves. Travel is very difficult through the tangle, but the trees form an important protective barrier. These woods and the lands beyond are mostly unexplored wilderness.

Near the source waters of the River Smoothstone, the forest undergoes a significant transition to a sub-arctic taiga. To the halflings this is still a continuation of their Northguard Woods, but to the barbarians and elves it is the Lothbarth Forest. Wildlife is uncommon in this area, giving the Lothbarth an eerie, empty feeling.

Surprisingly, there are hardwoods west of the Lothbarth. These areas experience an unusual warming air mass originating from Kaarjala, a land well north of the Great Bay. Barbarians commonly encamp here during the summer months.



*A small bay on the Northern coast of Leeha*

## WATERWAYS

The Great Bay of Norwold dominates this region of the continent. Before the the Great Rain of Fire, the Bay was comprised of several different large inland lakes. Its current appearance is a product of rising global sea-levels and the earth-shattering magic of Alinor. Harbor seals, belugas, and even the rare wayward sperm whale have been spotted in the Bay's open waters. The waters are rich with sardines, squid and other life.

The western extreme of the Bay is the Gulf of Leeha, which the halflings refer to as the Abbatarth Sound. Most of the Gulf was once above sea-level, but the destruction of Alpha collapsed the plain and tore open a deep chasm into which the sea poured. The Great Bay's deepest point (2,674 feet) exists in the Gulf midway between Port Hinly and Goodfield.

"Abbie" and "Bailey" are the Great Bay Monsters, legendary creatures of the Gulf

waters around Port Hinly. The local Harborhins treat the monsters as either a joke or with the utmost seriousness. Ships that fail to return to port are blamed on “Bailey,” while those that safely came back to port were under the protection of “Abbie.”

On the opposite side of the Caudasteen Peninsula is the Bay of Candelia. Prior to Alpha's fall, this was a large freshwater lake. The regional destruction opened the lake to the Bay's salt water, which killed the local fauna. Many of the migratory dragons that venture out of the White Mountains leek here. Aerial tumbles are a common sight as each breed in turn enters its mating cycle. In most years, one or two white dragons will attempt to establish a permanent dominion around Candelia during the winter when the rest of the flock returns to the mountains; however, it has been over a century since a given dragon held the Bay for more than a decade.

Today, the Gulf and Candelia both have ample fisheries and lobster beds. Ice can form over the surface during winter time. The northern Gulf coast is guaranteed some coverage, but the warning sign for the great freezes comes when an ice bridge connects the northern coast to the tip of the Caudasteen.

Ice bridges also isolate the Bay of Candelia around the same time, but the middle of the Bay remains ice free for all but the harshest winters. Many beluga pods take sanctuary here at that time, but the natives – and some wildlife predators – have learned how to use the ice openings as a means of surface whaling.

The White Bear River is a major waterway that leads high up into the western

mountains. The river continues for over 400 miles further west into strange barbarian lands. It is navigable for most of the year. The cold river is deep and slow moving as it passes through the shire. In some places, the river can be over a mile wide, depending on the season. The banks tend to be fairly steep as the river winds through the upper valley, but it is not so in all places.

The Skelleft and Calabras Rivers are large tributaries of the White Bear that drain the great glacial lakes further south. Their routes are more difficult to traverse, with numerous rapids and stone or ice bridges reducing clearance. Of the two, the route of the Calabras is the more dangerous.

After the White Bear clears the mountains it is joined by the Highticket and Fishrun. Some stretches of these rivers also contain significant rapids, so exploration of their upper limits must be done with canoes and rowboats that can be carried along the shore.

The Greenwood River originates deep in the Catbergs and flows through the forest and



*Small waterfall of the Calabras*

across farmland before joining the White Bear just north of Leeha. At the other end of the Hills, the Naszbras River travels through the fields just south of the shire. It terminates at the desolate Fogvail Swamp on the Gulf coast.

On the Gulf's western shores, the Snakebite River sports an assemblage of poisonous serpents unusual for this climate. The snakes hibernate most of the year, but starting in early summer, they rouse and disperse throughout the Hightimber, aggressively hunting small prey and each other. The Snakebite finishes its course in a marshland (the Saurian Saltmarsh). Hin rarely travel here, but they tell stories about the fierce Children of the Dragon (lizard men).

The River Dinelbras is an important navigational marker for overland travelers. In addition to dividing the Hightimber from the Northguard Woods, the Dinelbras has a number of tributaries that segment the northwestern forest.

The Cupribras Stream is a minor waterway connected to Lake Galass near Grassy Knoll. Many of the Snakebite's dispersing serpents end up here. Additional minor rivers include Pinecone Brook and the River Smoothstone.

There are lakes, brooks, and rivers throughout the greater region, particularly in the area south of the Catbergs. Of these, the Candellar River is the most noteworthy. Its southern and northern banks are split between humans and humanoids, respectively and delineates the Caudasteen from the south.

## OTHER LOCATIONS

Fogvail Swamp is a dark and murky place on the Gulf's southern shoreline. It is often shrouded in mist, and few dare enter. Pits of quicksand are interleaved with peat bogs, and all manner of denizens lurk behind the swamp's twisted and stunted trees. Nearer the coast, the swamp converts into a salt marsh with stagnant water infested with insects.

The Saurian Saltmarsh is a small marshland at the mouth of the Snakebite. It is the home of cold-adapted lizards that are generally active only from late spring to early autumn. They then go dormant in large colonies after the first frost and hibernate through winter.

The Kingdom of Alphaia left ruins at several sites in the region, including Galifron, Echalia, and the now-submerged sea port of Tarophina. In addition to these sites, traces of Alphaia can be found at other minor locations.

Likewise, Miranda and Zyggamon are remnants of Blackmoor culture. Human barbarians now use Miranda as their summer gathering point, ignorant of the locale's ancient history.

Hockey Town, Barrydwell and Maracope were halfling communities destroyed by fellow hinucks, frost giants and Catberg orcs, respectively. Frost giants are also blamed for the destruction of Sunnyville, but elder halflings know that cannibalism was to blame. The hinucks avoid these sites.

## SURROUNDING LANDS

The Coastal Plain continues to the south and to the east unto the mountains of the Wurmsteeth Range, forming Norwold's Southern Bay Marches. The Alphan Peninsula is still further east. If one journeyed beside the peaks holding the White Glacier, he would eventually pass through a gap in the ranges and reach the edges of the Icereach Barbarians' territory. From there, the Denagothian Plateau is accessible.

The Icereach Range grows ever more impressive as one travels west. One of the Range's greatest features is the Arch of Fire – a great flow of elemental fire and lava tearing through the sky. The 300-foot wide tube of fire travels 75 miles between its anchoring volcanic gates, and it gains an additional 6 miles in height. The Arch can be seen up to 72 miles away at night, 48 miles in daylight. The lands between the volcanos are true wastelands criss-crossed by lava and with huge lakes of fire at their bases. There are many caverns in this area, and some lead into deep fissures. Bands of fire elementals are common here.

The nearby portion of the White Bear is surrounded by swamps, and there are barbarian lands further upstream. In the latter area is the Leehan Trail, an overland route around the mountains that leads to the remote Kingdom of Ghyr. All of these features are known to the more experienced Leehan explorers. Less well-known is the Desert of Red Sands tucked away alongside the Rimatasz. This desert is dangerous to all life as it is littered with a red ice-like

substance that dehydrates whatever it comes into contact.

Northeast of the Lothbarth are arid grasslands of the Noskumis Plains, on which dwell nomadic barbarians and humanoids. This is part of a larger territory known as Viaskaland, and beyond that are the Autuasmaa Plain and the Kingdom of Kaarjala.

Finally, there is the large island of Nordenhafen in the Great Bay 70 miles due east of the Caudasteen. The island has little to show save scrub and grasses, yet a few dozen families eek out an existence by fishing the local waters.

## CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL NOTES

The western Bay has unusual seasonal patterns with two springs and winters, and a summer whose temperature spikes to levels more appropriate to a tropical locale. These climatic oddities come courtesy of the Great Sampo, an artifact that keeps the Kingdom of Kaarjala from freezing over<sup>2</sup>.

First winter normally begins Tembiir<sup>3</sup> 15, with the temperature averaging 11° F (-12° C). Easterly winds pull moisture off of the Bay to generate 4.5 inches of mixed precipitation per month. The temperature declines 1 degree (F) every two days into the season until Dauntil 6, when a massive heat front moves out of the north and settles over

<sup>2</sup> See GazF10, The Kingdom of Kaarjala.

<sup>3</sup> The Hin of Leeha use the same calendar as those of the Five Shire. See GAZ8, The Five Shires, Dungeon Master's Booklet, page 15.

the Gulf. Temperatures climb 5 degrees (F) per day for twelve days and then holds steady through the winter solstice (Dauntil 28, 4 hours of daylight). This run up is First Spring, and it is the best time to pick snow tulips.

At the start of the new year, temperatures plunge 7 degrees (F) a day as a regional Carnot Cycle is unleashed that draws all heat north to Kaarjala. Currently, the drop levels out at  $-21^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-30^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), but that bottom lowers 1 degree every 15-20 years. Leeha is buffeted by chaotic winds from all directions. Rain and snowfall total 26.8 inches per month. In addition, late Nor'easters pick up floe ice in the Bay and scour the landscape.

Second Spring starts 70 days later on Odelin 15. The thaw starts three weeks prior, gaining 3 degrees a day until temperatures naturally vary between  $30-45^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-1$  to  $7^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). The rivers swell from the melting snow, and flash floods are common. This period lasts 10 weeks through the solstice (Mithintle 28).

Summer lasts 8 weeks (Goldaun 1 – Fyrtal 28). Temperatures rapidly reach  $65-95^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $18-35^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). The temperature spike is a consequence of the Sampo's venting. The period is muggy, with rain and hail common.

Autumn (Aumbyr 1 – Tembiir 14) has cool, refreshing winds from the north and east. Cloud cover is common, and the temperature hovers comfortably between  $55-70^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $13-21^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).

## THE RACES

The western Bay region is lightly populated. Collectively, humanoids form the largest group of inhabitants and have strong communities in the Catberg Hills, the Greenwood, the Jotunheimr Hills, the western mountains, and locations further south. They are followed by the wide-ranging human barbarians, the halflings of the Gulf, and finally Foresthome elves. The halflings are discussed in greater detail in the next section. All other populations are discussed here.

## LANGUAGE

Many different languages can be heard in the vicinity of the western Bay. Those that are most notable are listed below.

**Novum-Or:** Novum-Or is the language of the Gulf halflings. It is a mixture of the ancient Lalor tongue, barbarian languages, and Heldannic.

*Leeha halfling*



**Thyatian:** This is a common language of adventurers and potential settlers.

**Alphatian:** This is a language of the newcomers; however, it is also spoken by many halflings and barbarians who have had contact with the Alphatian Empire or the Court of Ericall.

**Viaskodan:** This is the language of the northern barbarians.

**Theorundian:** This is the language of the southern barbarians.

**Essurian:** The trade town of Leeha maintains records and instruction for the Essurian language, which is native to the Denagothian Plateau far to the south.

**Elvish:** The Elvish spoken by Foresthome elves derives from the Shiye dialect heard in Alphatia. It provides no significant barrier to conversation with speakers of most other Elvish dialects.

**Hymsprach:** More commonly known as Giantish, Hymsprach is spoken by all true giant-folk (fire and larger).

**Shonak:** This is a human language heard on the tundra to the north.

**Catherwek:** This is the language spoken by humanoids in the Catbergs.

**Athraeg:** This language is spoken by humanoids in the Valley of Ath and the surrounding mountains.

**Malaasilut:** This is the language of the humanoids of the northern territories.

## BARBARIANS

A number of human tribes and clans live semi-nomadic lifestyles and their numbers range from as little as a dozen to over 1,000 each. The southern Theorundians are more settled, while the northern Viaskodas maintain seasonal migrations on the long northern coast of the Great Bay, from the borders of Leeha to the Ljallenvals Mountains of the east.

Both Theorundians and Viaskodas are a mixture of Antalian and Littonian stock, though they also carry some Alphatian blood – a legacy of the empire’s colonial periods. They have naturally pale complexions, but wind-burn gives them a ruddy hue. Hair and eye color are very diverse, although many barbarians along the Bay coast share a slight elongation of the eye. It is also quite common for Viaskodan males to shave their heads.

Attire is assembled from fur, leather, and limited textiles. Theorundians favor sleeveless tunics and breeches, adding an insulated leather jacket or overcoat during the cooler months. Their women don a double-tunic dress cinched by a rope belt. Viaskodan men eschew tunics in favor of going bare-chested or wearing only a harness or baldric during summer; the women sport fitted halters that expose their midriff and breeches, shorts, or skirts. Viaskodan women only wear dresses or full length skirts while pregnant or nursing. Both groups use heavy fur coats during winter.



*Barbarian chiefs meet under a tent*

## ORGANIZATION AND BANNERS

Tribal organization varies, but some barbarian nations still remain extant. The western Vanders, or the Barbarians of the Red Banner, are one such group. Their name is actually of Theorundian origin and means “the great wind,” a remark on the nomadism and savage potential of that nation in times past.

Other groups are also identified through the use of tribal banners – totemic expressions of the most powerful person or group. They are comprised of a central timber shaft about six inches in diameter. Cross beams are lashed to the top third of the banner, from which are attached skins, ribbons, and various items of significance.

Not all individuals are affiliated with a tribal group, especially among those who have adopted a more sedentary lifestyle. The reception of these settlers by their nomadic kinsmen varies, but scorn rarely rises beyond the teasing label of “Dairy-Men” employed by the Viaskodas.

## The Volek Leiho and the Guldskung

Every year during the summer solstice, the Viaskodan tribes gather under a Banner to celebrate the Volek Leiho, or “Festival of Brotherhood.” The hosting tribal chief, or Kung, settles disputes between tribes and adjudicates criminal complaints according to oral tradition. In turn, the visiting tribes are expected to offer tribute.

Historically, a greater title was also employed by the Viaskodas. Bearers of the title Guldskung (“first among chiefs”) were warlords that ruled the great barbarian nations during the time of the Alphatian incursions, and they commanded thousands of subjects over great swaths of territory.

There has not been a Guldskung since the time of Akra, but with the coming influx of foreign settlers, the time may be right for the rise of a new title bearer.

## ECONOMY

The barbarians display a wide range of activities, from herding sheep, goats, and shaggy cattle, to smelting and weaving, even to raiding and piracy along the coast. Neither meta-group possesses its own currency, but they understand its worth and use it as necessary when dealing with other parties.



*Barbarian Feast*

## Culture and Lifestyle

Among the Viaskodas, men and women have almost equal rights: stronger and tougher individuals fight, while others raise children and herd. Their primary sports are wrestling and lacrosse, and it is not unusual to see Viaskodan women participate in such events.

The laws of the tribes are based on an oral tradition. Judgments are issued by tribal chiefs and are swift and ruthless. Rulings can be appealed to a jury comprised of seven adults, but the jury cannot vacate a ruling. Instead, a convicted person with whom the jury has sided may challenge the chief to combat to the death. If he prevails, he will be the new chief.

Theft of property is punished with the branding of the hand. Theft of food, however, warrants being tied down to the ground for three days without food or drink as tribal shamans intensely watch for signs of the wendigo. Murder is punished with either immediate death or exile into dangerous

surroundings. Most other transgressions are considered matters of honor to be settled through wrestling matches.

A limited form of slavery is also practiced by the Viaskodans, but not the Theorundians. Those captured in war are made household servants, signified by a rope cord about the left wrist. Servitude lasts up to three years, after which the slave is set free. It may also be terminated earlier, either by adopting the slave into one's family or setting them loose (often to untax tribal resources).

## Magic and Religion

Witchcraft and sorcery are matters of great fear for the barbarians, a legacy of their suffering during the various Alphetian occupations and the reign of the Akra. Foreign magic-users are subject to contempt and scorn, though this may be mitigated if the offender displays martial bravery and skill. Yet despite this aversion, the barbarians did give birth to Norwold's modern druidism in conjunction with Alphetians surviving the fall of Alpha.

Their religious outlook focuses on nature spirits and the ghosts of ancestors that serve as divine messengers. Spiritual shamans known as taltos function as intermediaries between mortals and these divine agents, while other priests serve the general function of moral counselors.

The barbarians' greatest spiritual fear is succumbing to the spirit of the wendigo, a wild, voracious, and malignant hunger. Because of the cannibalism and gruesome consumption associated with the wendigo,

the Viaskodas are suspicious of the Vaarana nomads to their north. The barbarians share the Thanksgiving of the halflings.

## WARFARE

Both the Theorundians and Viaskodas favor heavier, two-handed weapons, e.g. staves, war hammers, mauls, great spears, bastard swords, and two-handed swords. Missile weapons are limited to capturing devices such as bolas and nets, although the short bow and javelin are used for hunting purposes.

Armor is limited to various hide-based forms of protection, but a few pieces of scale mail can be found. Those wielding smaller weapons often employ wooden shields on the off-hand.



*Barbarian chief in armor*

## OTHER HUMANS

In addition to the native populations of Norwold, humans from more civilized, foreign lands have made their presence known. Alphatians already have a small community at Arboria, and there are many Thyatian traders filtering up from the southlands. Additionally, human adventurers from a variety of nations are beginning to flock to Leea.

## ELVES

Norwold's Foresthome elves were originally part of the Shiye of Alphatia that fled in dispute with their king. Their strongest presence is on the oceanic coast, but a few outposts have been established around the Great Bay. These elves are secretive and avoid contact with outsiders.

Present since AC 525, the elves of the north coast number only a few hundred in total, and not all have a mature Tree of Life. They originally left their homes among Oceansend's Lornadiel clan to settle the lands memorialized in the Ley of Lornasen, a tale of their eponymous founder who journeyed from Norwold's eastern shores to locate the Sylvan Realm far to the west and returned with the knowledge of the Tree of Life.

Within the Ley are clues that Lornasen may have seeded other Trees during her return, and the Foresthome elves came to find them and to plant their own. Most of the elven families have now settled themselves in the

Lothbarth, but one mythic location, Sythan Alabarik, still fills their dreams.

The major northern families are Sinar, Leafbower, Feryndul, Sunviel, Sanathyl, Wensaren, Esendath, Ithyshiye, and Almashiye. The western Almashiye are the most open of the elves, and a few of the younger ones have made their way to Leeha.



*Young elf maiden*

The Imerath elves dwell within the Mur Woods of the south. Their forebears left the community of Whispering Grove for different reasons. They trekked the dangerous Norwold interior and faced the Wyrksteeth before settling. There are perhaps one thousand Imerath elves. They are very withdrawn, and they are currently unaware of their brethren to the north.

Both groups of elves construct houses in and around hardwood trees through carpentry. They also both celebrate the Shelter of Ygg (Felmont 17), which commemorates the providential arrival of Foresthome elves to

Norwold. This is a day of thanksgiving among the elves.

Elves in the north and south consider the barbarians as primitives, using the latter as a shield against the more dangerous opponents in the area.

## REGIONAL HUMANOIDS

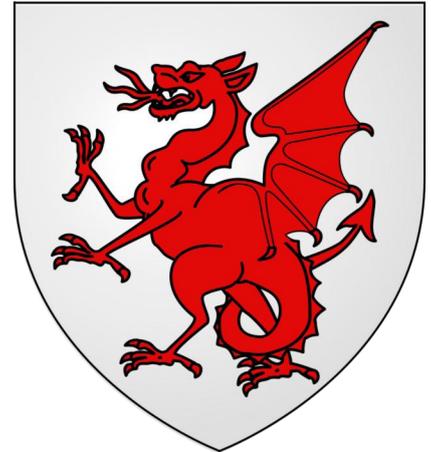
Tribes of goblins, orcs, and hill giants infest the Catbergs and surrounding forests. The orcs have been severely weakened in recent conflicts with the halflings, and the goblins are in the ascendance. In the north, hill and frost giants dwell in the Jotunheimr Hills along with trolls, bugbears, and orcs.

Most tribes of the Catbergs and Jotunheimr are unaligned, but the humanoids of the west – primarily hill giants, orcs, and goblins – have been organized by Kiriakiss, a huge female red dragon.

## TOTAL POPULATION SIZES

It is estimated that there are 15,000 Viaskodas – including 900 members of the Red Banner – 22,500 Theorundians, and 1,550 elves in the western Bay area. Halflings are thought to number 10,000 in total. They are matched by 12,000 denizens of the Catbergs, 6,000 in the Jotunheimr, and 5,500 under the direct control of Kriakriss.

# In the name of the Dragon



*Wurmsteeth's Coat of Arms*

by Francesco Defferrari (Sturm)

## AN ADVENTURE IN THE WYRMSTEETH

An adventure for PCs of high level (best for 9-12 level), fighting the Heldannic invasion in the north!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This adventure was inspired by the [work of Giulio Caroletti](#) that originally appeared in Tome of Mystara volume 2, the Dragonlord trilogy, Simone Neri's [History of Dragonkind](#), the [D&D 2000 movie](#), James Mishler's [Age of Blackmoor](#), by JTR's [Landfall Gazetteer F8](#) and [Denagoth Gazetteer F2](#), and by Agathokles' work on the Skaufskogr region in this same issue. My work has several different assumptions from theirs: for example I assume that the Dragon kingdom is much more ancient than in Giulio's and Simone's works, therefore linking it to James' history and my article on 3050 BC Mystara in issue #2 of Threshold magazine, page 165, but each DM could obviously choose the backstory he or she prefers.

This adventure sends the PCs in pursuit of Heldannic agents who came in possession of a very dangerous artifact, with which they could endanger the very existence of the ancient Dragon realm.

In Act I, PCs receive their mission and almost reach the Heldannic agents, but soon discover that there are more than two players in this game.

In Act II, PCs cross the dangerous Gnomsdal forest and Gap, finding enemies, traitors and possible new friends.

In Act III, PCs continue their pursuit in the Skarsholm plains, and more interlopers appear.

In Act IV, PCs must cross the Skaufskogr hills, full of Heldannic troops.

In Act V, PCs have one last chance to retrieve the artifact in the Streets of Landfall, or all will be lost for the Dragon kingdom.

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND AND ENEMIES



*The Rod of Dragon Control*

After suffering several crushing defeats at the hands of the dragons<sup>2</sup>, the Alphatian mages were able to create at least two very powerful *Rods of Dragon Control*. One of them was kept in the Alphatian imperial treasury, and had the power to control a huge number of gold dragons. Another Rod to control red dragons, the Rod of Savrille, was created by a powerful wizard. Centuries ago<sup>3</sup> the Rod of Savrille was destroyed, and the Alphatian empress at the time gave the imperial Rod to the dragons as a gesture of friendship and peace. The dragons decided not to destroy it, because they considered it important to study to counter its powers if necessary. Now a group of Heldannic agents has done the unthinkable: they have discovered the hiding place of the Rod, defeated its powerful

<sup>2</sup> As described in the Dragonlord trilogy and summarized in [“History of Dragonkind”](#) by Simone Neri. I imagine that the rod described in the D&D 2000 movie was created as a consequence of these Alphatian defeats around 510-511 AC (1510-1511 AY).

<sup>3</sup> The rod here is assumed to have been given to the dragons many centuries ago, but that could also have happened just some decades ago, as Havard assumed in his article [here](#).

guardians and stolen it! The Heldannic thieves did it thanks to decisive clues and aid provided by Primate Inge Gottfried<sup>4</sup>. What they do not know yet is that other interested parties knew of the Rod too and have been informed by spies of the theft, and are now sending their minions to take the Rod. One such party is Denagothian, in particular the black dragon Vitriol, champion of Idris and ally of the Shadow Lord. Another such party is a cabal of Alphatian wizards that wants the Rod back to use it against the Empress herself. The last party involved is a group of powerful Glantrian adventurers, sent by Jaggar Von Drachenfels and by Dolores Hillsbury<sup>5</sup>. Obviously, it is possible to have the PCs play the role of the Glantrian, Alphatian or Denagoth agents, instead of that of envoys of the Dragon King, depending on the nature and origin of the party, and the willingness of the DM to suitably adapt the adventure.



*Statue of a dragon family in Windreach*

<sup>4</sup> An avatar of Vanya herself, see [here](#).

<sup>5</sup> Jaggar, as High Master of Dracology, has a very different purpose in this matter than Dolores, who is unbeknownst to him the Night Dragon Synn. The Glantrian party is therefore divided, see below.

## Setting the date and season

The adventure could be set anywhere between AC 1010 and 1016, when the Heldannic Knights are conducting their campaign of conquest in Norwold, clashing with Wurmsteeth dragons. It is also possible to set the adventure in a different timeframe by adapting the background to the individual campaign timeline.

It could be better if the season is early spring, as the abundance of snow, and the risk of avalanches in treacherous mountain trails can add quite some drama to the adventure. The dead cold of deep winter or the muddy trails of early summer however could work just as well.

**1010 AC**, Thaumont 1st: the Heldannic army lay siege to Landfall and takes it by Klarmont 20th. The conquest stops at the Landfall region for the year.

**1011**, Thaumont 19th: the knights begin their march along the coast toward Oceansend, besieging it from Flaurmont 10th. Soon Norwold intervenes to defend the city, and the Wurmsteeth dragons do the same thing on Felmont, 22nd. Oceansend however surrenders to the Heldannic knights on Swiftmont 16th.

**1012**: the Heldannic knights are in possession of Landfall and Oceansend and all the land between them, at least along the coast, and are probably consolidating their conquests and founding outposts, as Neuhafen, renaming it Strondborg, and Forton Town, at the mouth of the Forton river over the ruins of Heldolanum.

**1013**: the Heldannic inquisition sweeps the Heldannic territories, while on Nuwmont

17th a severe earthquake strikes Norwold. On Vatermont 12-14 a deadly blizzard strikes the Heldannic territories. Between the 11th and 28th Fyrmont there is a great fire around Neuhafen, the new city founded by the knights on the Forton river between Freiburg and Landfall. on Swiftmont the 2nd a great gale strikes the coast of Heldannic territories and Norwold. On Eirmont the 3rd there is a great fire in Freiburg, a suspected arson.<sup>1</sup>

**1014**: The Heldannic Order wars with the simbasta in Davania and is defeated. The Heldannic knights also have trouble at home with rebels and renegades, and in the meantime king Ericall of Norwold tightens his kingdom ties with other Alpathian dominions.

**1015**: The Myoshiman Empire and the Wurmsteeth dragons attack Freiburg but are repelled by a combined army of Heldannic knights and simbasta<sup>2</sup>. From Flaurmont however the knights have more revolts in their territories and on Klarmont the 5th Oceansend frees itself from their rule. Within the month the Heldannic knights are repelled to the Nordheim river. By the end of the year however the knights regain full control of their territories and are ready to strike back.

**1016**: The Heldannic knights ally with Qeodharan raiders and launch another invasion toward Oceansend in Felmont, laying siege to it on Fyrmont 12th and

<sup>1</sup> Up to 1013 this is canon history from the Poor Wizard's Almanac I, II and II and Joshuan's Almanac. From 1014 to 1019 this history is from [Mystara Fan Almanacs](#)

<sup>2</sup> That's all part of a [greater story by Bruce Heard](#) also involving the great Orc's Head peninsula dragon Pyre.

taking it on Ambyrmonth 10th. In Ambyrmonth Norwold too is attacked by dragons (a result of a plot by the Church of Idris<sup>3</sup>). On Kaldmont 7th a peace treaty is signed between Norwold, Wyrksteeth and the Heldannic territories.

**1017:** The Heldannic knights have to deal with another internal rebellion and Norwold has its share of problems with Ostlander, Qeodharan pirates and undead.

**1018:** While the Norwold confederacy establish more cordial relations with Thyatis, the Heldannic territories are engulfed in civil war. The Heldannic knights of Wulf Von Klagendorf leave Oceansend free in exchange for Thyatian aid. The Heldannic knights effectively lose control of northern Heldland. The faction led by Heinrich Straßenburger ultimately wins and Wulf is slain on Sviftmont 6th. The civil war however continues as Anna von Hendriks still fights against Straßenburger.

**1019:** The Heldannic civil wars goes on with Anna Von Hendriks laying siege to Freiburg on Kaldmont 11th. The Norwold league is formed. Oceansend becomes a Thyatian protectorate.

<sup>3</sup> See [Mystara Almanac 1016](#), the ploy also involved the Dragonlord armor and weapon which originally appeared on the Dragonlord trilogy.

### Creating the PCs

If the PCs are not native of the Wyrksteeth kingdom, they could have some friendship with the dragons or they could have been pressed into service by the dragons because they committed some crimes in their eyes. In this case the PCs could come from any race or culture from Norwold, the Known World or beyond, providing they're not Heldannic loyalists, and the dragons will put a geas on them to assure they'll complete the mission. Thyatian PCs could be affiliated with the Knights of Air, RAF, or other forces that are friendly with dragons. These characters may be working as part of a Thyatian mission to Wyrksteeth, or be spies deployed in Norwold. If they are personally unknown to the dragons however, they could still put the geas on them.

If the PCs are Wyrksteeth natives they could belong to one of the several races that populate the dragon kingdom. In this case, each PC will have a Dragon lord, and will bear his or her tattoo. The tattoo bestows to the PC a special power, usually related to the Dragon lord. A Red dragon's vassal could have for example resistance to fire or create fire as a special power.

The most common races living in the Wurmsteeth kingdom are:

**Wurkrest dwarves:** Slightly taller and sturdier than normal dwarves, they pretend to be “normal” dwarves that arrived from the south like the others, but the truth is they are what’s left of the dwarves who sided with the Dragon Realm from before the Great Rain of Fire. Modern dwarves do not remember their history anymore, so other Norwold dwarves, like the Stormhaven clan, have good relations with them.

**Wurm gnomes:** Their original story is similar to the Wurkrest dwarves above, but the gnome population has been integrated several times in the centuries by refugees from Glantri and the northern reaches too.

**Dragonkin:** These people<sup>1</sup> were created by dragons ages ago and have lived in the Wurmsteeth ever since. Their lifespan is up to 300 years.

**Dragonborn:** A dragonborn<sup>2</sup> is the child of a dragon and another race, usually a humanoid one. They can be quite different in aspect and live long lives, as long as the elves. Traditionally a dragonborn receives a special gift (a magical object) from his or her dragon parent, grandfather or ancestor (if still alive).

<sup>1</sup> Possible statistics can be found in “[The Complete Monstrous Manual](#)” and in the [D&DWiki](#). They could also be linked to the Veydran mentioned in The Dragonlord trilogy.

<sup>2</sup> The [3.5e statistics in D&Dwiki](#) can be used for them, or alternatively the [4e Age of War statistics](#) can be used.

**Lizardkin:** Arctic lizardmen with white skin, adapted to the cold climate and the mostly subterranean varkha<sup>3</sup> populate the Wurmsteeth since old times.

**Saurials**<sup>4</sup>: They are too ancient creatures that live in the area since thousands of years, some believe originally brought from Davania by the dragons.

**Ice Frogfolk**<sup>5</sup>: It’s a common rumor in the Wurmsteeth that they were brought from Skothar at some point in the remote past. They spend the winter and most of the autumn in subterranean houses and cover themselves heavily in clothes if they have to face the cold outside.

**Wurm brutemen:** Highly intelligent and civilized, rumored to possess great mental and magical powers, these brutemen belonged to an ancient and lost civilization.

**Humans:** Several human cultures live in the Wurmsteeth. The more numerous are the Wyrmsdanner, Antalians related to the Heldanners that live in the area since thousands of years. Then there are the Vanatics, a culture similar to Traladarans and Zuyevans, also living here since before the Great Rain of Fire<sup>6</sup>. Then there are Thyatians, mostly outcasts of relatives of werecreatures, with no love lost for the

<sup>3</sup> Find AD&D stats for them in the [Complete Monstrous Manual](#)

<sup>4</sup> Find AD&D stats for them in the [Complete Monstrous Manual](#).

<sup>5</sup> The Vaults of Pandius contain both Andrew Theisen’s [Frog-Folk stats](#) and Jamie Baty’s [Frog-Folk stats](#).

<sup>6</sup> Simone Neri’s A Traveller guide to Norwold and Agathokles’ Skaufskogr article in this same issue provide more details on these people.

Empire. Also many Heldanner exiles came here after the Knights of Vanya stole their lands in the south. Other human cultures have found a home in the Wurmsteeth, like Norwolder Antaliens, Alphatians and Denagothians. All of them usually have no residual allegiance with their former homelands

**Wurm humanoids:** All the common races of humanoids have representatives in the Wurmsteeth. They are usually fanatically loyal to their liege dragon.

**Wurm fairies:** These fairy folk, mostly sidhes and drakes, sided with the dragons long ago. They have however peaceful relations with the other, unaligned fairy folk that live around the Wurmsteeth area, like centaurs, ents, actaeons and others.

**Werereatures:** The Wurmsteeth dragons offered protection to werereatures many centuries ago, so many of them live in the Realm. Usually they are not distinguishable from normal humans, and many have normal human relatives and live peacefully among them.

**Eldar:** Mythical ancestors of the elves that supposedly survive only in the Wurmsteeth<sup>7</sup>.

**Wurm elves:** Different group of elves have joined the dragon realm over the centuries and eventually formed a new and particular clan under a green dragon ruler.

**Wurm giants:** This special breed of giants had a powerful kingdom in these mountains in ages now lost. They are similar to stone giants. A giant PC should have the

<sup>7</sup> According to the Dragonlord trilogy. Could be similar to D&D 4th ed. Eladrin.

advantages of strength and size but the disadvantage of encumbrance and weight in the treacherous ice covered mountain trails.

**Wurm rakasta:** Lynxman, snow pardasta and mountain rakasta<sup>8</sup> live in the area since ancient times, and some have sworn allegiance to the kingdom.

**Wurm lupins:** The Heldann Shepherd, Norwold Malamute, Gnomish Snoutzer, Great Dogge and white Foxfolk lupin breeds<sup>9</sup> have lived in the area since thousand of years.

**Others:** As the Dragon Realm is very ancient and the dragons live long lives and are often powerful wizards, nearly any Mystaran or extraplanar race could have some inhabitants in the area, if the DM wishes so. PCs could also belong to unique orders of the Wurmsteeth, like the Order of the Holy Blood Swords or the Defenders<sup>10</sup>, or the Redhammers<sup>11</sup>.

**Complications:** Even if the Wurmsteeth population is normally loyal to the dragons, the DM could allow one or more PCs to be traitors or spies, working for the Heldannic knights or another external power, and ready to betray the rest of the group. Among the Wurmsteeth population there

<sup>8</sup> Check [History and evolution of Rakastas](#) by Simone Neri and/or Giampaolo Agosta's article on the History of Rakasta in issue #5 of Threshold magazine, page 64.

<sup>9</sup> Check [History of the Lupins](#) by Giampaolo Agosta or [Lupin Breeds](#) by Atila Pires dos Santos or the latter article in issue #2 of Threshold magazine, page 59.

<sup>10</sup> More details can be found in ["Wurmsteeth Gazetteer part 2"](#).

<sup>11</sup> More detail here in ["Wurmsteeth Gazetteer part 4"](#).

are tensions, as in any other nation, mostly due to the perceived superiority of one race over another or over religious issue, as the Church of Pearl in recent years has hindered the religious freedom of other faiths<sup>12</sup>. Vassals and scions of chaotic dragons could also have unresolved issues and grudges with vassals and scions of neutral and lawful dragons.

<sup>12</sup> As explained in Giulio Caroletti's work. In the Dragonlord trilogy however the Wurmsteeth are rather ruled by gold dragon priests of The Great One. I'm assuming here that now the red dragons are dominating Wurmsteeth politics, thus reconciling the two sources, but other DMs may prefer otherwise. In Simone Neri's article "A Traveler's guide to Norwold" here in this same issue of Threshold magazine, the take is also slightly different from mine, as I assume a much stronger and organized realm.

## MAPS

Several maps of southern Norwold can be useful to run the adventure. In particular, an 8mph map is provided in "The Skaufskogr and Beyond" in this same issue, whereas JTR (OldDawg) designed a different version for the GazF series<sup>6</sup>. Robin Dijkema's Composite Map of Norwold provides a further elaboration on JTR's map, and can be found on page 22 of Threshold Magazine Issue 6<sup>7</sup>.

A 24 mph map is attached to Simone Neri's article, "A Traveller's Guide to Norwold", in this same issue. I have also designed a map of Brun at 24 mph which could be used instead<sup>8</sup>. Note that depending on the specific map used, certain encounters may be affected. Map-dependent encounters will be indicated as such in the text.



*Windreach column*

<sup>6</sup> It can be found in "[Beyond the Final Range: The Ransarn-Vinisk Valley](#)" by JTR.

<sup>7</sup> And is also available at [The Vaults of Pandius](#) website.

<sup>8</sup> Available at [The Vaults of Pandius](#) website.

## ACT ONE

### TEMPLE OF PEARL IN WINDREACH

The adventure begins in the great temple of Pearl in Windreach, the majestic capital of the Wurmsteeth kingdom. PCs will be summoned by none other than the Dragon King himself. The King<sup>9</sup>, is imposing and majestic, and PCs should be properly humbled before him. He'll explain to them that the Rod has been stolen and to retrieve it is most urgent and vital. They have been chosen as known and capable adventurers, and also because they are not dragons. The King in fact fears that a cunning spellcaster, as one may be among the thieves, could be able to use the Rod against approaching dragons of any breed, and doesn't want to risk such an occurrence. Indeed over time the dragons have modified the Rod, expanding its power. Now the object can control dragons of any colour, albeit at a shorter range. The King will not share this information with the PCs, fearing they could be tempted to keep the Rod for themselves, or that spies could be among them (and a traitor could be among them if the DM would allow so). Until the Rod is retrieved, no dragon would come near it, so the PCs cannot have aerial support. Apparently, and strangely enough, the Heldannic Knights do not have it either, so they have escaped from the hiding place of the Rod by dog sleds<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> In Giulio Caroletti's work, the King is a red dragon, while in Bruce Heard's HK works, the Dragon King is the gold dragon Eruptaar. It was also a gold in the Dragonlord trilogy. In the *Mystara Almanac description* of 1017-1019 AC the Wurmsteeth was a triarchic kingdom. The DM may choose the ruler she or he prefers.

What the King does not know is that the Heldann have decided to avoid the use of a warbird because they fear a dragon attack, and they think that a land party has better chances to hide and escape. The Heldann in fact do not know yet how to use the Rod. The King also doesn't know that other parties are now pursuing the Rod. A Denagothian spy in fact is active at the highest level of the Wurmsteeth government, and now Vitriol will mobilize his agent in the area to have the Rod. Dolores of Hillsbury also has a well placed spy in Denagoth: she has shared the information with Jaggar von Drachenfels<sup>11</sup>, for her unknown purpose, and now a Glantrian party is on the track of the Rod too. Another spy was placed at the highest levels of the Heldannic knights hierarchy by some Alphatian wizards: they want the Rod too and are sending yet another party to retrieve it. Neither the PCs nor the Heldannic agents will know about these three other parties until they meet them.

PCs are equipped as quickly as possible with provisions, dog sleds, skis and snow rackets and sent through a magic portal to the Ransarn river valley, south of the official Wurmsteeth kingdom border, near to the place where the Rod was secretly kept.

If the DM has decided to stage the adventure during the most dramatic years of the Heldannic invasion of Norwold, then the area from the Ransarn Valley and below is

<sup>10</sup> Assuming it's winter or early spring. In another season, the Heldannic thieves and the PCs will have to use horses or other terrestrial mounts.

<sup>11</sup> Or Jaggar, being the Master of Dracology, could have obtained this information on his own.

already a frontline, with Heldannic troops probably ready to invade from the Gnomstal and the Saffir pass. Therefore the thieves could find allies rather quickly, if not stopped in time.



*Dog sled*

### Ransarn Valley

As the PCs arrive in the snow covered valley, they will immediately meet Jacob 'Raven' Aloysius, First Legion Overlord and Wereraven, with some soldiers. Jacob is hurt, as are all his men, while others have been killed by the thieves, who have escaped south along the Ransarn river. Jacob will give the PCs a first description of the thieves: a thin and tattooed man, a grey-bearded man, a lupin, a blond-haired female knight, two young knights with brown beards, and one bald and beardless knight. None of the suspects wore Heldannic symbols but, as the Heldann Territories are now at war with the Wurmsteeth kingdom, Heldannic knights are the most likely candidates for the theft. Jacob will also warn the PCs about the strength of the thieves, as the Rod was kept in a secluded and secret temple nearby, with powerful guardians which have been easily dispatched. Jacob and his men tried to stop

the thieves, but they used a strange weapon on them, gravely injuring and confusing many of his party, and allowing the thieves to escape<sup>12</sup>. Jacob will send four of his men with the PCs. All of them are werereatures (the DM should choose the species) so they can be of help in the pursuit.

Jacob also promises to follow and aid as soon as some clerics arrive here to cure his soldiers<sup>13</sup>. After that the PCs should begin the pursuit!

### Pursuit!

The DM may choose different ways to calculate the relative speed of the two parties. It should be assumed that the PCs can soon spot signs of the thieves and slowly gain on them. There are 400 miles from Ransarn valley to Landfall and, even in spring and summer without snow, the terrain is hilly, irregular and devoid of good roads. As per the BECMI Rules Cyclopeda (page 88), PCs can cover only 16 miles a day, reaching 36 a day only by exhausting the dogs (or the horses, or other mounts). The Heldann however will be able to cover **80 miles in just one day** among the light forest of the eastern Ransarn Valley, reaching the Ransarn river. They'll accomplish this with the potions of speed and exhausting the dogs, trusting in the possibility to change them among Heldann troops at the ford. PCs could match such speed only with magic or

<sup>12</sup> This should be described as an effect similar to the clerical spell Holy Word.

<sup>13</sup> Jacob is already regenerating his wounds but some of his men are not and he wants to remain with the wounded for now, he will refuse to abandon them and will follow the PCs later.

## The Heldannic party

Konrad (C13), the gray bearded man, is a powerful cleric of Vanya and leader of the group, the DM should adjust his level depending on the PCs' levels, but he shouldn't be below 10. He has a Holy Word globe with three charges left, a ring of protection+2, a ring of protection from fire and ice, several scrolls of protection from evil 10', several potions of healing, potions of invisibility, and a potion of giant's strength. Shan (T14 or see note), the thin and tattooed man is a powerful, bronze skinned assassin and sorcerer<sup>1</sup> from Davania in service of the church. He has rings of protection+2, fire and ice resistance, a potion of levitation, a potion of flying, and a wand of fireballs with 9 charges. The lupin, Roaroth, (F11) is an experienced warrior of the Heldann Shepherd breed. He has a sword+2, plate mail+2, a potion of blending, boots of speed, and a ring of spell turning with 4 charges left. The bald beardless knight, the two young knights and the blond haired female knight are all paladins of Vanya (P8-12). All are equipped with rings of protection +1 and fire resistance, 1 potion of flying each, 2 scrolls of create monsters (15HD), and have weapons and armor +1. The party also has several potions of speed which they use up during their escape. They will not be easy to defeat. They also have a unique Massmorph ring that disguises them as trees, as the spell. The effect however is not as perfect as the spell, and they can normally be spotted at a short distance (less than 10 meters).

<sup>1</sup> Or just a high level mystic or thief with powerful magical objects, if using unmodified BECMI rules.

airborne mounts, but spotting the Heldann from the air will be impossible, as they'll be magically concealed too.

Several factors could weigh on when the PCs will be able to reach the Heldannic thieves, mostly the results of optional encounters listed below, duration of fights and natural obstacles.

If the PCs are exhausting their mounts and using magic as the Heldann do, the DM could decide which group is gaining or losing ground making checks on the average constitution of each group (and their mounts)<sup>14</sup>.

### Optional encounter #1 Undead!

To give the PCs an even more dramatic chase, the DM may choose to include in the first day an encounter with undead, that could come either from Koldunya (if you use the Skaufskogr map) or from Drax Ruthiss (if you use JTR's map), an abandoned Essurian<sup>15</sup> city. The undead could be a random encounter, or have been sent by the Church of Idris, Hel (if the DM desires another complication), or Nyx. In the first case the undead could be allied to the Denagoth party (see below). In the latter case they could offer their help to the PCs, as Koldunya could wish to help the dragons in exchange for aid against the Church of Idris.

<sup>14</sup> Some rules about pursuits could be found on the BECMI Rules Cyclopeda on page 98-99, or in the D&D 3ed SRD: [Evasion and Pursuit](#) at the D&D Wiki.

<sup>15</sup> See [Denagoth](#) for more about the fallen kingdom of Essuria.

**Vrodniki!**

When the PCs reach the thicker woods near the bank of the Ransarn they should be able to see the Heldannic party not too much ahead. But at this moment a new complication will ensue: a large band (50 or more) of red haired barbarians will come from the forest, half of it pursuing the Heldannic thieves, the other half stopping the PCs.

These are Vantalian nomads, the Vrodniki. Knyaz (duke) Korun of the Suva Voysko (the “owl host”) will stop the PCs. Korun will insist that the PCs join him, as he wants to retrieve the artifact for the dragons, just like them. The simple fact that he knows about the theft should make PCs wary of him. Indeed Korun was sent by Dominagon, a powerful blue dragon who has recently (secretly) decided to join the cause of Vitriol and the Church of Idris. If Korun takes the Rod he will later give it to Dominagon, who’ll probably go to Denagoth with it. Before the PCs have to make a choice however another host of about 20 warriors Vrodniki will arrive. These are led by Knyaz Visok of the Orao Voysko (Eagle host) and they are truly sent by the Wyrksteeth government.

Visok will accuse Korun of being a traitor<sup>16</sup> (and rightly so), and the PCs will have to decide which party they trust. Either way, the two groups of nomads will start a fight that will probably involve the PCs too. Jacob 'Raven' Aloysius could eventually arrive with a host of Wyrksteeth troops and stop the fight. He’ll scold both Knyaz for fighting

<sup>16</sup> As the DM prefers, Korun could be aware and part of Dominagon's treachery, or simply a dupe.

among themselves with the Heldann ready to attack the valley. The Knyaz will grudgingly stop their men and follow Jacob to the Ransarn river, where the Wyrksteeth army and allies will stand against the invasion.



*Ransarn river valley*

**The Heldannic party escapes!**

The Heldannic Knights should be able to escape the Vrodniki and the PCs, cross the Ransarn<sup>17</sup> and flee into the Gnomsdal forest, forcing the PCs to follow them there. If necessary, or for added drama, Heldannic troops may intercept the main force of the pursuers at the ford of the Ransarn river, forcing a battle with the Vrodniki and the Wyrksteeth army. The Gnomsdal goblins, who are under the rule of Dominagon, will fight against the Heldannic Knights in this occasion, attacking them from behind. However, the goblins will then pursue the

<sup>17</sup> The Ransarn will be frozen during winter, and therefore easily crossed by sled or horse. In other seasons, a boat will be needed to cross the river. The Heldannic thieves could have left one on the shore for this purpose, but the PCs will have to find another solution.

Heldannic thieves as they escape south into the Gnomsdal forest. Jacob will explain that they probably act under Dominagon's orders, and the Blue dragon's loyalty to Wurmsteeth is very much in question. The Vrodniki and the Wurmsteeth army will not risk entering the Gnomsdal, where they could be caught between Heldann and hostile humanoids, but Jacob will send two more of his soldiers with the PCs (werereatures as the four before) and also Knyaz Visok will send five expert warriors with the PCs if they wish to have some more help.

### Or maybe they don't?

PCs shouldn't be able to stop the Heldann this early in the adventure, but if the PCs are particularly good, the DM could allow them to intercept them already. If this happens, the Heldann will still have 3 charges of Holy Word in a strange white sphere that the grey bearded man keeps. If the PCs manage to do it nevertheless, then the adventure can be played in reverse, with several interesting parties (Dominagon's Vrodniki and goblins, Denagothians, Alphatians, other Heldannic soldiers) pursuing the PCs to steal the Rod before they reach Wurmsteeth borders. If however the PCs do not reach the Heldannic thieves or are unable to stop them at the Ransarn ford, then proceed to:

## ACT TWO GNOMSDAL FOREST AND GAP

In the Gnomsdal forest, the Heldann will be able to cover only 16 miles a day, and therefore it should take them 6 days to reach the other Heldannic camp in the Gnomsal gap, but they'll cover 32 miles in the last day, anticipating the possibility of changing their dogs (or horses) and so covering the distance in **only 5 days**. If the PCs get too close, they will send any encountered group of Heldannic soldiers against them, as explained in Encounter #5 below. The PCs can probably maintain the same normal speed on average, but the DM could roll a constitution check to determine who is gaining ground. If the PCs try to fly they'll be attacked by warbirds<sup>18</sup>, and anyway they will not be able to spot the Heldann from the air, due to the Massmorph effect.

Even if there are legends of gnomes and fairy creatures in this area, these woods are mostly inhabited by goblins and hobgoblins who aren't very friendly with the Wurmsteeth nor with Oceansend and Norwold, but answer to Dominagon. The Lirovka's Alps south of the forest are also inhabited by clans of Mountain rakasta and Mountain giants. Both have to pay tribute to Dominagon to avoid harassment by the dragon and his goblins, but resent this and resent the Wurmsteeth government who does nothing to keep Dominagon in check. They were trying to establish an alliance with Oceansend and Alpha, but now they have been cut off from the rest of Norwold by the Heldann invasion. It's hard to say now if they'll fight the

<sup>18</sup> See "[heldannic Warbirds](#)" at the Vaults.

Heldann or will have a truce, or even an alliance, with them. Jacob can provide the PCs all the above info before they enter the Gnomsdal.

### Hegkogur

This goblin village is the first community encountered after the ford of the Ransarn river<sup>19</sup>. If the Heldann invasion has reached this far, the village is now occupied by a vast number of Heldannic troops and the goblins have retired to the mountains to harass them. All the valley should then be a war zone, where the PCs should tread carefully, as they cannot defeat all the Heldannic army alone, and neither the local goblins. It should be immediately obvious then that Hegkogur has to be avoided. Fortunately, the Heldannic thieves, even if they stopped to rest for some hours, have every intention to go further south, and the PCs can follow them.

All encounters below can be played or avoided as the DM prefers, or randomly determined with a 10% chance of encounter for each hex and the roll of 1d5 (1d10 halved) to choose which encounter of the 5 optional encounters listed below for this area. Also the players could be able to avoid an encounter through stealth. The DM could also randomly determine if such encounters happens also for the Heldannic thieves. If it's so, the Heldann could be hindered and slowed and be reached by the PCs, or at least the PCs could encounter survivors of a party

<sup>19</sup> Shown in Robin's and JTR's [maps](#) but not included in Agathokles' Skaufskogr map.

that the Heldann defeated, and obtain help and information from them.

### Optional encounter #2 Goblins fight back!

Groups of many goblins and hobgoblins (at least 1d10+5 HD 1-3 each or more, depending on PCs levels), often with experienced warriors (HD 3-7), chiefs (HD 5-9), wiccans or shamans (W or S 4-8), roam the valley harassing Heldannic troops. They will not be hostile to a Wurmsteeth party, as their lord Dominagon is nominally an ally of the Dragon King, and they'll offer their help. If their help is refused, they'll try to follow the PCs as their ultimate purpose is to retrieve the Rod and bring it to their master. The Heldannic thieves too will run into at least one group of such goblins, but will defeat and scatter them. Survivors among the goblins could point out the direction where the thieves are going (south on the eastern border of the valley).

### Optional encounter #3 People of the Mountains

Mountain rakasta of the Chogh Dene tribes and some Mountain giants allied with them are watching the Heldannic troops, fearing they will eventually invade their mountains. As written above, they distrust the Wurmsteeth kingdom that hasn't helped them against Dominagon. Clever PCs could be able to parley with them, promising help, and obtain at least some assistance, shortcut or direction to intercept the Heldannic party.

Such parties will normally be composed of 3-4 experienced rakasta warriors (F3-5), a thief (T5 or AD&D ranger) and a shaman (S5-8) or chief (F6-10) and 1-2 Mountain giants (HD 13-20). The Norwold party (see below) could be able to obtain the Rakasta assistance, if the PCs are able to ally with them.

#### Optional encounter #4

##### Fair resistance

Fairy folk squads, mostly composed of gremlins, pixies, pookas and satyrs are ready to hinder the Heldann advance as soon as they disturb the forest (such as cutting trees to make large buildings<sup>20</sup>). Human druids could also be among them, and treants. For the moment probably fairy folk are just keeping an eye on Heldann activities, but the situation could escalate quickly. To protect the forest, the fairies are ready to help the goblins, with whom they have a long lasting truce, but they'll also be open to an alliance with Wyrksteeth or Norwold, whatever party guarantees more help in defending the forest. If the Heldannic thieves encounter the fairies however they'll be polite and respectful with them, and the fairies will let them pass.

#### Encounter #5

##### The Invasion

Heldann troops and some Mountain giant mercenaries are quickly marching toward the Ransarn river, and several groups are trying

<sup>20</sup> Or maybe the Heldannic Order will get along with the fairies and respect their territory. Much depends on how each DM wishes to play the Order in his/her campaign.

to "secure" the forest, i.e. destroying any residual goblin and monster presence. "Monster" is for the Heldann quite a broad category that includes almost all the non-human sentient races, except for some lupins and the more human-like, such as elves, halflings, dwarves, gnomes and giants. Such Heldannic parties will be immediately hostile to the PCs, easily recognizing them as Wyrksteeth spies, unless the PCs are almost all humans and somehow disguised. If the PCs try to pass as Norwolders or Oceansenders, they'll be considered enemies anyway. Even if they try to pass as Thyatian agents they'll be questioned and, if they do not fight back, taken prisoner. The Heldannic thieves will send one such group against the PCs as soon as they encounter one. These groups of Heldann could be composed of low level soldiers (F1-3) with a corporal or sergeant (P4-5) or be more experienced knights (P4-8) with 1-3 Mountain giants (12-18 HD) and a lieutenant or captain (P9-12).

#### Optional encounter #6

##### Norwolders

This party of adventurers have been sent by King Ericall to spy the Heldann advance. They know nothing of the Rod, but will try to follow the Heldannic thieves nevertheless to understand what they're doing. If the Heldann discover them, they'll try to kill them or, failing that, they'll send another Heldannic party as in encounter 5 against them. If the PC's try to parley with them, they'll be open to an alliance with the Wyrksteeth, as king Ericall by 1011 AC is actively seeking a firm alliance with the Dragon kingdom. The PCs are probably

aware of that too, and could therefore find an agreement with the Norwold party. As the latter one doesn't, in fact, know anything about the Rod, they'll be happy to help just to strengthen relations with a useful ally. They also already have contacts with the Chogh Dene Mountain rakasta, and could guide the PCs to a shortcut in the southern Lirovka's Alps that can bring them to the Nordheim river avoiding the Heldann surveillance of the Gnomsdal Gap.

### Gnomsdal Gap

The Gap will have a Heldann camp at the centre and be heavily guarded by Heldann troops. The Heldannic thieves will have an ambush organized against the PCs by Heldannic soldiers (at least 10 F or P4-8 and a commander P7-11), to try to stop them. Clever PCs could avoid the trap entirely if they have obtained the help of the Norwold party and the rakasta, and therefore are able to take the shortcut mentioned above to reach the Nordheim river. If not, PCs will have to break through the Heldann block with violence, to follow the thieves in the Skarsholm.

### The Norwold party

The Norwold party is composed of one female cleric, one male wizard, one male elf, two male warriors, one female halfling thief or rake. If appropriate for the DM's campaign, they could be a group of famous adventurers. They should be at least around level 7 and have one magical weapon +1, or magical armor, +1 or magical ring +1 each, and also some magical objects, as potions of healing, speed, invulnerability, gaseous form, defense, heroism, gauntlets of ogre's strength, and a wand of lightning.



*Gnomsdal Gap*

## ACT THREE SKARSHOLM

This region takes its name from Skars, “some kind of ogress (or possibly even a hag) feared by the few Heldanners and Heldann Shepherds who lived here<sup>21</sup>”. Orcs and hobgoblins partially conquered this area, harassing the local humans, Heldann Shepherds and Foxfolk lupins. The arrival of the Heldann has therefore been seen as fortuitous by these latter populations, who have established with the Heldannic army various degrees of cooperation, alliance or truce.

All the region could well be considered full enemy territory, and the PCs should try to move as stealthy as possible.

It will take for the Heldann party **five days** to reach the road that crosses the Skaufskogr hill.

As in Act II, all the encounters below can be played or randomly determined, both for the Heldannic thieves and the PCs, as the DM prefers.

### Optional encounter #7

#### Orcs

Numerous parties of orcs (HD 1-5) with possibly some ogres (HD 4-9), fire giants (HD 11) and mountain giants (HD 12-15) are roaming the area, staging guerrilla warfare against Heldannic troops and supplies.

<sup>21</sup> As described in Giampaolo Agosta’s Skaufskogr article in this same issue.



*Elk herd in the Skarsholm*

Pushed back to the Hettafjall Mountains by the Heldannic invasion, they’re not inclined to surrender yet. They are allies with the Denagothian party below, that has promised them aid from Vitriol and his black dragons against the Heldann. They’ll not be immediately hostile to the PCs if they’re able to recognize them as Wyrksteeth agents, even proposing a momentary alliance against the common Heldannic enemy. Their true purpose however would be to drive the Heldannic thieves and the PCs toward the Denagothian party.

### Optional encounter #8

#### Lupins

Groups of Heldann shepherds with some Foxfolk lupins (1d6+2 each HD 2-7) are scouting the region to drive away orcs or, failing that, pinpoint their position to return with reinforces and the aid of Heldannic troops. The lupins do not really trust Heldann much, but they think an alliance with them is the only option they have at the moment. They could however be open to switch to Wyrksteeth and Norwold, if the

PCs can guarantee effective aid against the orcs.

They'll not stop the Heldann but will not hinder the PCs either, and they could warn them about the presence of orcs nearby. There is also a 20% chance that they have spied on the Denagothians and could warn the PCs about them too.

### Optional encounter #9 Denagothians

The Denagothian party is composed of a Dragonborn warrior (son of Vitriol), a female cleric of Idris, a human wizard, a human warrior, a brute warrior, an orc warrior, an ogre warrior, a goblin thief, and a thoul<sup>22</sup>. Under the nominal leadership of the Dragonborn, the party is in truth deeply divided by Denagothian politics, with the Dragonborn, the brute, the orc, ogre and the thoul loyal to Vitriol, the female cleric and the goblin to the Church of Idris, and the human wizard and human warrior to the Shadow Lord. They'll present a unified front however and it would be hard for the PCs to play on their division, unless they already have been in Denagoth and know the situation of the country well. If the Denagothians succeed in taking the Rod, however, they could turn on one another rather quickly once they have reached the Gate of Henadin and thus are near to Denagoth borders. When they encounter the PCs for the first time they'll be friendly and

<sup>22</sup> For more details on Denagoth races and politics, see the [Denagoth listings](#) at The Vaults, and check Denizens of Denagoth Gazetteer by JTR.

### The Denagothian party

The Dragonborn warrior should be at least a F12, the female cleric a C10, the others should be around level 10 too. They could be famous (or infamous) adventurers in their country and beyond. They will have several magical objects, beside weapons, armor and rings, such as a wand of frost, scroll of conjure elementals, potions of gaseous form, speed, heroism, polymorph self, plant control, dragon control, a rod of victory, and a girdle of giant strength.

offer their help, particularly if they have already encountered the Heldann and been defeated. They'll claim to be loyal to Denagoth's dragons, here to establish good relations with the Wyrksteeth. If the PCs accept their help, they'll turn on them as soon as the Heldann are defeated and the Rod is taken.

### Optional encounter #10 Alphatians

This human group of three wizards (one female), one male cleric of Razud, three male warriors and one female thief will present itself as freedom fighters from Midway Haven, now occupied by Heldannic soldiers. They'll recount dreadful stories about Heldannic abuses on the colony and claim to be here to search for allies among the lupins and other local populations. The story is only partially true. The three wizards, the cleric and the thief, all clearly Alphatians<sup>23</sup>, claim to

<sup>23</sup> I.e. a male wizard and the female wizard

## The Alphatian party

The wizard and the thief, at least, could be famous adventurers in the Empire, all around level 11, while the three warriors, around level 5-8, could be local adventurers that have distinguished themselves in the resistance against the Heldann. The wizards and the thief will have a lot of magical objects, mostly rings of protections, at least a wand each, a potion of flying each, a potion of gaseous form each, a potion of healing each, potions of human control, flying, speed, growth, elemental form, and poison, and scrolls of create monster, summon elementals, spell catching, and seeing. The warriors will probably have only magical weapons and some potions of cure serious wounds.

be colonists but really come from mainland Alphatia, sent by other powerful wizards to retrieve the Rod. They have been following the thieves for days, but will claim that they have only just spotted them and they'll offer their help. The three warriors, one Cypric Alphatian looking and the other two Antalian looking, are really from Midway Haven but will not expose the wizards as they are eager to kill Heldannic knights for whatever reason, and do not care about the PCs or the Wyrmssteeth. Nevertheless, the younger Antalian warrior could let something slip about the Alphatians if the PCs talk to him a bit. If the PCs accept the Alphatians' help,

are pure Alphatians with black hair and pale skin, while the other male wizard and the thief are Cypric Alphatians with brown hair and bronze skin.

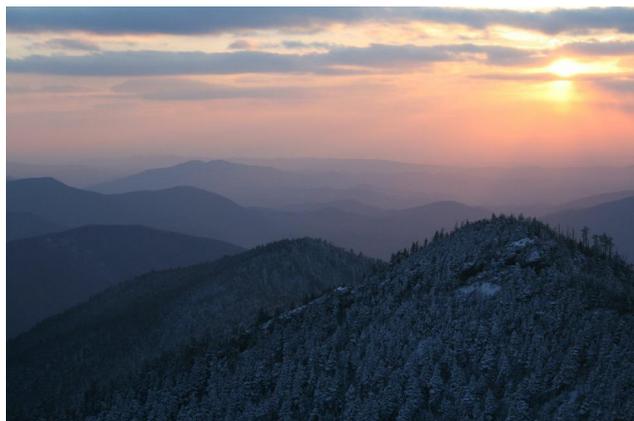
they'll assist until the Rod is retrieved, then they'll turn on the PCs to take it for themselves.

Theoretically at this point the PCs could have goblins, Norwolders, orcs, Denagothians and Alphatians with them, even if it would require some amount of effort to have all these different people get along. Should the PCs retrieve the Rod whilst in the company of all these groups, the goblins, orcs and Denagothian will turn on them immediately, while the Alphatians will remain momentarily loyal, only to turn on them later. The Norwolders however will not betray the PCs. Any group obviously could take advantage of the confusion to escape with the Rod or to steal it during the night.

## ACT FOUR SKAUFSKOGR HILLS

This region is mostly inhabited by lupins, with some gnomes, elves and fairy folk among them. Humans are rare and usually are druids or rangers. The Heldann army has to cross the hills going from Landfall to the north, and the lupins, while at peace for the moment, are quite worried.

The Heldannic party will cross the hills in **just two days**, covering 32 miles on the second day to reach Regjadur, where they have fresh mounts waiting for them.



*View of the Skaufskogr hills*

### Encounter #11 Foxfolks

More than one group of Foxfolk lupins can be encountered in the hills, so that the PCs should meet at least one. Each group will have at least a Foxfolk druid (D5-10), with possibly a shaman (S3-9) too and the rest will be composed by warriors and rangers (F2-8) (or foresters in BECMI rules). Forest gnomes,

elves, Snoutzer lupins and human druids or foresters could be present among the Foxfolk. The lupins have a truce with the Heldannic Order at the moment, i.e. they have allowed the Heldannic army to pass undisturbed. They'd have preferred not to let them pass, but the clans rightfully considered that they could not resist alone, yet they are very worried that the Heldann will be here to stay, and will slowly begin to colonize and cut their forest.

For this reason, they're carefully searching for allies among the nearby elves, gnomes, Heldann Sheperd lupins, antalian freedom fighters and even giants, orcs, bugbears and gnolls.

Any Foxfolk group will not stop the Heldannic thieves, but they'll be willing to parley with the PCs and interested in establishing stable relations with Wyrksteeth and Norwold, so they'll point out the direction the Heldannic thieves have taken and maybe even guide the PCs to avoid the Heldannic troops.

### Encounter #12 More Heldannic soldiers

It seems almost the entire Heldann army is going north from Landfall, passing among these hills. If the PCs haven't reached the Heldannic thieves yet, they'll do their best to use the army as a shield between them and the PCs. If the PCs reach the Heldannic thieves in this area, they'll try to call nearby troops to their aid, and there is a 50% chance each round that 1d10+5 Heldannic soldiers (One F7 and the others F2-4) will come in aid.

### Encounter #13 Regjadur

This town just south of the Skaufskogr hills is normally inhabited by local Antalian humans, but is now full of Heldannic troops and carriages on the route from Landfall to the north. The Heldannic thieves will stop briefly at the town, just to change dogs (or horses) and if they are aware they have been followed (and they probably are, at this point) they will send two groups of soldiers (as above) after the PCs. There is a good road to Landfall, so the Heldannic party will be able to cover the 48 miles in **just five hours**.

### Encounter #14 Glantrians

The Glantrian party will be encountered just south of Regjadur. They'll try to stop the Heldann, attacking them with certainty and determination. The party is composed of four wizards (two female), one thief and four warriors (one female). They'll be friendly with the PCs, claiming to be representatives of "Western dragons", and willing to help. If the Heldannic thieves have already been defeated before, this group will follow the PCs to take the Rod, but they'll always try to befriend the PCs beforehand, and then they'll try to steal the Rod during a rest or during the night. They could also form a temporary alliance with the Denagothians, if they get the chance, but will eventually betray them. They will fight the Alphatians on sight however, and the Alphatians will do the same with them.

### The Glantrian party

They are a group of adventurers famous in Glantri and beyond, notoriously often working for Dolores and Jaggar. They should be around level 9 and will have plenty of magical objects too, such as boots of speed, a potion of diminution, a mirror of life trapping, a ring of truth, a ring of quickness, and potions of healing, clairaudience, clairvoyance, elemental form, giant strength, polymorph self, antidote, and dragon control.

If, despite this last encounter, the Heldannic thieves are still ahead, they will reach Landfall.



*Landfall harbour*

## ACT FIVE LANDFALL

The city is occupied by a large contingent of Heldannic troops, with Warbirds and ships in the harbour. PCs could hope to enter it only in disguise, and non-human PCs could have serious difficulties, as normally only demi-humans (elves, dwarves, gnomes and halflings) and sometimes lupins, giants and rakasta are accepted into the city, and thoroughly questioned beforehand.

The Heldannic thieves will spend a night in the city, at the “Welcome Inn and Tavern” on Shayler Street<sup>24</sup>, heavily guarded as it’s now the favorite place for Heldannic officers. The next day they’ll board the ship “Glory of Vanya II” to Freiburg, and will reach the Heldannic capital **at the end of the fourth day of sailing**.

If the PCs have not yet retrieved the Rod then stealing it from the tavern (a very difficult task) or hiding in the ship’s hold could be the last chance they have. One of the other interested groups, mentioned before, could have the same idea, if they’re not with the PCs.

The Alphatian group has also hired the services of an Ostland pirate, with whom they’ll try to board the Heldannic ship to take the Rod. Obviously, they’ll not share this information with the PCs, unless forced to. Resourceful PCs could try to obtain another

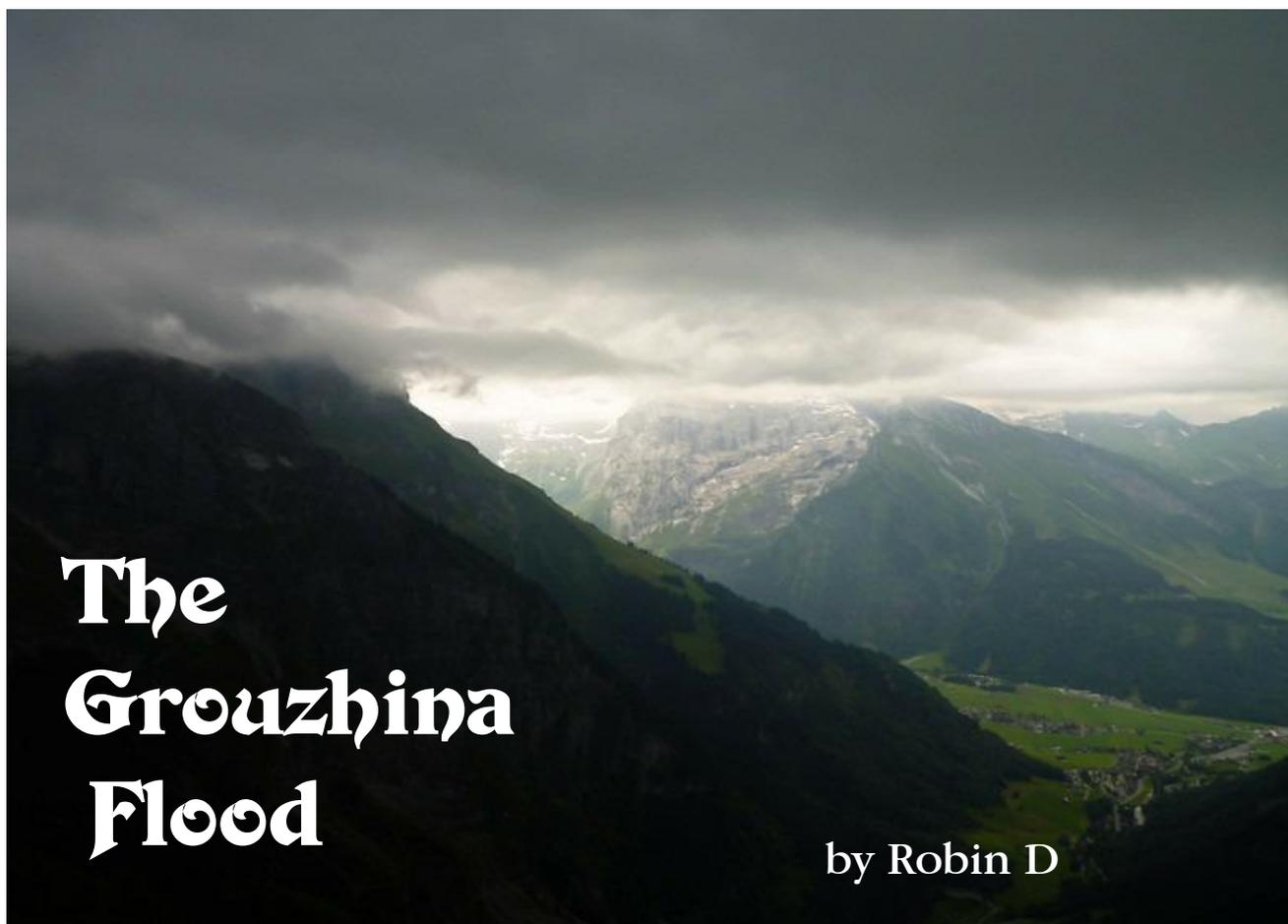
ship in case the thieves manage to leave Landfall.

## RETURN AND ENDING

If the PCs fail, the adventure could still continue with a desperate strike on Freiburg before the Heldannic can manage to use the Rod. The Alphatians, the Glantrians and the Denagothians could try the same thing too, but they will not try it on Windreach, fearing the wrath of the dragons. If another party takes the Rod, that will mean a disaster for the Wurmsteeth.

If the PCs take the Rod any surviving interested party will still try to take it from them until they reach the safety of Wurmsteeth lands. Once the Dragon Kingdom has the Rod again, they’ll make sure it will be impossible to steal again, but surviving enemies could return in the future in some other adventure. The adventure could have follow-ups in aiding friendly parties against the Heldannic knights, like the Norwolders and the Lupins, and in the continuing war for Oceansend and the north. Also if Dominagon’s treachery has been proved, the King will probably exile him to Denagoth or beyond. The Dragon King will also reward PCs handsomely, with appropriate honours and riches, and their status and fame in Wurmsteeth society will be greatly improved. They’ll certainly become indeed the most famous adventurers of the Kingdom.

<sup>24</sup> For more details on Landfall, check [“The Streets of Landfall Gazeteer”](#) by JTR. Note however that the Gazeteer is set before the Heldannic occupation.



# The Grouzhina Flood

by Robin D

Grouzhina was originally created by Christian Constantin in [these articles](#) available at the Vaults of Pandius, and depicted in [this map](#) (also available at the Vaults).

## 8 YARTHMONT 1004 AC

Within the Kingdom of **Grouzhina**, several miles East of Djuhra, near the Azhdakan standing stones. Late Spring. It was dark that night. The storm clouds blocked out the stars again, yet no rain did fall for three days.

The Wildwood druid Glashbar frowned deep within his beard, being sure not to awaken the gerbil babies hiding within it. He took a sip of Dalarquian Brandy, glanced up again, and frowned even stronger. *“It is that I know this be no magic cast from a fallen cleric from Hule, or a decrepit adventurer from the East. Not even a foul sorcerer from over the Silver Sierras, nor a demonic Lich from the Kingdom of the Dead in the North. No. None of these had been seen in the region for over three years now. Not that there was no magic. No. Adventurers enough; Fighters and Clergy from Kyurdukstan, Thieves from Grouzhina, and even Dragonhunters from the Wildwoods. Some Orcish Shaman from Hule, perhaps..., but neither of them ... no,*

*neither of them would be able to lock the weather down in this region, without making it rain. No. Nobody would be able, or so stupid. The source must be natural. But where?"*

The Mother gerbil arose Glashbar from his pondering. The creature looked deep into his eyes, as if a question had been asked. No sadness, fear or anger was in its tiny bead-like eyes, but there was no happiness either. Then it rapidly scuttled between the strands of beard, climbing up to its litter, a squall briefly arose, as the pups fought for their nipple to suckle upon, then fell silent again.

Glashbar, felt the warm fur of the critters on his chest, now and then the tiny claws scratching his bare skin. He looked again at the dark foreboding clouds. The storm's center was near, somewhere above the village Illishian. *"Tomorrow, yeah, tomorrow I'll be there and find the source..... yeah, tomorrow, it must be tomorrow!"*

## 9 Yarthmont 1004 AC

Marla looked up from her stand. Between the chalked spires of Kouriani, the dark green clouds in the South seemed as solid as a rock, which became brighter for a moment with each lightning burst crawling inside. *"No sorcerer had been seen in Grouzhina the last year, or several miles around, yet it felt as if..."*,

here her thoughts stopped, frozen. For less than a mere blink of an eye, within the fluid moment between two seconds she felt as being adrift. The world around her seemed to change. She saw fish and trees flying through the air, sand and stone above and air



*Calm Before the Storm*

below. Softly a voice spoke; *"Prepare to leave, meet me at the Crystals of Merat. You have two days!!"*

Then all was as if nothing had happened, the people around here were still selling their wares as usual. The pigeons she used to send messages were feeding upon the corn seeds. The storm still raged on. *"Weird, isn't it?"* A voice broke her reassining reasoning.

"Huh? Ehmm... Yeah. Yes .... Weird". "They say in Illishian that it started three days ago. Three days, and still no drop of rain. It must be dem wizards beyond da desert plateau to da east".

Worried she looked upon the merchant, a local from Isiliath selling magic sand to merchants travelling far away. She knew the sand was used for magical creations, like sandhours which always revealed the true time, or sleeping sand for the sleep spell research, or even the creation of Sand Golems.

His eyes dark and covered in dirtied wrinkles, yet friendly. His mouth, dirty and almost without any teeth. The wooden

mouthpiece as replacements hung on a rope beneath his chin. The dirtied clothing revealed clearly his Sindian origin, one of the few still roaming around here.

*"Yes, still no rain!...?"* she answered, voiced more like a question than an affirmation.

*"Nabh, no' even a drop"*

*"But, Hey... cannai send a message to Illisbian? I wanna know if me brats continue digging up enough sand. I just gotta new order. 15 bags o' sand. Fifteen!!. That'a bring me at least a 1000 gold. A 1000. Yo've eva seen a 1000 gold? I'm becoming rich ya know, and then I....."*

Slowly Marla looked back at the clouds, and tried to mix it with her vision. Nothing came out.

*"He Ya... I canna write, ya know. Grab da feather anna start writing kid, ya wanna earn ya money aren't ya?"*

*"Ehb..Yes, sir. What is your message....30 words is the limit, since my pigeons aren't weightlifters, for only 3 silver....."*

## 10 Yarthmont 1004 AC

The Storm raged above Isiliath. Yet no drop had fallen. Four days now. No strange magic, no hard wind, no humanoids or dragons. Nothing at all. Only the complete covering of the sky. Blocking almost all daylight that passed over the valley walls. Logan saw the people, foreign as he was between them, foreign they were to him. Most of them were hauling crystals and crystal-like sand in sacks and carts. Yes, he was a foreigner. Far away he came. His clergy ordained him to go to a

sorcerer who could teleport him here. In Glantri he found one. 500 gold pieces. 500!! Expensive. Why did the clergy want to spend such an amount just to send him. He unsurely looked around. His new warhorse reined, and saddled, the merchant checking another 80 gold pieces. Logan pondered; *Horses were rare here. Apparently. Some other creature was more common. Some kinda big bird.* He saw many nests lining the rocks, but the birds were gone. None remained. *The population was frightened, yet hungry for more magical sand.*

*"Thank You Sir"* said the merchant as he gave the money.

*"Do you know a place of crystal known as Merat?"* he asked.

*"Yeab.. o'course. Go North. Along da river and ya see it clearly. Its druid territory though. I dunna think they wanna have metal-bearers there. On da horse ya can reach it in a day o' two. Hope I Helped ya...."* With a greedy outstretched palm, eagerly for a coin extra, he looked beggingly into the face of the Paladin.

Logan frowned; *"Of course, here best man, may the Immortals be with you"*, and placed a silver piece in the dirty hand. As he arose the horse, the merchant mumbled something under his breath, something unfriendly. *"Greed in any form, is never good, but always wrong, Mister."* *"Yeab, yeab, ya surely wanna never get another rich, mister goodytissue....."* further he could not, nor wanted to, hear the words the man said. The horse itself suddenly walked forwards. And outside the village limits, it started to run. Northwards...along the river.

In the cave of the Malet Mountain, north of Djuhkra, Vertigeribiil Darastrix suddenly had a strange feeling. He was being summoned, with his hoard. A sort of druidic summon, yet he never was requested to do such a thing with his hoard. Yet Glashbar had always kept his promise. Never he sent hunters, thieves, or other kin to slay him. He even awarded the dragon when he helped. Vertigeribiil Darastrix cast a few spells and his treasure disappeared in a huge sack. Then he lifted it and spread his wings. He looked over the valley. In front of him he saw the river Merat. And even the sparkles of the Crystal Vale near it. The faint light from the north broke through the dark-green and purple clouds. Not even Vertigeribiil Darastrix did like this. He felt the magic tingling in the air. Something was amiss, so much for sure. His wide wings spread, he took a step over the edge, and jumped into the sky. A small circle, as he looked back upon his lair. His home. He had a feeling it would be his last moment with it. Then he turned East. The 30 miles were done in a few hours, and at nightfall he landed near the Crystal Vale. He liked the magic coming from it. It charged through his muscles, giving him strength and healing. Of course as a dragon he had more affinity with nature than most species, yet it was always weird to see how he could accept its powers already at a distance, while humans and such had to wear a Crystal shard.

Nobody here, he thought as he looked around. I wait. The sack placed in the Vale, for he knew humans would not dare to enter a Crystal Vale. Then he stepped just outside. Folded his mighty wings and tail. And sagged down. Slowly he fell asleep.



*Crystal Trees*

## 11 YARTMONT 1004, EARLY MORNING

Marla had traveled by moose now. Horses were way too expensive, and since moose tended to function better in woodlands, this tamed version would suffice. Or at least it has too. With a bottom like a rock and pains in her lower back she travelled day and night. It was weird, as the moose was neither hungry or thirsty, and did not get tired. As if something important was to happen and the beast knew it. Marla wished she had brought her pillow, as the back of a moose was not built to ride upon.

Then the first crystals could be seen. Single elongated elliptical strands growing like flowers from the ground. The Crystal Vale was near. Very near. And then the glow of the main source could be seen through the crystalline trees. She halted the moose. But as soon she grabbed her equipment, (the tent from her grandfather, the dagger from her sister, and the pouch with food from her mother) the creature staggered back and ran away, back into the north. The strings of the

bedroll securely strapped, the equipment fell to the ground. Marla kneeled, and while doing this, she sensed a strange smell. A scent of chlorine, somewhat acidic, yet not chemical, but still a strong natural smell. Something she had never smelled before.

Logan tried to slow his horse down, but all attempts were fruitless. The beast ran forward like as if in a panic. As soon as it had left the village Isiliath, it took up several notches of speed. Only his experience held him in the saddle. He saw the small village disappearing from sight. In the darkness against the rockwalls it was soon no more to be seen. The forest itself was strangely easy to pass, as if it helped. There were no branches, no bushes in the way that seemed to hinder the horse. And where they were, it jumped over it. Then he noticed something. He didn't spot it directly, but during the day, he found out what was different; it was silent, really silent. No birds singing, or other beasts making sound, not even insects. He did notice animals, but all were in some kind of haste, though a clear chosen direction could not be seen. The whole day and night passed on this way. It was the morning sun piercing over the mountains from the Northeast that broke his dreary eyes. He was completely awake instantly. Looking around, the horse was still running. Panting it suddenly fell. Logan tumbled over the horse. The ground and his armor met with a loud crash. Dizzy from the impact Logan arose, directly turning his eye towards the horse. With a last gasp of breath the creature looked frightened back into his soul. *"What... the beast is dead? How?"* The horse had not broken any legs, but was soaked in sweat, and spilled foam from its mouth. Its body was still feverishly hot. A Heart attack. Purely

from exhaustion. Logan hoped he was near his intended destination, and grabbed his equipment. With a stroke of his hand he closed the horses' eyes. *"Rest well, beast, Rest well."* The animal served him only once, but he felt as if they were long friends, one able to give life to save the other. In the north he saw some smoke rising from above the trees. Where there's smoke there's fire, there is intelligent life. About a mile or so, he estimated. It was in the main direction, so why not.

Glashbar had ignited a fire, a secure spot, only rocks and no wood within 50 yards or so. He disliked it still, but knew it had to be important. It was as if nature itself told him what to do. He sat down. Ate some berries, gave some to the gerbils, but they didn't want to leave his safe and warm beard. He drank some brandy, but it didn't taste as well as he remembered. The cloud was darker than before, he noticed that the rain had started above Isiliath. *"At last. And yet... still..."* he was bothered, something was still amiss.

## Lake Ishi

The mountain Fisher Amras was just south of the great lake. He had said farewell to his family, but couldn't understand why. His thoughts were at first that the dangerous climb to the lake could be his downfall, but when he canoed over the lake he was sure it was something else. Thousands of fish, were jumping up from the water. A sight he had never seen, carps as large as a horse were jumping like a goldfish in hot water. Within



*Mountain Lightning*

the ruckus he succeeded to reach the southern shore. Then the lightning bolts struck the mountain. The purple sky was lit for several moments as the several bolts hit the northern side of the lake.

*"That musta be it..."* he mumbled *"...they musta sensed the weather. No moment for me to return home. That's a thing o 'sure"*. He unpacked his canoe and set up his tent. Then the rain fell. It was as if the heavens opened and released a downpour. Within an hour Amras noticed the water level had risen a full yard. *"Thadda not normal. I'd betta bike up da mountain and find a dry cave or somethin. Or I'll be needinn to learn ta swim."* And so he did. After strolling for a hour up the mountains he found a cave a hundred yards or so above the water level, here he was at least dry and safe.

Vertigeribiil Darastrix suddenly awoke. He heard something and his keen senses told him his food had come. His favorite dinner; Moose. But as soon as he arose, and stretched his sleepy wings the scent was gone. *"A Pity, such a fine dinner"*. Normally he would have flown after it, but he knew it

was somehow important to be here, remain here. He noticed the rain falling. *"That must be the beginning of..."*, here he stopped, not knowing what to think or to say. Then a young human female came from around the Crystal Vale. And behind her something else, something big, very big.

Rumbark Questinor had been the local protector of the region. All his life, but he knew that was to change. The humans had depleted the magic point south of Isiliath too much. The balance was disturbed. The magic spread, drawing upon the energies of the sky in a balance to the powers of time it had in itself. It sought for water, for time, but the humans had diverted the river so it didn't reach the crystal sands of the magical area. Then they also stole away great amounts of the crystal sands for acquiring yellow metal. *"Pah"*. He had called a mighty summoning spell to ensure the seeds of the forest would be saved Two humans were called. One druid and a maiden. Vertigeribiil Darastrix was also called, and he succeeded to request help from Ordana. She explained a hero would be there too. Most of the animals he urged to flee, away from the area, yet many, so he knew, would not be able too.

He saw the girl, when she climbed down from the moose, and as fast as a Treant could walk he followed her to the Dragon. The wait was only for the druid and the Hero. Vertigeribiil Darastrix knew Rumbark and settled down. Though they were not friends, they had great respect for each-others' Might. The woman, however, was something completely different. He knew her as the Thief-merchant who sent sold messages by pigeon, but often sold the messages to those she saw profitable. He knew as he had

noticed her often in Kouriani in a human shape. Why was she the maiden summoned? Why? Rumbark noticed Vertigeribiil Darastrix settling down, and cast a Calm spell on the girl, just before she saw the dragon.

Logan noticed the rains too. A complete downpour came down, dowsing the fire he just saw. In the darkness of the rain he stumbled further, when a greenish light almost beckoned him further. A Druidic Continual Light he thought, and removed his helmet. And indeed he noticed a human figure where the fire just was. A hunchbacked bearded fellow who probably had never seen the good use of a razor and a piece of soap. Typically a druid.

Glashbar noticed the paladin long before he was noticed himself. And cast a spell to ensure they would come together. The rain was so heavy, without light, you could pass a house in 10 yards without noticing it, let alone meeting one another. *"Hello there. Come. I made cover"*. He called, and directed Logan to a makeshift roof of branches and leaves. Before the man in armor could respond he cast yet another spell transforming Logan into a squirrel. *"That would surely hasten our travel"*. He grasped the animal and shape-shifted into a deer. A bearded deer, but a deer nonetheless. Rapidly he ran forward, and in the middle of the night the magical lights of the Crystal Vale became recognizable. He was baffled when he saw the Treant Druid being there together with the green Dragon Vertigeribiil Darastrix and some unknown human girl.

When he halted, and returned to his self again, he also transformed Logan back to his

human shape. "Sorry for that fella, but when Rumbark calls it's important".

Rumbark acquainted the party and explained to them how they could help. Rumbark was slow and could not really help himself, but he gave them a huge sack of seeds and seedlings of rare and unknown plants. *"Go North. Just west of the hills of the Wild Ogres and south of the Wildwood. Find a good hidden glade and plant the seeds, when fully grown plant them here anew"*

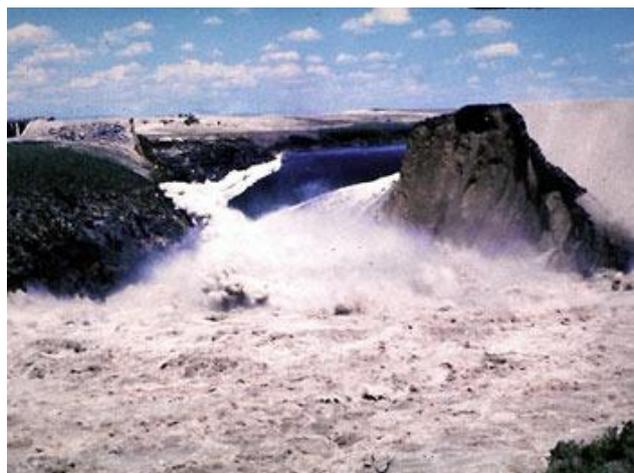
They went north as rapidly as they could, using all their skills combined to reach the specific destination Rumbark had given to save these precious plants. He said farewell, and then they suddenly knew. He was not surviving this, whatever was going to happen. With all the speed they had they moved north. Hindered here and there only by humanoids too stupid for knowing what they should not do.

## 12 Yearthmonth 1004 AC. about 12:00

It was Amras who first noticed a change. It was a faint rumble within the mountain. The water had risen 15 yards in total, and only now the rain was somewhat lessening.

The people of Isiliath awoke in their richly decorated houses. A minor shock awoke them all. They remembered the words of a Treant a week ago to leave, but almost torched the thing for daring them to leave their wealth. Was there something in what he had said? But before they could act upon these new fears, a great explosion broke down the mountain. Millions of cubic feet

broke through the mountain destroying everything in its wake. The first were the inhabitants of Isiliath and their precious ownings. The wave slammed into the Malet mountain, destroying all that was the lair of Vertigeribiil Darastrix. The water rushed onwards, filling the complete valley.



*Dam Failure*

Rushing over the Crystal Vale only a single turn after breaking through the wall of the mountain. Engulfing the valley with several yards of torrentuous water, destroying all in its wake. Trees flushed away as if not being there. Amras saw the lake literally disappearing. The water slowed down near Meratnishi, but left no stone unturned, no building intact. Within a moment the second village of the valley was completely destroyed with almost all of its inhabitants. The onrushing water fell back upon the side hills of the valley, and flooded Kouriani. Even here hundreds died in the massive wave of water, mud, muck, trees, dead creatures and evermore. Rumbark reverted back to a dead stump of wood, was one of them.

When the night fell, the water calmed down a bit and slowly fell back into its riverbed, the river had created over centuries winding side by side. The high water lost most of its destructive force north of Slashina in Grouzhina, but the sudden high wave of water was noticed far away in Gallanor and even the Kingdom of the Dead. The dead it brought with it were found all along this tract of river.

The strange party succeeded in their quest. Logan saw and spoke while the others were just awed;

*“Greed in any form, is never good, but always wrong.*

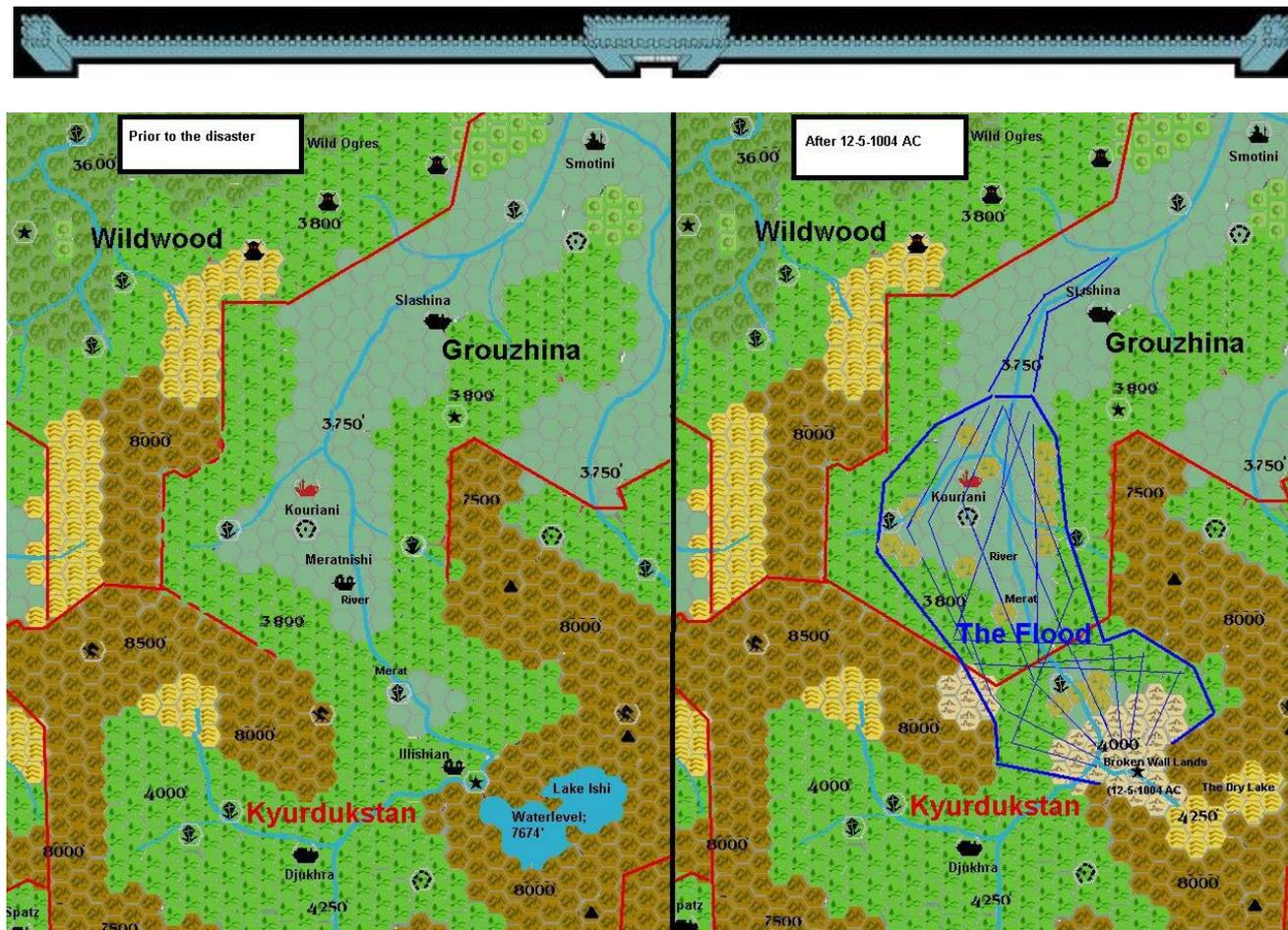
They caused their own downfall by their own greed. Nature can't be plundered without repercussion. These are the words of Ordana. Great Mother of the Forest. Pleased she'd be for saving us.

The Druid and the party returned to the area, and helped spawn a new forest with the use of special magic granted by the Immortal. The body of Rumbark was discovered and returned to the ground. Within 8 months the first trees sprouted up, and the Crystal Vales, hit by the wave broke through the mud, showing of their new splendor. The Young Gerbils left the beard of Glashbar. Soon other animals would accompany them, chased by the dragon's awe into the valley.

A weird Party. Indeed.

A Good Cause to come together. Indeed

## The Grouzhina Flood



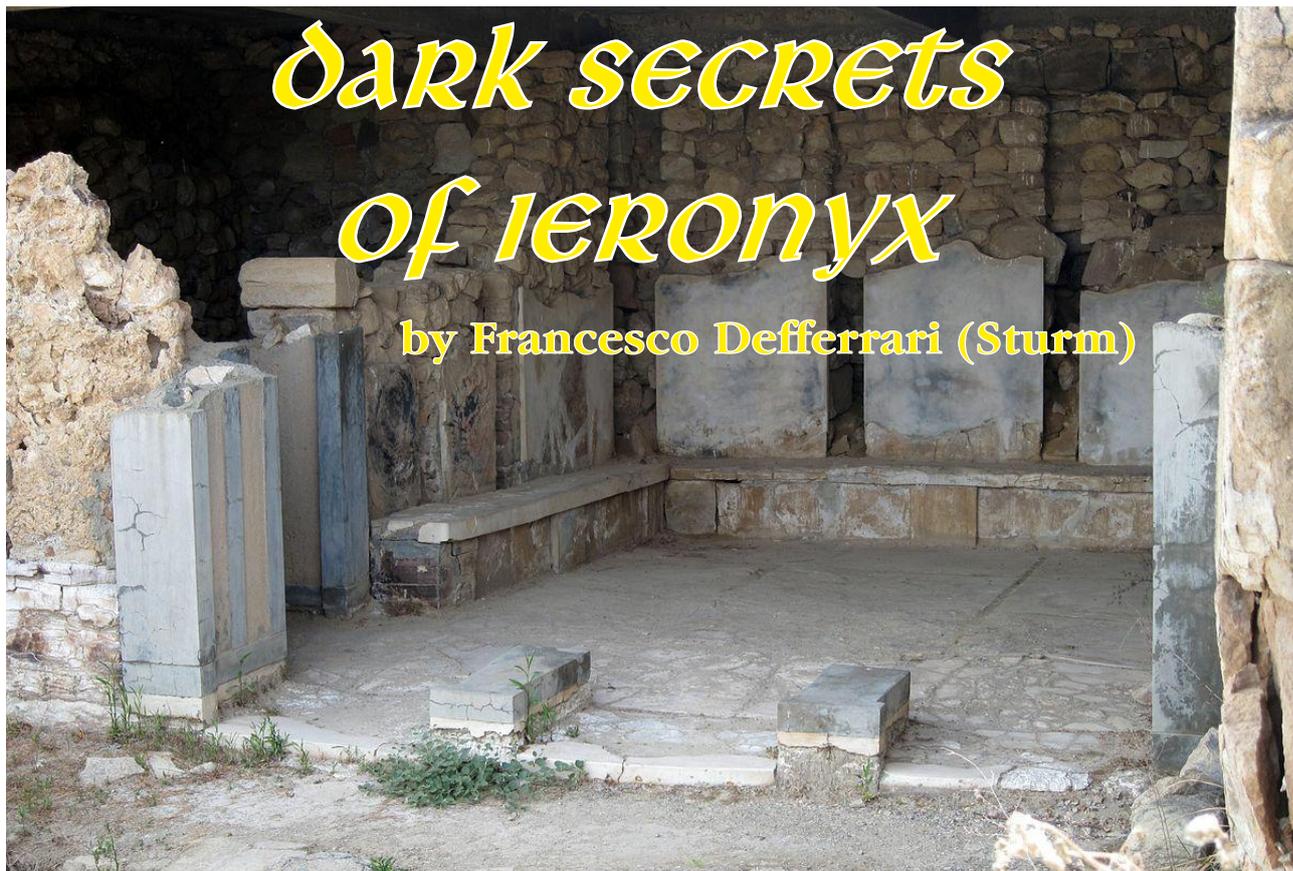
Grouzhina Flood Map

### Note;

*“mister goodytissue.....”*

This is a local Grouzhina slang derived from a small sentence *Goody two-shoes*, Local meaning; A dandy rich individual, (hence the tissues), presenting him/herself as overly virtuous, and morally superior, at least in the eyes of the user of this sentence.

Further see the [Urban Dictionary definition](#).



*Beloved prince of the Lady of the Night, Lord Keiros, ruled over Ieronyx, the sacred city he had reclaimed for the Promise to be fulfilled, because Ieronyx had another name in the Powerful Age. It was the city of Kosmoteiros, where the Lady herself had inscribed The Signs. It was the treasure chest of the most sacred gift the Lady ever made for us, the Starlake. When we'll finally be strong enough to defeat the Evil which now defiles the sacred city, an ancient prophecy says Lord Keiros will return from a long slumber, to rebuild Ieronyx once again. Because He who hopes in the Darkness of The Lady will not forever die.*

From "The Legend of the Darkness", sacred text of the Church of Nyx, compiled at unknown date.

*The army of the Light banished the Darkness in the name of Pflarr and Ra, blessed be their names, and the city of the undead was buried, its passages closed, its abominations destroyed, so that the dead could rest, and the Sun could shine.*

From "Chronicles of Hutaaka", compiled around 1300 BC



*A powerful chief Hyvrok was a red orc, as big as an ogre he was, and he defeated the dogmen -no pup the dogmen weren't common gnolls, they were powerful, magical beasts - and Hyvrok slew the humans who served them, and he bathed in their blood and ate their hearts and on their city he built the greatest orcish city that ever was, and he named it Rak. And from there the red orcs ruled over a hundred miles, and everyone bowed to us. Yes pup, the giants too.*

The red orc Hyvrok of the Rotting Snakes clan, Western Karameikos, telling a bedtime story to his sons to explain the origin of his own name.

*And as the orcs were an unending nuisance on the eastern border of the Glittering Realm, Loktal sent Wyrllum to destroy them. And because he ended them quickly and with few losses, Loktal granted him the city of the orcs, and he renamed it Karrast, and proceeded in cleaning it from orc filth and built statues and houses. And he found an ancient city below, once the home of unknown people. Wyrllum however sealed it, and ordered not to ever open the lower levels again, because ancient evils dwelt in the hungry darkness.*

From "Annals of the Glittering Realm", compiled around 920 BC

## SECRETS OF KOSKATEP, LEVEL 5

This level can be reached going down from room 21 or 31 of Level 4 (Karrast, dwarven gold, published in Issue 6 of Threshold magazine). The PCs will find themselves in **Level 5, Ieronyx**, a city inhabited by followers of Nyx that later became part of the hutaakan city of **Ranekek** and the red orc city of **Rak**.

The text below repeats the original description of this level in issue 1 of Threshold Magazine (Mirror of Eternal Night article). Read on to discover more on this level of Koskatep!

### Level FIVE, ORCS AND NOSFERATU

This level was a short living orc city around 1000 BC. What's left of it now are some scratches and signs crudely drawn on the walls. Before that, it was part of the hutaakan settlement, mostly cellars, and before that it was a city built by followers of Nyx and nosferatu. A small host of undead orcs infest the level.

*The secret:* Under an altar in this level there is a sleeping nosferatu, Lord Keiros, more than 2500 years old. When the hutaakans seized the place he was wounded and forced to hide. He will not automatically be hostile and knows much about this level and the



others below, yet he is aligned with Nyx and wants the place for his goddess. Lord Keiros is very powerful and could be the only one strong enough to confront the ancient evil hidden in level 10 (see below)

Two Darker priests of Nyx, Lord Kivid and Lady Ilena - husband and wife from Specularum - will free Keiros if PCs do not do it before, and will later inhabit this level with him and five apprentices, two male and three female

### Relevant history (expanded from issue 1 of Threshold)<sup>1</sup>

**1777 BC:** To prevent Kosmoteiros from falling into the hands of Thanatos, the priests of Nyx destroy the city with a terrible earthquake. Thousands die and the place is abandoned for many years as seismic activity increases in the area.

**1664 BC:** After the destruction of Taymora, fairies of the Unseelie court take possession of the place and try to use the Starlake, but do not know of the hidden temple of Ixion below.

**1597 BC:** Lord Keiros, a Tal nosferatu and follower of Nyx, conquers Koskatep from the dark fairies. Keiros rebuild the city as Ieronyx (sacred to Nyx). Vampiric followers of

<sup>1</sup> Several details of this history come from my [History of Traladara](#). Other histories may differ, as the one presented in issue 1 of Threshold magazine did (History of Karameikos by Simone Neri, page 37), but this timeline could easily fit into them too.

Thanatos attack several times but are defeated.

**1412 BC:** After the time of the Nosferatu Kings ended with the Traldar crusades against the undead, hutaakans took the city from the powerful nosferatu Lord Keiros, exterminating his followers, and renaming the city Ranekek (Light over the Darkness). hutaakans and Traldar settle the city, which over four centuries establishes peaceful relations with nearby giants and fairies. Trade relations are established with the newly-arrived Hin of Faerdinel<sup>2</sup>, as well as the Nithian empire. The hutaakans build over Ieronyx, using the original city of Lord Keiros as storage and treasury, and are unable to locate his hiding place.

**1257 BC:** Wogar's red orcs conquer and enslave the people of the Atruaghin Clans, as well as several cities in the area of modern Darokin. Their raids also endanger Hin and hutaakan lands, and some orcs occupy the Western Cruth mountains and hills.

**1147 BC** Alik Rokov of Corescon, a nosferatu follower of Nyx, leads a rebellion against the hutaakans and lays siege to Pflarkhepet (Achelos) and Ranenek, but is eventually defeated.

**1095 BC** Hutaakans and Traldars establish peaceful relations with the men of Minroth who have colonised the southern islands.

**1021 BC:** The red orcs sack and conquer Ranekek, renaming it Rak. Several hutaakan priests survive by hiding in the lower levels. They eventually become additional guardians

<sup>2</sup> Modern Five Shires, see Gaz 08 The Five Shires by Ed Greenwood.

of the hidden temple of Ixion (Level 13). The orcs make the former storage and treasury of the temple of Pflarr their main city.

**1018 BC:** An attempt by the hutaakans to reconquer Ranekek from the orcs fails.

**1000 BC:** Gnoll invasion, Pflarkhepet is sacked and hutaakans and humans are enslaved. The red orcs of Rak ally with the gnolls and maintain rulership of the city.

**954 BC:** Despite the successful campaign of the Traldars against the gnolls, the west is still in their hands and orcs still rule the city of Rak. In these years a large dwarven expedition reaches the Cruth Mountains. After several battles, a dwarven army defeats the red orcs and conquers Koskatep-Rak, renaming it Karrast. The dwarves are soon in constant warfare with the gnolls that rule over the region. Level 5 is sealed by the dwarves who are unable to completely eradicate the undead orcs that infest it.

The Random Critters table of level 2B (in issue 3 of Threshold magazine) and the **Wandering Parties** table may apply here if the DM wishes so. In this case there is a 1% chance in each room that a Wandering Party will be encountered.

The **Followers of The Last One** encounter table of level 1 (in issue 2 of Threshold magazine, page 122), can also still be used here if the DM wishes so. One such follower could try to join the PCs to explore this level. Any Follower of the Last One will likely be allied with the undead orcs that infest the level, and will lead the PCs into a trap or will try to capture and bring them in the presence

of The Last One himself (in Level 7). After the Darkers take control (see issue 1) any Follower of The Last One will obviously keep a much lower profile and maybe even aid the party against the Darkers to use them or lead them to their deaths.

The initial layout of this level was the city of Ieronyx that lord Keiros built. Level 6 below (the dark fairies level) was too strange to use as a normal city, and so he used it as storage areas and laboratories. He also proceeded in restoring Level 7, which contains the Starlake. After the hutaakan occupation this level was sealed, but when the orcs conquered Ranekek they used it as the centre of their city, the abode of the Orc king, his chiefs, shamans and most of his forces. The dwarves, unable to clear it from the infestation of undead orcs, eventually decided to seal it. After them, the gnolls and the priests of Thanatos and Ranivorus among them obtained from the undead orcs permission to cross this level to reach and study The Starlake in Level 7. Many undead orcs were killed here during the attack of the Church of Nyx in 841 BC, and were almost exterminated in 603 BC when the Ogre king Kulfan and the church of Nyx conquered Koskatep. Some of the undead orcs however were able to escape and hide in the many forgotten tombs of this level. More undead orcs were destroyed by the priests of Ixion after 95 AC, yet some survived until 227 AC, when The Last One arrived. He fully restored this level to them, giving them magic and powers to use them as guardians against intruders that could try to reach Level 7, where he now dwells.



*Survived Ieronyx wall paintings*

The layout of this level is mostly unchanged from Lord Keiros' times, because the orcs decorated it extensively with objects and paintings but didn't alter the structure. The hutaakans used it mostly as treasury and storage, while the orc city of Rak was centered on this level and therefore many orcish common objects still lay around in this level, even if most of them are half decayed and hardly recognizable.

Coming from area 21 and 31 in Level 4, this level can be entered through stairs that arrive at the left and right-hand sides of the warehouses (area 7). The right-hand stairs of area 7 go deeper to Level 6 too. In area 13 there is also a hidden staircase leading directly to Level 7, thus permitting one to avoid Level 6 entirely. Not even The Last One and his minions know of this passage, but Lord Keiros (buried in area 12) does. Indeed when the Darkers invade Koskatep he'll lead them to fight the Last One using the hidden staircase (see the Battle on this level at the end of the article).

**Spells** that provide magical transportation, such as teleport, passwall, dimensional door, magic door, travel, gate and spells such as clairvoyance and find the path do not work on this level and those below due to powerful wards placed by The Last One and others before him. The DM could decide to apply the same rule to the levels above, at

least from Level 2 and below, particularly if the PCs are of high level.

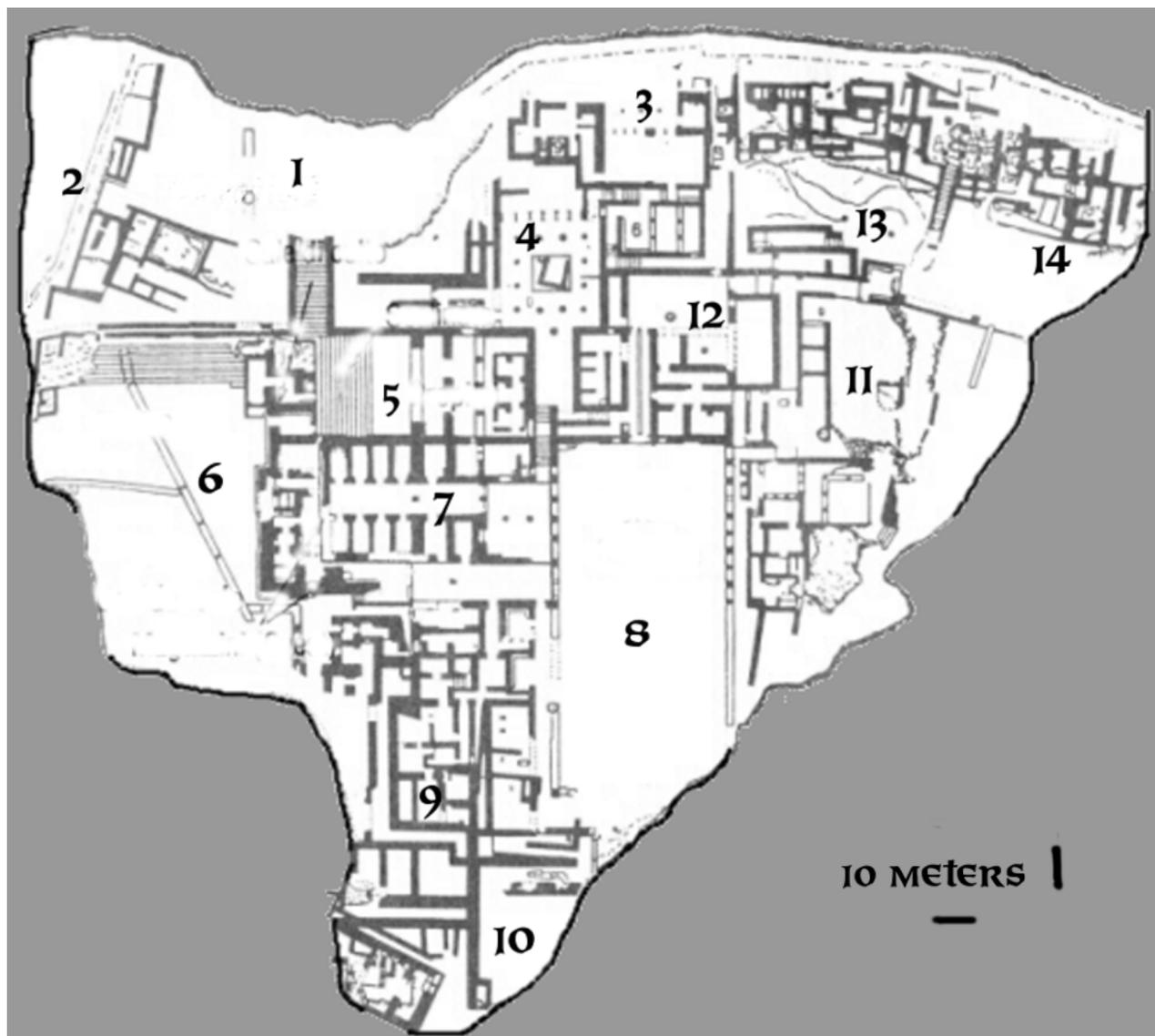
Depicted in grey on the map is solid stone which is very difficult to dig. In white are the open areas. "Open" should be considered a relative term as much of the terrain is rugged and full of debris. The area is completely dark if PCs do not bring light. If they do bring light, of course, it makes the party quite visible.

## The undead orcs of this level

The exact number and power of undead orcs in this level will not be specified and will be left to each DM's choice, to be adjusted depending on PCs level. The description of each room will include a random die to generate the number of orcs, and some "special" orcs and other characters will be described.

All the undescribed orcs are red orcs, usually dressed in the style of Atruaghin tribes with feathers, beads and war paintings. Most of them will have appropriate weapons, like bows and stone hatchets, even if some, as incorporeal undead, will not really need them. The undescribed undead orcs could be of any type of undead, from skeletons to vampires, as The Last One raised them over and over again, even after some were destroyed in the past by enemies and adventurers.

# koskatep, level 5



### 1 - The Entrance.

This area of about 40x80 meters was the entrance of the city in Keiros' times, and a great statue of Nyx dominated it. Destroyed by the hutaakans, it was replaced with a mound made of hundreds of skulls and bones by the orcs. The mound was destroyed or decayed during the centuries, but lately the undead orcs have rebuilt it with the remains of dead adventurers. **1d10+3 undead orcs** usually roam this area, under the command of **Evra**, a large undead female orc (nosferatu, shaman 9) that has **2 hellhounds (HD5)** as pets. Evra is loyal to The Last One and will fight to the death.

The Darkers will clear this area of orcs and orc trophies, but it will take time before Lord Keiros and his new companions (see Area 12 below) could put this area to a new use.

### 2 - The Workshops.

This area once had workshops and stores of jewellers, leatherworkers, potters and many other artisans that inhabited the city in Lord Keiros' times. The hutaakans abandoned it but the orcs used the area again with the same purpose. Many common objects can still be found in the area, even if most of them are almost completely decayed.

**Adud, a hutaakan wraith (HD6)**, roams this area. The Last One has ordered the orcs to leave him be in his sad state. Adud is almost mad with loneliness and despair and will probably attack any intruder, but patient PCs could manage to communicate with him.

The Darkers will try to communicate with Adud, promising him a new body and a new purpose. The wraith could accept their offer, unless the PCs have succeeded in bringing him to their side before.

(1) - There are some ancient carved wooden red orcs figurines in Evra's hut, that she managed to preserve and restore through the centuries. She has also hid around 700 coins from various nations of 1000-960 BC, which now will have a great value.

(2) - There is a huge chest of treasure hidden in this area, including a potion of invulnerability and 2000 coins from various times. The chest is quite hard to find.



*Red orc necklace made of silver and turquoises*



*Red orc chest made of birchbark and porcupine quills*

### 3 - The City palace.

This palace was the seat of the city government and public offices. Abandoned in hutaakan times, it was used by orcs as the house of females and children. Crude orc toys still litter the area. The other undead orcs avoid this place as it's haunted by a **Vision (HD12)** of dozens of orc females and children, burned here by the dwarves when they took the orc city. The Vision does not immediately attack intruders but cries (with the power of a banshee's wail) and, after that, can also attack physically with the powers of a poltergeist. The orcs avoid this area because of the sadness and fear it causes in them.

The Darkers will disarm the trap and give final rest to the orc females and children. Some of them (1d6+1) will then start working here to clean and renovate the place, but it will take months, or even years to bring the palace to a new use.

### 4 - The Market.

This area of about 30x30 meters, once adorned by statues and columns, was the main market of the city during Lord Keiros' times. The hutaakans used

(3) - An old and, strangely enough, uncrumbled doll made by red orcs contain some gems someone hid inside it in ancient times. The doll has also the ghost of a female orc child attached, however.



*Red orc doll*

(4) - There is a shelf full of jars in bottom right corner of this area, a collection of clerical potions of almost any kind created by Juvur (see Area 5 below). None of them

it for storage, and the orcs for weapons practice. Five large **gray oozes (HD4)** have been placed here by the Juvur (see Area 5 below) to hinder intruders.

The Darkers will keep and occasionally feed the gray oozes, finding them useful as possible guardians against intruders. They will also collect all Juvur's potions.

### 5 - The Temple.

This was the main temple of Nyx in Lord Keiros' times. The hutaakans desecrated it but did not rededicate it to Pflarr, rather using it as storage and treasury. The orcs however dedicated it to their dark immortals during their time. The Darkers, the ogres and the priests of Ixion that reached this level later desecrated the temple again, but in the last centuries The Last One rededicated it to Thanatos. Now a great statue of the entropic immortal dominates it and **Juvur** (C16 of Thanatos, nosferatu) ministers in it with four **orc apprentices** (C5-10 all nosferatu). Juvur also has 3 **hellhounds**, always kept in the temple as guardians. The walls are now decorated with more images of Thanatos.

The Darkers will destroy Juvur and his apprentices, along with the hellhounds. Juvur may be able to escape to Level 6, when he'll join The Last One. The Temple will eventually be dedicated by Lord Keiros to Nyx, and all Thanatos' objects will be destroyed. **Yuri**, a **C7 priest of Nyx**, will always be here with 4 **acolytes** (C1-3), repairing and renovating the temple.

however is curative, being that all the orcs are undead.



*Red orc jar*

(5) - Juvur has a secret stash of scrolls, 2000 coins, semiprecious and precious stones, jewels and several silver objects. This treasure is hidden in a secret compartment of the southern wall of the temple and not even the apprentices know of it. The apprentices have some coins and jewels in their quarters below the staircase on the western side of the area. Juvur's room is located in the same area too.



*Statue of Thanatos*

## 6 - The Theatre.

This area was the city theatre during Lord Keiros' times, the hutaakans abandoned it and the red orcs utilized it as a fighting arena.

A group of incorporeal minions of The Last One usually dwell here, this group may include any number of **wraiths (HD5)**, **spectres (HD7)**, **phantoms (HD10)** and **ghosts (HD14)** depending on the PCs levels<sup>3</sup>. **Hikros**, a orc werewolf and cleric of Thanatos (C13) is in charge of the incorporeal undead in this area, and his job is also to try to weaken the magical ward between this level and the one above. He has two pet **undead giant scorpions (HD4 with ghoul touch)**.

The Darkers will kill Hikros, his pets and minions, unless he's able to escape down to Level 6.

## 7 - The Warehouses.

This great area has many warehouses that were used as storage during Lord Keiros', hutaakan, and orc times. The orcs have stored their treasures here, mostly equipment taken from the corpses of invaders and adventurers they killed. Depending on the DM's generosity, several normal and magical objects can be found here, along with coins and other valuables, and precious books and diaries of ages past.

In the north right corner of the area a great staircase comes down from area 21 of Level 4, and in the north left corner another, smaller one, comes down from area 31 of Level 4. Both are guarded by undead orcs and possibly other

<sup>3</sup> This group could be the same present in Level 4, Area 17 in issue #6 of Threshold magazine, or a back up party ready to join those above. Hikros could have succeeded in weakening the magic ward between this level and the one above, thus gaining another access to Level 4. An access that can be used however only by incorporeal creatures.

(6) - Hikros has a treasure of coins, gems, a potion of fire resistance, potion of levitation, wand of enlarge person with 7 charges. He'll probably use the wand and the potion of levitation in a difficult fight.

(7) - The diary of Nuf, priest of Ssuma, is stored here along with a bunch of other diaries and books that do not interest the orcs very much. There are also amulets and many other red orc objects, some of which can be magical if the DM wishes.

minions of The Last One, who endlessly try to invade the level above from here. The north right staircase has **1d10+2 undead orcs guards**, while the north left staircase, closed and much less used, has only **1d4+2**.

The overseer of this whole area is **Tharb**, a revenant orc (15 HD) who dwells here with **4 orc spectres and 2 orc ghouls**, his servants. If a fight with the orcs that guard the staircases last more than 10 rounds, Tharb will join it with 3 spectres and 2 ghouls, and will send the other spectre to call for reinforcement in area 8. After 5 more rounds, group of undead orcs will start to arrive too.

The north right staircase goes further down, directly to Level 6, inhabited by the dark fairies. Eerie sounds and a thin mist seem to come from below. The orcs have left this stair open as they have a sort of alliance with the dark fairies, or at least they were forced to keep the peace with them by the power of The Last One.

The Darkers will destroy all the undead orcs who refuse to join them. Tharb could be able to escape to Level 6 to warn The Last One and stand there with him. The Darkers will place here temporary dwellings for the guards in area 8, five of them (**Four F1-4 and One C3**), will always be here resting.

### 8 - The Central Court.

This area of about 40x100 meters was the largest open space of the ancient city, and now there are always **3d20+5 undead orcs** here, from ghouls to vampires, ready to defend their city should invaders arrive. **Bruk**, (F9, nosferatu) is their brutal commander.

The remains of Elren (male, fighter, deceased) and the wood elf, Yipki (male, cleric, deceased), part of a group of Minrothaddan adventurers<sup>4</sup> have been

<sup>4</sup> See Level 4, Area 10 in issue #6 of Threshold



*Red orc amulet*

(8) - Bruk has chain mail +2 and a scroll of protection from magic, that he'll probably use in a fight if he has the chance. He also has several gems he carries in his clothes.

hanged at the centre of the court, with armor, weapons and possessions below them, and some ghouls eating their flesh.

The Darkers will defeat Bruk and his orcs, but he may be able to retreat to Level 6 when the battle goes badly for his minions. **Five Darker guards** (Four F1-4 and One C3) will always be posted here afterwards.

### 9 - The Low city.

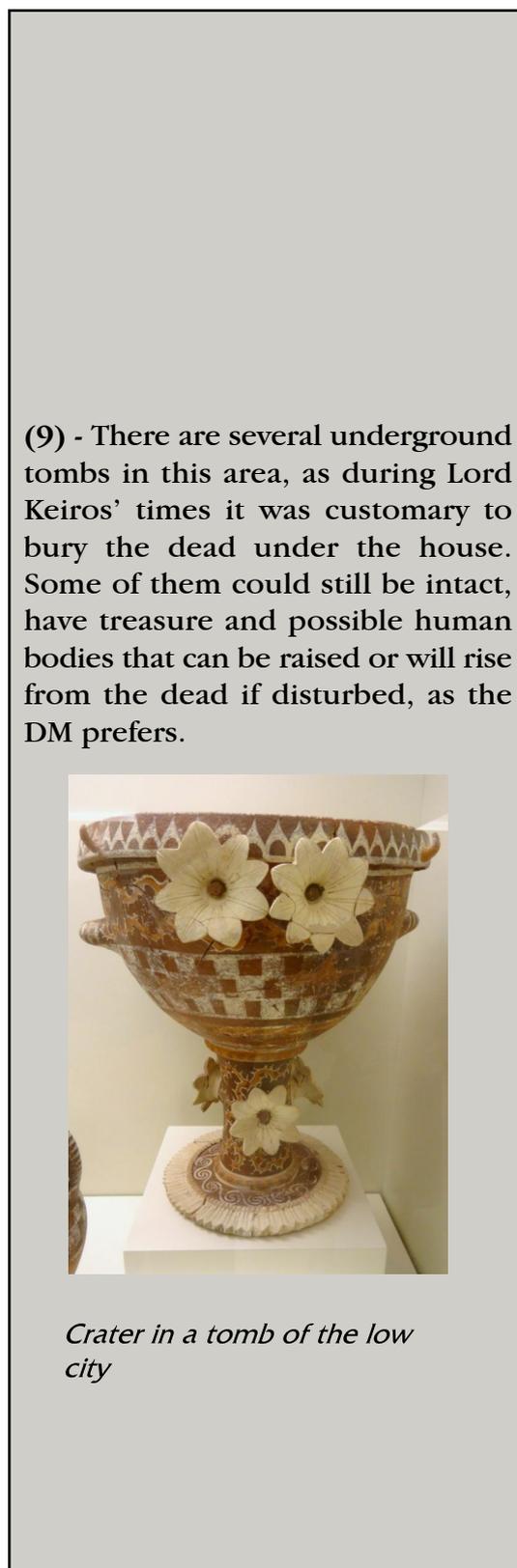
Here were the quarters of the common people of the city during Lord Keiros' times. The district extended much more to the west and the south of this area, but is now partially buried under the earth. The hutaakans didn't use this area of the city, but the orcs inhabited the houses again. Most of the objects still laying around here are therefore of red orc craftsmanship.

There are three **trap pits** filled with acid in the area, constructed by the orcs as the area is difficult to navigate and they cannot patrol it properly. Some **wraiths** also dwell here, once humans of Lord Keiros' city, raised in the last centuries by The Last One. Most of them are not fully aware of their condition and it's difficult to communicate with them.

The Darkers will explore this area extensively, trying to recruit any undead into their fold. As most of the undead in this area were probably followers of Nyx in their past life, they could find several new recruits here. After their takeover, at least **1d6+1 Darkers** (Any class Level 2-4) will always be here, along with **1d10+1 Uncorporeals**<sup>5</sup>.

magazine.

<sup>5</sup> The Uncorporeal are special Nyx ghosts who can possess the bodies of any living people or dead bodies (an unwilling victim will obviously be allowed a saving throw), as explained in issue #1 of Threshold magazine, in "Mirror of Eternal



*Crater in a tomb of the low city*

## 10 - The Beast market.

This irregular area of about 20x40 meters was once the market for animals and many more common objects, abandoned during hutaakan times and used again as market by the orcs. **Dugoth and Vorokh**, two brothers, both nosferatu and F8 keep **7 undead trolls** (HD6 and mummy powers) The Last One gave them as troops. They will come in aid of the other orcs in area 8 in 1d4+5 rounds if called.

The Darkers will destroy Dugoth, Vorokh and the trolls along with other minions of The Last One, unless they surrender or escape to Level 6.

## 11 - The Garden.

This area was the beautiful garden of Lord Keiros' palace during his time. The hutaakans abandoned it, while the orcs used it as a pen for dangerous beasts. Now it's just an open space of grey dust, hardly recognizable as the former garden. **Hakrag (nosferatu, F12)**, the orc pet master at the time, has been revived by The Last One and recently has received a giant undead **Caecilia** (HD10, plus mummy's touch) as a gift. He has also **2 undead orc apprentices** (nosferatu, F5-6) and is now working on reviving some remains of rust monsters. He hates Dugoth and Vorokh of area 10. Sometimes he pits his monsters against the trolls of the two brothers for the amusement of the king and the other orcs.

The Darkers will destroy Hakrag, his apprentices and monsters. Eventually Lord Keiros will rebuild the garden, planting in it magical plants that can live in the dark or in dim magical light.

Night" article.

(10) - There are the remains of some orcs and ogres in this area that look recently deceased, and partially eaten by the trolls. They were adventurers sent by the ogres on Level 1. Golbag (See Level 1, Area 9 in Issue #2 of Threshold magazine) will be interested in hearing of their fate and any other information on this level and the ones above.

(11) - There are remains of several other creatures in the north east corner of this area, where Hakrag has a hut where he keeps remains of creatures he wishes to revive, someday. Hakrag also has coins, jewels, several weapons and pieces of armor and a bow with three arrows of slaying and more normal arrows. He'll use the arrows if menaced.



*Hakrag's bone breastplate*

## 12 - The Palace.

This was the palace of Lord Keiros at the height of Ieronyx. The hutaakans used it for magic items storage, then the orcs made it the abode of their king Hyvrok. The king was slain here with his shamans and bodyguards by the dwarves of Wylrum Lokar, but just a few days after he returned from death as a spirit and began to infest the area. **Hyvrok** was defeated two more times, but he didn't find eternal rest and finally The Last One brought him back from death again. Now he rules again over Rak with a court of undead orc minions (**3d10+10 undead orcs** from ghouls to vampires are always here, including at least two nosferatu **orc shamans, level 9**). Hyvrok is a HD20 Spirit that can fight as a revenant but also leave his body to escape or try to possess a victim (save at -1). He'll wait for intruders to sit on his throne, surrounded by his warriors. Hyvrok has a ring of protection +2, a ring of counterspell with three charges left and a wand of fireballs with 2 charges left. He'll try to hit enemies from afar and will escape if he sees that the battles goes bad for his side, trying to reach more orcs in Area 8 and from there the staircase leading down in Area 7.

Once Ieronyx had towers, but now only here in the palace a second floor survives. It now contains the sarcophagus and treasures of Hyvrok, who has accumulated over the centuries a formidable stash of weapons, armors, magical objects, gold, jewels and much more. There are several traps protecting the treasure, and **3 cockatrices (HD5)** in the first room up the stairs.

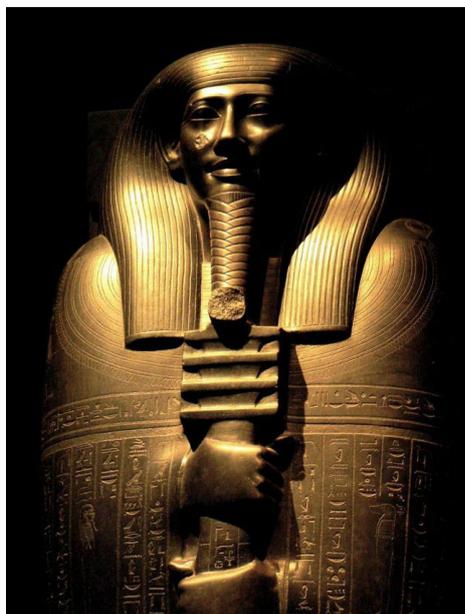
The Darkers will defeat Hyvrok and his minions (but he may be able to escape to Level 6), then they'll proceed to explore the palace, searching for the tomb of Lord Keiros.

The Darkers in fact have gathered some clues about the location of Lord Keiros tomb, during the centuries, so they'll be able to find and revive him.

(12) - There is a hidden door in the southern right room, very hard to spot. Nevertheless, the room was discovered by the undead orcs, who didn't touch its content much as they haven't any use for it. Flesh and blood visitors however would be much more interested in the coins, jewels, works of art and magical objects that were the personal treasure of Lord Keiros. What no one knows is that under an elaborate and surprisingly well preserved, heavy chest of drawers there is another hidden hatch, leading to the hidden tomb of **Lord Keiros (C25 of Nyx)**.

The tomb is an underground chamber of 5x5 meters, with a massive stone sarcophagus in the centre. Inside the sarcophagus, Lord Keiros has slept for more than 2400 years. Mortally burned by the hutaakans who attacked Ieronyx in 1412 BC, he was able to hide here but couldn't regenerate his wounds and fell into a long stasis. That happened because the hutaakans blessed and purified Koskatap, yet their magic didn't destroy him completely. Inside the sarcophagus, Lord Keiros appears as a man of indefinite age, with black hair and a grey tunic reaching his ankles. A black obsidian half moon rests on his chest. Lord Keiros will awake only if a drop of blood is shed on him. A cleric of Nyx or a faithful of the goddess will hear the voice of the immortal herself, telling him or her to do so.

Lord Keiros will immediately aid them to reach Level 7 (see area 13 below) once he's brought up to date with the occupation of Koskatep by The Last One. He'll aid the Darkers in the fight and, after their (temporary) victory<sup>6</sup>, he'll inhabit the Palace again, together with two Darker priests of Nyx, **Lord Kivid (C12 of Nyx) and Lady Ilena (C15 of Nyx)**, husband and wife from Specularum, and **five apprentices**, two male and three female (C 1-6 of Nyx)



*Lord Keiros' sarcophagus*

Once awake, Lord Keiros will ask what happened during his sleep, and he'll be thoughtful for the long time passed, but not daunted. He'll aid any followers of Nyx to the extent of his capabilities. Should he be awoken by common adventurers or followers of other faiths, Lord Keiros will not be hostile, but will calmly explain his convictions. If PCs cannot be persuaded to join him and Nyx, he'll let them go, pointing out that he'll not resort to violence, unless he's forced to.

### 13 - The Hill.

This steep hill once housed the most important people of Ieronyx, but was abandoned in hutaakan times and later became an area inhabited by common orcs. The beautiful wall paintings that once decorated the houses were mostly ruined by

(13) - There is a staircase leading up to a group of ruined houses, once the abode of the most important clerics and wizards of Ieronyx. At the top of the staircase, behind a ruined bas relief that orcs covered with crude inscriptions and feather decorations now decayed, there is a secret door, very hard to find, that leads to a hidden staircase. This passage lead

<sup>6</sup> See Mirror of Eternal Night in issue #1 of Threshold magazine and previous levels of Koskatep, the Darkers will be able to defeat The Last One but he'll not be destroyed as they think, but he'll hide in Level 10, waiting for the right time to strike back.

the orcs, who put on their decorations, now mostly crumbled to dust. **2d10+3 undead orcs** always dwell in this area.

The Darkers will find Lord Keiros and so they'll know of the hidden staircase. They will indeed use it to avoid Level 6 entirely and directly attack The Last One on Level 7, guided by Lord Keiros himself.

#### 14 - The Warrior's houses.

This area was dedicated to the houses of Ieronyx warriors at the height of the city. The orcs used it more or less for the same purpose and in the area there are still weapons and armor tracing back to two thousand years ago, some in surprisingly good condition. Several **wraiths and wights** dwell in this area, humans, hutaakans and orcs randomly revived by The Last One in recent centuries, or former adventurers from the past 4000 years of Koskatep history (the DM could randomly choose the origin of an undead rolling 1d20 and picking a date from Timeline of Koskatep in issue #1 of Threshold magazine, from 3525 BC (Azcan) to 912 AC (Traladaran freedom fighters). If the PCs are able to communicate with such undead (most of them are angry and confused, so patience and creative solutions could be needed) they could discover many interesting facts about the history of the ruins.

The Darkers will try to bring to their side every undead still active in this area. Depending on each undead background, some could accept their offer. At least **1d10+2 wraiths and wights** will be here, loyal to the Darkers and ready to warn Lord Keiros of any intruder roaming the area.

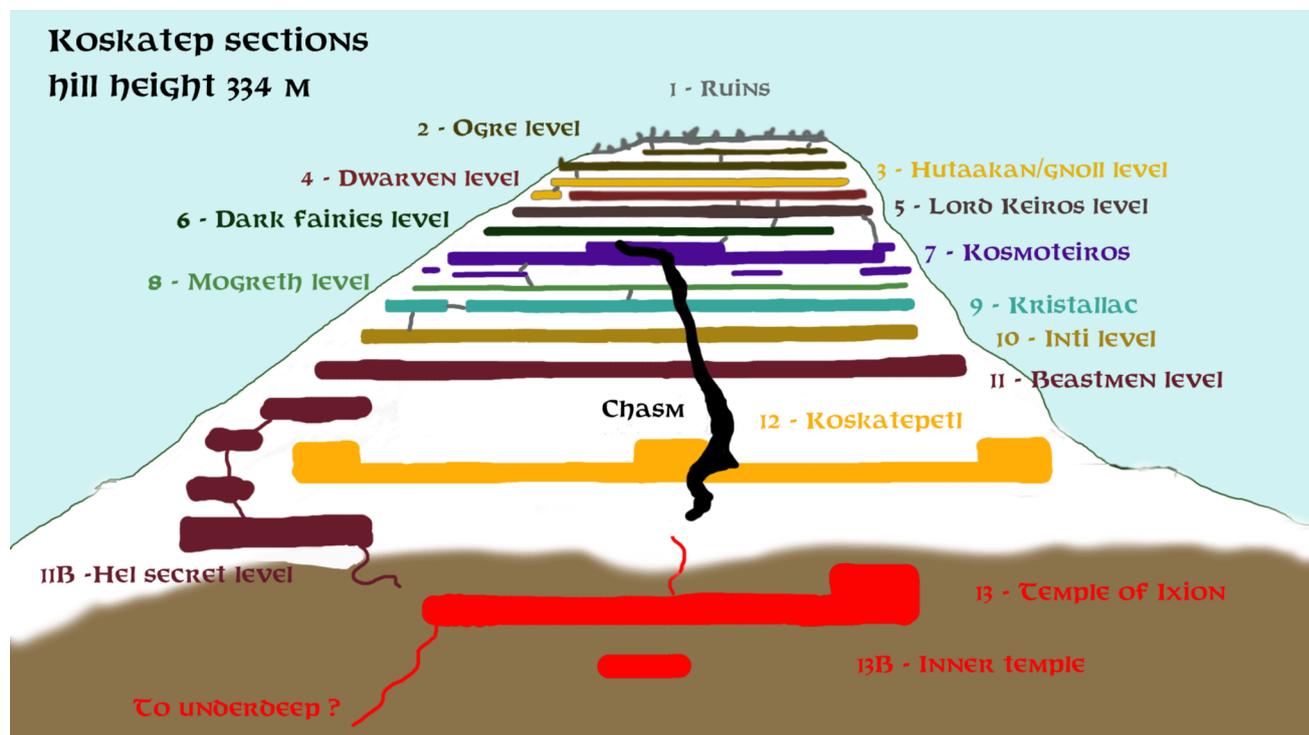
directly to Level 7 and no one knows of it anymore, except for Lord Keiros.

(14) - There are several magical weapons and armor in this area, that could be randomly decided by the DM if the PCs spend at least one hour searching. There is a 20% chance for every hour passed here that 1d6 wights or wraiths will attack the PCs.

## THE BATTLE IN THIS LEVEL

When the Darkers attack, they'll probably come from the north right staircase in area 7, destroying Tharb and all the other orcs, unless some of them surrender and join Nyx's faith. During the battle more orcs will probably arrive from area 5, 6 and 8 (Juvur, Hikros and Bruk), and eventually also Dugoth and Vorokh from area 10 with their trolls. The Darkers however will be strong enough to defeat them, and they'll proceed to the palace (area 12) where King Hyvrok will make his last stands with his guards, the undead orcs from area 13 and Hakrag from area 11. Evra from area 1 could join this last stand or try to escape in the confusion. As the Darkers will block the staircase in area 7,

however, escaping down to Level 6 could be unlikely, if not outright impossible, for the undead orcs. While The Last One will expect an attack from the staircase and through Level 6, the Darkers will instead arrive directly on Level 7, thanks to the Lord Keiros' aid in finding the lost passage in area 13. The Last One will be surprised and defeated, also because the Dark Fairies of Level 6 will not come to his aid. He'll not however be completely destroyed, and will hide on Level 10, as explained in issue #1 of Threshold magazine. When he strikes back he may be able to raise more undead orcs in this level to fight Lord Keiros, his apprentices and the other Darkers that will be here.





**MYSTARA  
2300BC**



ONCE they were slaves like us, but 200 years ago they freed themselves and found a home of their own.



I have a friend among them and together we found this... an artifact of Ancient Lhomarr

We're going to use it to...

PRINCE Olan, they still aren't back.

I'M WORRIED.



RUN Stefa!

RAWWW



HUF HUF HUF



To be Continued

**ARTWORK SOURCES AND CREDITS**

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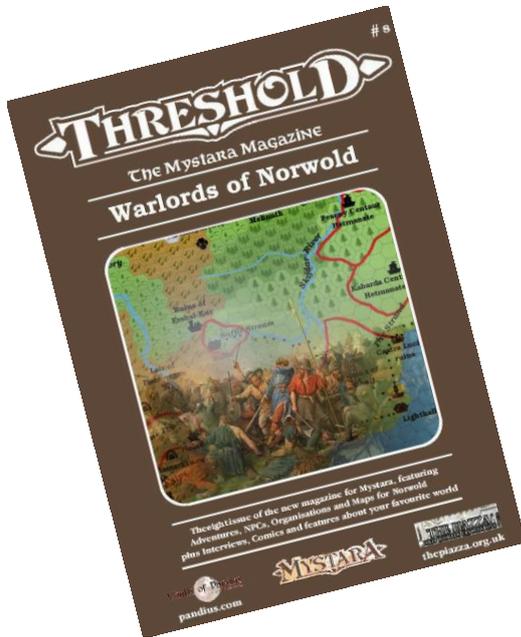


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**[Back cover Image: Sea of Ice]** [Source](#)  
 Sea of Ice by Caspar David Friedrich via Wikimedia Commons

## NEXT ISSUE



*Not final cover*

Claim your own corner of Norwold in the next issue of Threshold magazine, or maybe support the claim of an ally, or fight against the claim of an enemy, in another article that will provide more companion content to the mythical CM1 module that introduced Norwold in Mystara.

Also in the next issue an adventure in the wild Skaufskogr region, who's who among the dragons of the Wurmsteeth kingdom and another level of Koskatep!

Anticipated additional content includes King Ericall's war on Qeodhar, an overview of North Western Skothar, the Midlands of Brun, the frozen lands of Vulcania in Davania, more Mystaran books and an adventure in Threshold to stop Bargle, expanding the historical Red Box solo adventure!

## WARLORDS OF NORWOLD

Anticipated contents include:

- Test of the Warlords: an in depth view to the claimants of CM1
- The Skars' Legacy: An adventure in the Skaufskogr
- Politics and personalities of the Wurmsteeth
- Qeodhar, Skothar, Midlands and Vulcania
- Mystaranomicon: books on the North
- An adventure in Threshold to stop Bargle
- Another level of Koskatep

## Your Opinions?

The Editorial Team welcomes your feedback on this issue of THRESHOLD are welcomed. Please post your comments either by posting in [The Piazza Forums](#)

Or by email to the Editorial address: [Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com](mailto:Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com)

Please begin the subject line with the tag "[LETTER]"

## Submission Guidelines

### Proposals

All proposal submissions can be sent by mail to the editors at the following address [Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com](mailto:Threshold.Mystara@gmail.com), and must be received by the proposal deadline†. The Threshold editorial team will contact you within 7 days of the proposal deadline regarding the status of your proposal.

Submission proposals should be sent inline in the mail, using the following subject format: [ISSUE#][Proposal]<title of your article>

The mail content should include the following:

- Proposed article title
- The type of article being proposed (short story, adventure, geographical location, organization, etc...)
- A one paragraph description of what the article is about.
- An estimated word count of the article (articles should range anywhere from 1000 to 7000 words, depending on the type of article submitted).

### Manuscripts

Manuscripts should only be submitted after you proposal has been accepted by the Threshold editorial staff, and must be received by the manuscript deadline†. When submitting a manuscript file, please use the following naming convention:

threshold\_#\_your\_title.<extension>

(extension: see below for recommended file formats)

and the following subject format:

[ISSUE#][Manuscript]<title of your article>

The mail content should include the following:

- The article title.
- An attached document containing the article contents.
- The final word count of the article.

Other types of contributions: the editorial team will consider on a case by case basis other types of contributions. Please contact us to inquire if and how we can accommodate unusual contribution formats.

The following guidelines apply to different types of submissions:

*Illustrations:* please submit art and maps in lossless format (e.g., PNG).

*Articles:* manuscript submissions can be sent by mail as plain text, doc(x) or odt, or shared as Google Doc. The issue editor will create a shared document (for each article) to allow the author and editorial team to work on it. Articles can be as short as a single page, or as long as 6 pages, depending on the specific content. The editorial team will do its best to accommodate the contributions, but especially long works may be split over several issues.

*Tables:* Tables should be numbered (Table X: Name of Table), and any references in the article should refer to that table number (and not to "the table below," for example).

*Author Bios:* Please include a short blurb (one or two sentences) biography/blurb about yourself for our "contributing authors" section. It can be serious or silly, but don't get too carried away with it, please.

*Other types of contributions:* the editorial team will consider on a case by case basis other types of contributions. Please contact us to inquire if and how we can accommodate unusual contribution formats.

†Refer to "Call for Contributions" (page 5) for next issue deadline dates.

#Insert relevant issue number in place of '#'



# THRESHOLD

The Mystara Magazine

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## Exploring Norwold

Still lost in the Northlands? Do not worry, as this issue of *THRESHOLD Magazine* features the most detailed description of Norwold and its regions ever written for Mystara.

You will have the opportunity to learn more about Leeha and the Skaufskogr, the southernmost region of Norwold, and will receive a vital mission to defend the Dragon Kingdom of Wurmsteeth from the Heldann invasion.

You will also read about the terrible event of the great flood of Grouzhina and will also discover more secrets of Koskatep, if undead orcs do not eat you!

[www.pandius.com](http://www.pandius.com)



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