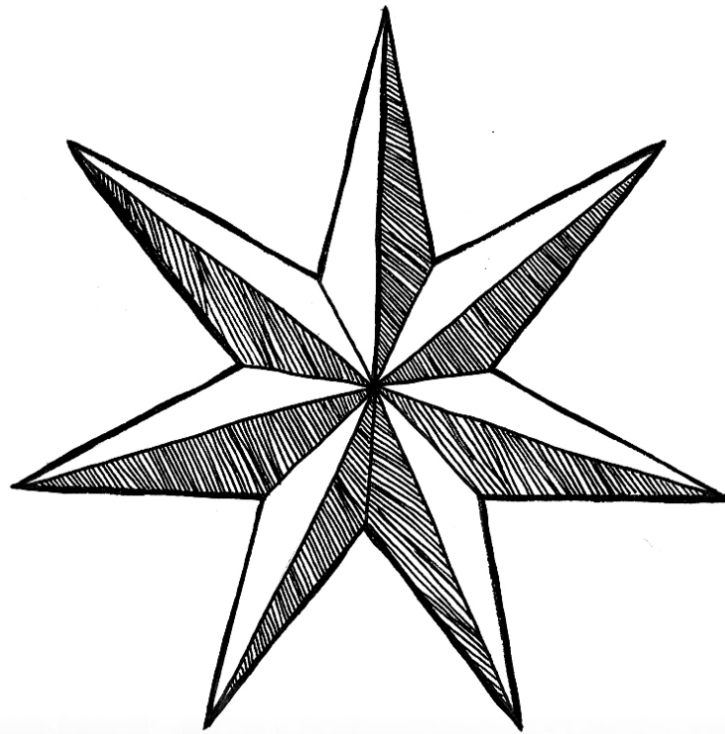


THE
KINGDOMS OF NOVITAS
WORLDBOOK

VERSION 1.0: FEBRUARY 2014



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INTRODUCTION

Your blood surges, answering the yells of your tribesmen as you clash your axes together, adding your noise to the din of the others. Like a human wave, the sunlight glinting from the crest of your raised weapons, you charge forward to engage your enemies. As your axe strikes home, you realize that this is what you were made for.

In another part of the world, you lift your head from an ancient tome. Firelight reflects from your glistering scales as your apprentices watch you begin your incantation. Your voice crescendos majestically, climaxing as you clap your hands together. There is a burst of light, and your apprentices flinch reflexively. When they look back at you, you are sheathed in a shimmering field of magic. "Observe," you say, and walk unharmed directly into the room's central fire pit. "This... *THIS* is the power of DRAGONS!"

Somewhere else, you mentally quell a small tremble in your hand as you slide through the forest. Your light touch on the thin ceramic of the eggshell you hold steadies. You laugh to yourself silently, fangs gleaming in the moonlight, as you ponder for a moment the satisfaction your enemies would get from finding you dead of your own poison – "But not tonight," you whisper. Up ahead, you see the glow of your quarry's campfire.

You've been watching them for an hour, so you know that their sentries are not vigilant. "Too bad for them," you hiss. Checking the load of your crossbow, you gather yourself, and then burst from the trees. One elf gets a glimpse of your long white hair and pale face, and calls out, "Snow Goblins!" He dies first as your crossbow bolt, wet with virulent poison, slams into his chest. His comrades scrabble frantically for weapons, but it is too late.

You are a racing whirlwind, poison death spraying from your hands. Your left hand flashes out even as your right moves to draw another weapon, and the ceramic eggshell whips through the air to impact on another elf. He starts to charge you, but suddenly falls over, clutching his throat. The last elf steadies himself, the tips of his two swords weaving through the air. Both your hands become blurs as you hurl four daggers in quick succession. The elf is good – he dodges three of them – but the fourth one nicks his arm, drawing a thin line of blood. He takes two steps toward you before he pitches over onto his face. "Snow GOBLIN, thank you."

Welcome to Kingdoms of Novitas Live Action Role-Playing, a game where you and your own abilities do as much to define you as your character sheet.

WHAT IS LIVE ACTION ROLE-PLAYING?

Live action role-playing (LARP) is a fluid combination of fantasy gaming, interactive theatre, real-time combat, and medieval re-enactment. While some live action games lean heavily on imagination, players at Kingdoms of Novitas look, act and dress the parts of their characters, whether they are a simple human bard or a howling Tribesman warrior.

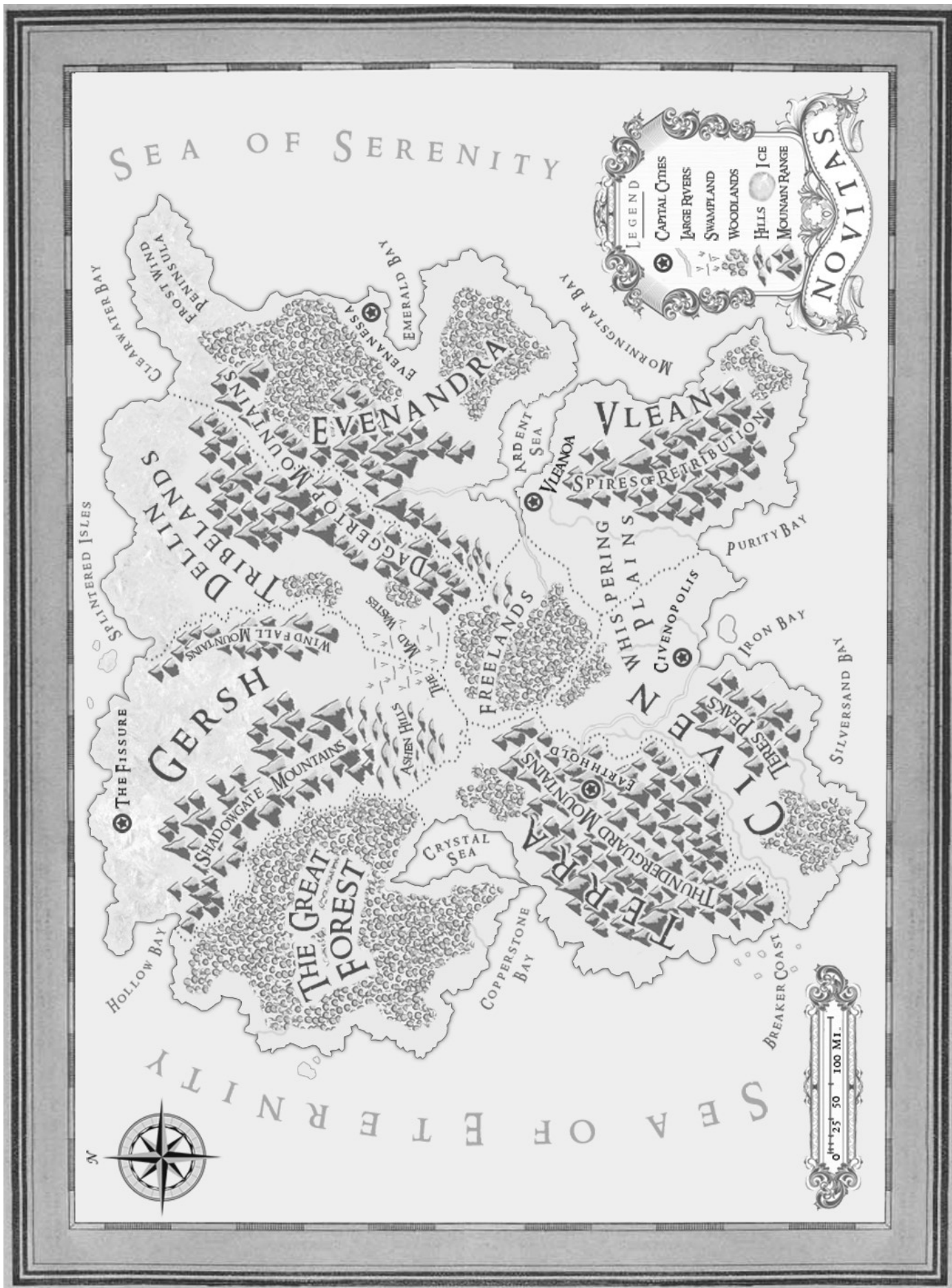
While your character has skills written on a character sheet like many other fantasy role-playing games, those skills only serve to simulate fantastic abilities (such as magic), or to provide game balance (most of the combat skills). The basic rule of Kingdoms of Novitas is that if it can be physically done, and done safely, you have the ability to do it. Climbing, running, hiding – these are all things there are no substitute for. While combat is fought with padded weapons called "boffers", it is full speed, and very deadly for characters. Don't worry though: It's not that hard, and with a little practice, you too will be able to hold your own against marauding ogres or shambling zombies moaning for brains.

HOW DO I START?

A good source of information is our website, found at www.kingdomsofnovitas.net. Players should also familiarize themselves with the contents of this worldbook. If you're still a little unsure of your feelings about LARP, attending your first game is free, and we encourage you to come check it out. While we know it's not for everyone, most people quickly find themselves hooked on the unmatched role-playing opportunities, the depth of the immersion and the suspension of disbelief they get. Welcome to your new world.

Our Mission is to run a fantasy fighting LARP in a persistent world that upholds high standards for storytelling, immersion, and atmosphere. We have created a rules system that uses smooth and easy-to-use game mechanics that encourage a fully immersive atmosphere while maintaining the balance between game play and story. We strive to keep our attendance fee low, which is made possible by our all volunteer staff, fully comprised of players from our gaming community.





THE ANCIENT HISTORY OF NOVITAS

No mortal truly knows the state of things before the birth of our world. Manuscripts written by Septons whose bones have long ago crumbled to dust report that before the arrival of the first god, a dark and shapeless void stretched to infinity in every direction. This god — whom we call Illumitas for a lack of true knowledge — was reportedly greater of stature and power than any god worshipped in the present day.

THE TIME OF THE GODS

Being peerless as he was, Illumitas grew weary of his old existence and stepped forth from the beyond to explore the void. At first the deity was delighted by the formlessness of his new environs but in time he once again became bored.

Illumitas drifted into sleep and began to dream. In his dream he saw a new world hanging in the void: A world populated by many lesser beings. Illumitas was amused and intrigued by these beings, watching their struggles in his dream for some time and always from a distance.

When he woke, the deity was pleased to see that during his repast he had already begun to form this dream world from the only material available - his own body! Illumitas decided to complete this world, as leaving it unfinished would be wasteful of his own power and would ensure his tedium for millennia to come. Thus his bones became mountains, his flesh formed the stretching plains, and the riverbeds and deeps were filled with his blood. The deity plucked out his right eye and set it afire so that it would provide heat and light to his creation.

Illumitas marveled at the world he had fashioned, for it was a wondrous accomplishment indeed. The beautiful sphere from his dreams now hung in the void before him, a perfect paradise that practically begged to be occupied by the many creatures he had envisioned. The work had proven quite taxing to the deity, however, and Illumitas fell into a deep slumber.

THE DARK POWERS

Unfortunately, another had been watching the mighty god at work. This dark being, who none dare to name, coveted the sphere for his own purposes. He knew that he was no match for the first god, even

asleep and debilitated as Illumitas was. He Who Is Made Of And Dwells In Darkness then enlisted the help of two others to execute his foul designs. Together with Nox the Putrescent and a brutal warrior god called Grak, Darkness fell upon the sleeping form of Illumitas and tore him to pieces. But then something happened that he could not have anticipated.

Illumitas had been dreaming of new life and subconsciously created it at the same time.

Seven new deities sprung fully-formed out of his corpse to challenge the trio of Darkness. War reigned for a time and the newly-made planet was severely damaged. Eventually the

Seven (called the Sept by modern mortals) triumphed, sealing the three dark gods into chasms deep in the planet's core.

DRACONUS

While the Sept battled the dark powers, one last creation of Illumitas awakened.

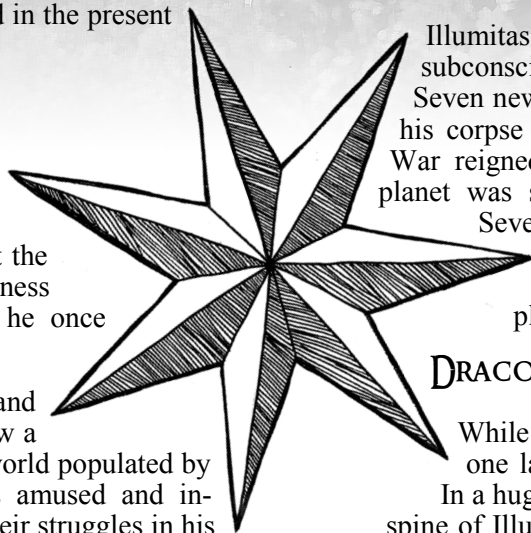
In a huge cavern deep in the mountains, the spine of Illumitas' slain body rose again as the dragon god, Draconus. He was huge and magnificent, and powerful beyond mortal knowledge. He took no part in the battles of the Sept and the dark powers, and instead turned his powers to coaxing his first children into the world. He used his magical arts to transform the last fragments of bones into the first dragons, who became his loyal followers.

THE GOLDEN AGE

Once the evil deities were sealed in their prison, the Sept surveyed the damage and began to repair the ravages inflicted upon the masterpiece of the first god. The Soldier and the Knight cleared the wreckage while the Smith forged discarded material into new landscapes. The Elemental renewed the foliage while the Mother tended the wounds of her brethren. Even the Scholar was active in this endeavor, for only he knew the exact dimensions of the world when it was first made.

So it came to be that the Stranger was first to discover that the gods were not alone. Illumitas was enormous and had died in the midst of a creative dream. The Sept were only the first things that had sprung from his corpse, guardians of all that came after them.

Returning to the spot where the first deity had died, the Stranger found a veritable explosion of life. Birds, beasts, men, Elves, and faeries were all present. The Stranger led these creatures to where the sphere hung in



the void and the gods unanimously decided that they should dwell there on the lush continent of Vargainen as Illumitas had planned. The gods even lived among mortals for a while, for they quickly learned that men and Elves were similar to themselves, if a bit less majestic.

So the Scholar taught them language and philosophy, that they might communicate with the gods and each other. The Mother made them fertile so their races might continue on even after individuals have perished. The Elemental gave the gift of agriculture, that they might feed themselves and always respect the power of nature. The Soldier taught men and Elves the ways of battle so they would have the means to defend themselves in a world that was wild and untamed. The Knight taught them the concepts of law and honor so they would know when and why to use the gift of the Soldier. The Smith instructed the sentient races in many crafts, even taking many of the best artisans to live in Voltanicus, his underground stronghold. Finally, the Stranger gave mortals the Well, a final resting place for their very sparks even after their mortal forms had perished.

Though most men and Elves had been nomadic hunter-gatherers before, they soon began to congregate into villages. As mortals learned more and more from the gods, some villages grew into cities and civilizations flourished.

Three great countries as well as a dozen city-states sprung up in this age and the wilds of Vargainen were pushed further and further north. The nation of Andar became particularly wealthy and influential during this period. The capital city Andarsin boasted the largest library and greatest university in the world; its markets were so vast that anything one might want could easily be found there.



It was the Andarans, with the help of the Knight and the Smith, who built the fortress Wahnarn over the prison of the dark powers. Upon its completion, the virtuous and mighty man Kalbis the Bold founded the Templars of Wahnarn. This knightly order took up the vital task of guarding the sealed portal that enclosed the triumvirate of evil deities. Centuries passed and peace reigned.

THE DARK POWERS ARE RELEASED

As thousands of years passed, the people of Andar, particularly the Templars of Wahnarn, came to regard themselves as beloved of the Sept. In truth, all mortals held the favor of the Sept in those days, but the Andarans became filled with pride and overzealous righteousness.

A small faction within the Templars began to question exactly what they were guarding. They could feel great power beneath their feet and began to ask if the gods had not hidden something from them. Nobody knows for sure, but it is thought that Darkness had found a way to bleed a small measure of his power beyond the barrier. Whether the cause was dark magic or simple faithlessness, the results were the same.

This rogue faction of Templars destroyed the portal and released the dark powers into the world once more. The trio of Darkness “rewarded” any Andarans they found by twisting them into their own image. Elves became goblins and the race of orcs was born from human stock. Light fae were infused with evil, and their hearts darkened. The gods gathered their armies and a terrible war ensued.

The world was nearly torn asunder for a second time. Some scribes claim that the mysterious dragon god known as Draconus fled the sphere amidst this chaos, creating the moon as his sanctuary and thus initiating the slow decline of his progeny.

In the end Vargainen, the continent where mortals had always dwelled, was undone and crumbled into the sea. So many lives were lost that it did not take the wisdom of the Scholar to know this war would eventually destroy the world.

All the gods struck a bargain by which they would never again walk the sphere in their true forms but rely upon mortal worshippers to decide the fate of Illumitas’ masterpiece. All mortals were deposited upon the former home of the deities, and the continent was renamed Novitas (the new land). The gods then withdrew from the world, crafting a magic circle around it to ensure that no immortal could physically reach the sphere again.

So began the age of mortals.



THE AGE OF MORTALS

As those mortals that could be saved in time were collected by the gods, they were relieved that the deities were not deserting them. But to their dismay, the gods in their haste deposited them about Novitas in a haphazard manner. Whatever armies and hosts had been fighting in the same area during the last battles were placed together in the new land, staring in wide-eyed wonder at the former home of the immortals.

PARADISE GAINED

The whole continent possessed a perfect climate. Completely tame animals nuzzled at their blood-stained hands and an abundance of food grew naturally on every tree, bush and vine. It was as if Novitas was newly made by the elder god Illumitas and blessed by the long-time residence of his children all at once. Here and there abandoned buildings, artifacts and tools could be found, made and used by the Sept themselves!

After thanking their gods for salvation and picking themselves up off their knees, the mortal races began to labor. Most created villages wherever they stood, since the resources to support life were not an issue. A short period of adjustment to their new environs was followed by an age of exploration. A new calendar was started, and the year they arrived on Novitas was called year one of the Age of the New Land (1 NL).

Villages grew into cities, and in some cases into nations. Dragons traversed the land in search of their brethren and re-established their empire, dominating the forests, mountains and coastlines of the west. Gob-

lins who had found employ in the armies of the dark gods founded the nation of Gersh in the north. Soon they were joined by their Sept-worshipping cousins, for the "goodly races" seemed only to remember those goblins that fought for the dark gods.



Artifacts of great power were discovered. Some of these were benevolent, others malicious, and more than a few were simply never meant to be used or even seen by mortals. Many explorers vanished, never to be seen again, but a few came back wielding great magic, carving out a place of power in their new-made societies. In 6 NL, Garan Draisson, a great human hero from the war of the gods, found a great stone fortress already made and stocked with magical weaponry in the far south. He led the remnants of his legion there, founding the city of Civenopolis. Three other predominantly human nations rose up: Adecia in the east, Dellindanar to the north, and Quaradar nestled against the mountains to the west.

The majority of the Terran race settled in these western mountains and was promptly forced underground by the brown dragons and their thralls. In 34 NL, the Elves completed the luminous alabaster city of Evenanessa on the eastern coast of Novitas.

A mixed army of humans and Elves discovered a great library in the heart of Novitas. It was believed that the Scholar himself had lived there at one time; the very air sparkled with magical energy. A village called Nalbendel sprouted next to the library and quickly grew



into a city. Nalbendel became known as the greatest center of learning in a land of budding civilization, producing or training nearly all the mightiest mages of this time.

For nearly a thousand years the peoples of the new land co-existed in relative peace, broken only by minor disputes and skirmishes.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

Even a golden age can not last forever, and the end was foreseen by the sages of Nalbendel. Slowly, the radiance of the Sept began to bleed out of the land. Animals grew wary of the sentient races, forcing them to hunt for their meat. The bountiful food plants that once littered the land had to be cultivated or else died out entirely. The once-palpable divine presence faded from holy sites. Powerful artifacts that had been used to aid or protect the people crumbled to dust, eaten by their own magical energies. Famine and disease reared their ugly heads anew and devastated peoples who had forgotten such things existed. Violent, chaotic weather became commonplace as the wards put in place by the Sept decayed, and the climate of Novitas shifted. Hurricanes lashed the shores in the south.

In 985 NL, gigantic blizzards slammed the Northlands, particularly Gersh, and few were prepared. Thousands froze to death or starved and thousands more tried to flee south. The southlands had their own troubles, however. The humans and Elves still remembered the Goblins who had fought for the dark gods; the flood of refugees was turned back as though they were an army.

The Draconic Empire to the west was having even larger problems. The flight of the god Draconus from Novitas had begun working a long process of decay upon the physical forms of his children. Once the drag-

ons were huge, majestic reptiles that walked on four legs and had enormous wingspans; the degeneration had reduced them to reptilian humanoids resembling the races that had worshipped them. The dragons had used their superior grasp of magic to conceal this fact for generations, but now the metamorphosis of dragons to Drakes was complete.

The lesser reptilian races finally perceived the change in their masters and threw off their chains. In 992 NL, Gorgons, Troglodytes and Basks rose up in such great numbers that the Drakes were forced to flee. The Draconic Empire was torn asunder from within, and this great reptilian host turned its attention to conquest.

The Earthkin quickly sealed the gates to their underground holds, so instead the reptiles raced down the mountain slopes to fall upon the human kingdom of Quaradar. The unsuspecting humans were slaughtered, though a few were able to escape the southern port city Sulanash by taking ship. These men sailed on to warn the Civenites of the fate that would soon befall their realm, and eventually re-settled in Adecia.



The Civenites mustered rapidly, in spite of not having known war in generations, and also managed to warn Nalbendel to the north. Despite beseeching the Nalbendelese for aid, the Civenites were left to their own devices and the two nation-states prepared for the onslaught independently.

Luck was with them, however. After centuries under the brutal centralized rule of the Drakes, the reptilians now fragmented into tribes rather than remaining one cohesive unit. Even divided as they were, the reptilian armies bore down man and Elf alike with sheer weight of numbers alone. In the end, both Civenopolis and Nalbendel were besieged. Each of these great sieg-



es lasted a decade, until the reptilian losses made victory seem pointless, and the tribal leaders lost interest. In 1005 NL, the remnants of the tribes scattered into every land, sowing chaos wherever they went.

DIVINE INTERVENTION

The gods watched their children with growing concern. The Sept had anticipated that one day the residual magic their immortal presence had left behind would fade. They still imparted magic, knowledge and guidance to their followers, but the Sept fully intended to adhere to both the letter of the bargain and its spirit; none would touch the world with their physical forms. Even famine, disease, and war among mortals could not wreak the havoc that a war of deities had.

The dark gods, however, were not so scrupulous. Ever since taking the loathsome oath had Darkness chafed against his bonds. Sometime around 1150 NL, unbeknownst to most other beings, he stumbled upon a way to bypass his oath and touch Novitas in a limited way. Channeling some of his personal power into the most devious and deadly mortal he could find, Darkness created the first avatar: Maon.

In no time at all Maon became the advisor to the Emperor of Civen. Soon after, Maon took control of the ruler's mind through a sorcerous Compulsion ritual. Darkness was pleased, and he shared his secret with Nox and Grak. Nox managed to corrupt the Goblin sorcerer Erdarusk, who led the forces of Gersh southward into battle. Grak chose Rannigar, a young tribal chief in Dellindanar. Until this time, Dellindanar had been a nation only on maps; Rannigar became the first chief strong enough to unite all twelve of the tribes.

The avatars of the dark triumvirate slowly and deliberately gathered their power. Nevertheless, the Sept was not caught completely unaware. The Scholar began to suspect the nature of these avatars before the evil gods' plans were in readiness; he shared his suspicions with the Stranger, who created an avatar of her own. Maon discovered the identity of the black-cloaked man called Umiel when he entered the Emperor's court in Civenopolis, but in failing to destroy him revealed himself. Likewise, the Sept now knew precisely who and what Maon was, and the Sept hurried to empower their own avatars in order to counter the dark gods.

THE WAR OF THE AVATARS

Darkness accelerated his plans. In 1182 NL the Civenites, under the influence of Maon, invaded Adecia, subjugating them handily at first. The Adeicians were simple folk who had not known war in generations. They might have fallen without notable resistance if not for the arrival of Vlean, a great hero and war leader. He organized and trained an army seemingly from nothing, slowing the onslaught of the Civenites and making them pay dearly for any gains.

At the same time the Goblins poured forth from the north to make war on the Nalbendelese. Still bitter about being forced back into their harsh land, the Goblins proved to be implacable foes, driving inexorably toward Nalbendel under the leadership of Erdarusk. Half the tribes of Dellindanar attacked the elves of Evenandra, keeping them from aiding anyone. Rannigar himself led the other six tribes against Nalbendel from the east, working with the Goblins to tighten the noose on the great city.



Just when all appeared lost, the avatars of the Sept entered the fray. Most of the Elves of Nalbendel vanished, led to safety deep in the Great Forest by the heroine Bethanael. A smaller group of scholars somehow escaped to Evenandra, carrying a wealth of knowledge and many artifacts.

Meanwhile, the arch-mage Gorgannash sundered a relic of unimaginable power as the rampaging armies closed in on the library at Nalbendel. The resulting blast wiped Nalbendel completely from the map, creating a huge crater and destroying the land for miles around. The invaders were destroyed utterly, though the cost was horrible.

Another band of heroes (thought to be avatars of the Sept) followed Umiel back to the court of the Civenite Emperor. Maon was driven off, his magical link to the Emperor's mind severed. By 1185 NL, the tribes of Dellindanar were retreating back to their own lands, as were the Snow Goblins, and the War of the Avatars drew to a close.

LANDS OF THE PRESENT DAY

The nations fortified themselves and licked their wounds. The Earthkin unbarred their gates a bit and



began to trade more openly, but remained unashamedly neutral in their dealings with any nation that had been at war. Even so, this gradually eased trade prohibitions among the nations themselves, though tensions still remained.

The Civenites refused to relinquish control of Adecia. In 1250 NL the Adeicians protested by renaming their city Vleanoa, after the hero that had defended them and slain so many Civenites. The Elvish refugees from Nalbendel created a loosely held nation in Fionn A'ilean, the Great Forest.

A time of relative peace ensued, and the nations rebuilt and moved on. The great crater where Nalbendel once stood filled with rain and was named the Eldirloch. Villages sprung up in the surrounding lands. Over the next 300 years, a dozen battles were fought over the lands once occupied by Nalbendel. No one nation trusted any other to reside there due to the strategic location of this land that stood in the center of the nations.

In the year 1371 NL the Treaty of Ghage was signed on the shores of the Eldirloch by all of the rulers of Novitas. This treaty demarked all of the lands once held by Nalbendel to be free lands, a buffer between the nations that was immune to both tariffs and conquest.

In the year 1480 NL a cabal of Septons incited a rebellion in Vleanoa and the Civenites were cast out. The Empire of Civen has not ceased trying to win its province back for the last 100 years.

In the year 1585 NL a treaty between Vlenoa and Civen was signed in the town of Pinedale officially recognizing Vlenoa as a sovereign nation and ending the war, if not the tension and hostility. It is rumored that the elves of Evenandra had a hand in getting this treaty



signed by using diplomatic and economic pressure against both nations.

In the year 1586 NL an ancient evil awakened from beneath the Freelands. The Dark High Fae Kezzidruul and an army of creatures known as the Night's Children razed the Freelands while the great nations sealed their borders against the threat. The only settlement to survive intact was the town of Pinedale, where a large number of heroes defended the town and defeated Kezzidruul.

Present day in the year 1593 NL sees the continent of Novitas broken into seven distinct territories. Each has its own culture, and each is predominantly populated by one race. In the center of the continent is an unclaimed area known as the Free Lands.



THE FREELANDS

Since the signing of the Treaty of Ghage, the Freelanders have been a lawless place – a buffer zone of emergent order where only vigilante law is acknowledged between neighbors. Denizens of the Freelanders are varied: outcasts from the seven kingdoms, humble farmers whose ancestors were abandoned by their governments in the signing of the Treaty, craftsmen trying to thrive without a government to rule (or protect) them, merchants willing to brave unpatrolled roads for excess profits, black and gray market entrepreneurs seeking amnesty from moralizing theocrats -- and of course, adventurers.

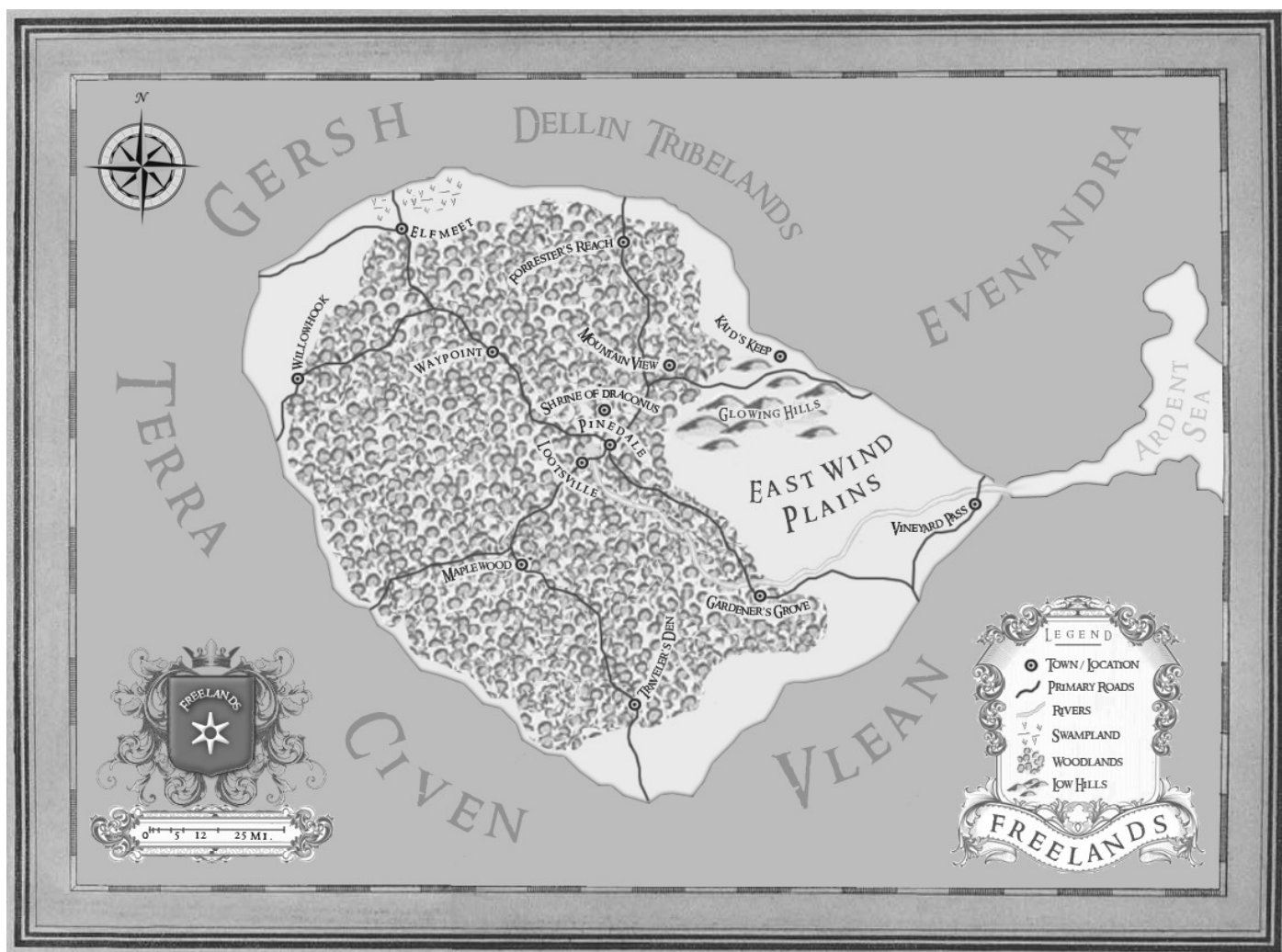
Ruins of what was the Scholar's greatest city – Nalbendel – serve as a stark reminder of what was, what was lost, and what currently is. No longer a place of peace and pontification, the Freelanders is a place where great fortunes are won and lost, heroes made and murdered, and mortals of all races come together to hold back the forces that wish to use Nalbendel's destruction

as inspiration.

HISTORY

After the War of the Avatars, the seven kingdoms decided that having a universal border was ineffective at maintaining peace and order. In the year 1371 NL, the Treaty of Ghage was signed on the shores of the Eldirloch (the lake where Nalbendel was) by all of the rulers of Novitas. This treaty demarcated all of the lands once held by Nalbendel to be free lands, creating a buffer between the nations that was immune to both tariffs and conquest. With the signing of this treaty, the Freelanders were born.

The Freelanders serve an important purpose for all countries as a free trade zone, neutral meeting ground, and buffer between countries. Occasionally, one country will decide to try and occupy the Freelanders, and invariably the other countries band together to make



common cause against such an occupation.



CULTURAL VALUES

Above all else, the people of the Freelands value their freedom. It is this one simple tenet that unifies the people to fight against any who would oppress them. From liches to High Fae to even other Kingdoms, the people of the Freelands have preserved their freedom by uniting against their would-be conquerors.

The majority of people who live in the Freelands are human farmers, so while many different cultures permeate and mix into the Freelands from the other Kingdoms, the Freelands are essentially an area of agriculture. Every year, when the crops are ready for harvest, the people of the Freelands celebrate a Harvest Festival in which they share food, play games, and share stories with each other. It is the one day of the year in which people get together to share in a day of peace and prosperity in a land that is so often cruel and unforgiving.

Against this agricultural backdrop is the culture of banditry and thieving. Believing that lawlessness begets opportunities, enterprising bandits, highwaymen, and thieves descend on the Freelands with great frequency. Unprotected merchant caravans travelling the roads of the Freelands are waylaid as the rule rather than the exception. Although groups of bandits and gangs of thieves seldom last for very long due to the nature of the rugged individualists who inhabit the Freelands, would-be bandits simply seem unable to resist the Sirens' song of a stateless society. Every so often, a leader tries to unite the bandit gangs together to form one large network of thieves and rally against these adventurers, but this organization inevitably falls apart due to infighting or greed.

The most famous (or infamous, depending upon who one talks to) culture of the Freelands is the culture of adventuring. With no government to protect or rule, the romantic allure of adventure draws mercenaries, knights, scholars, Septons, barbarians, and any whose need for adrenaline is not met in a simple life elsewhere. If the Freelands is the country of the adventurer, then Pinedale is the capital, for the center of the world attracts the noble-hearted paladins and the ruthless sell-swords alike. Each cut from a different cloth, the one cause that manages to unify them is protecting their freedom and protecting the place they have called home. It is these adventurers who fight back the monsters and protect the innocents of the Freelands. It is they who run toward trouble while the common farmer runs away. Without them, the Freelands might not be free at all.

REGIONAL WORSHIP

Worshippers of all kinds can be found within the Freelands. Sept-worshippers make up the supermajority of practitioners in the Freelands, but all manner of worshippers can be found if one looks hard enough. From evangelizing Septons to Draconus scholars to Darkness cultists, any and all gods are worshiped. While worship of the Dark Three is not conventionally tolerated, it nevertheless happens frequently among the many necromancers and creatures that roam the Freelands – those outcasts who fled their homes to pursue a darker path.

One notable location of worship in the Freelands is the Shrine of Draconus, which can be found just outside of Pinedale. Drakes and other worshippers of the Godbeast often make holy pilgrimages to this Shrine, which is said to be located in the exact center of Novitas. Legend has it that the whole of Novitas could be balanced on the head of a needle if that needle were



placed directly below the center of the Shrine. The Shrine radiates a special type of magic that has been known to augment rituals and even grant visions to worthy worshipers. It is a place considered sacred even by those who do not worship Draconus specifically, for none can deny the power that it holds within.

ECONOMY

The economy of the Freelands is just as chaotic as everything else there. Coin, gems, magic items, and even seashells are traded amongst the inhabitants of the Freelands as currency. A thriving economy of truly free trade, residents and merchants will also frequently barter or trade services for goods, or come up with all manner of creative ways to exchange value for value. Farmers often trade food with one another, and adventurers have been known to take up magical crafting as a way to invest the wealth they earn.

The economy of “looting” is a large part of the Freelands adventuring economy. This is not to be confused with “thieving,” though the practice is similar in nature. The nasty creatures that roam the Freelands often accumulate treasure as they slay their victims. As none can lay any rightful claim to items taken by force, any coins, magical items, gems, or other treasure found on a would-be aggressor rightfully becomes the property of whoever finds them.



Perhaps the biggest part of the Freeland economy is business done with traveling merchant trains, who, by routing themselves through the Freelands, can avoid awkward border crossings and tariffs between neighboring countries. Smart merchants often hire mercenaries for protection, and are happy to sell their goods at discounted rates in an area free from taxation.



MILITARY

The Freelands, by its very nature, has no centralized military to speak of. The only organization close to an army that exists in the Freelands is the Cairnhold Legion, a horde of undead from the necropolis of Cairnhold, an underground city beneath where Lootsville once stood. Although it may appear that the undead are a haphazard collection of zombies and ghouls, mindless in their purpose yet single-minded in their malevolence, these undead are led by the lich known only as The Al'Carn. Living humans who work for The Al'Carn guard the necropolis during the day and are called Cairnhold Rangers. The only forces strong enough to keep the Cairnhold Legion at bay are the adventurers of the Freelands, who fight off the undead forces almost every night.

The other frequent military presence in the Freelands is orcish hordes. Orcs are often seen in large packs, ruled by their shamans. They are a nomadic race of simple creatures that move across Novitas. Orcs have never excelled at craftsmanship or trade skills and survive mostly through theft and plunder. As orc tribes often break apart only months after forming, orc leadership is chaotic and progress is difficult. Orcs are known for their savagery, and raiding parties often commit unspeakable acts upon their victims simply for their own amusement. Oftentimes ogres will fall in with orc hordes and share in the bounty that is to come from slaying innocents. While the adventurers hold back the undead at night, they are most often fighting these orcs during the daytime.

The loose bands of thieves are another common issue in the Freelands, and they might be considered an army if they were ever to unite together for a common cause. Fortunately for many in the Freelands, greed and backstabbing make it so these bandits cannot join



together in large groups for very long. A woman known only as the Bandit Queen once managed to join most of the thieves together, but like many before her, she was thwarted by adventurers before her reign took hold of all the Freelands.

The adventurers of the Freelands often band together in small groups to combat the undead, orcs, bandits, and many other threats to their home. These small squads of adventurers, when banded together to protect their freedom, can form a formidable army that has held back Avatars of Darkness, powerful liches, Dellin invasions, High Fae, and even the Kingdoms' Occupation during the time between the Treaty of Ghage dissolving and the Treaty of Pinedale being signed. If there is any true military force in the Freelands, it would be the brave adventurers that protect it from harm.

GOVERNMENT

The Freelands have no cities, nor any recognized governments. There are, however, a number of small towns, the foremost among them being the Free Town of Pinedale, built near the ruins of Nalbendel. While it plays a central role, the reality is that, like everything else in the Freelands, Pinedale is rather small and disorganized. The lack of central or local government in the Freelands means that there are no courts to establish law, and no armies to keep the peace. Frontier justice and vigilantism are the orders of the day. Even so, some people prefer the chaotic, unstructured life in the Freelands, so towns like Pinedale never lack for new settlers.



Other hamlets are ruled over by democratically elected mayors, and still others are protected by organized crime syndicates that offer protection in exchange for tribute. Others seek the insight of a retired scholarly mage, or bend ear to a native wise woman. Others simply live and let live, and rely on the gods and the adventurers to keep what moves in the night at bay.

PLACES OF INTEREST

- **PINEDALE**

A small town well-known for the fantastic events that supposedly have transpired there. It is home to the Shrine of Draconus, the location where the leylines converge. It also hosts the Lake of Nalbendel.

- **ELFMEET**

A small settlement mostly populated by traders from the Great Forest and their families. They have a small adventurer population.

- **GARDENER'S GROVE**

The second largest city in the Freelands. Gardener's Grove is one of the largest lumbering sites in all of Novitas.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES:



EMPIRE OF
CIVEN

Human Freelanders, if they are not born in the Freelands, often come from Civen. However, many Freelanders do not like the slave policies of Civen and believe that they are both wrong and immoral. Slaves found in the Freelands are often freed, with the slavers either slain or sent away unharmed but without their property.



DELLIN
TRIBELANDS

The Tribelands and the Freelands are quite similar in many ways. Both lands value their freedom and most are willing to die to protect that freedom. However, just like in the Freelands, there are many different factions and tribes within the Tribelands. The recent Dellin Invasion showed that many Dellins view the Freelands as weak and ripe for the taking. They were proven wrong and repelled, but many Freelanders still hold a grudge against them for trying.



REALM OF
EVENANDRA

Elves from Evenandra do not often travel to the Freelands. The chaos and general disarray of the Freelands is quite unappealing to their High Elf sensibilities, and most Freelanders are happy to see them stay where they are. During the Evenandran Occupation of Pinedale, many adventurers and other Freelanders grew to distrust and even hate the High Elves that tried to impose so-called order and beauty upon what they saw as a chaotic and ugly place. Though the Evenandrans did eventually leave, the adventurers of Pinedale and the rest of the Freelands never saw the High Elves the same way again.



KINGDOM OF
GERSH

Snow Goblins are rarely seen in the Freelands, mostly because of their intolerance for warmer climates. Freelanders do not appreciate the harsh and rigid way of life of Gershens, nor the fact that they buy and sell slaves like Civenites. Snow Goblins are treated with a weary distrust, and it takes a lot for a Freelander to finally trust and even like a Snow Goblin.



GREAT
FOREST

Wood elves from the Great Forest are often seen in the Freelands, as it was once their home when they called it Nalbendel. The wood elf view on slavery and freedom matches that of the Freelanders perfectly, and the Freelanders have a high regard for the Great Forest. The town of Elfmeet in the Freelands is known for its friendly relationship with the wood elves of the Great Forest.



KINGDOM OF
TERRA

Not many Terrans find themselves living in the Freelands for very long, finding it difficult to live above the surface and away from their people. Traveling Terran merchants are more often seen than Terran Freelanders. The inhabitants of the Freelands revere Terran craftsmanship and often trade in their wares, but they do not understand how the Terrans are able to live underground and in such harmony with one another. Terrans are always welcome in a Freeland's tavern, but many Freelanders are perplexed by their ways.



THEOCRACY
OF VLEAN

Refugees escaping from Vlean often hide within the Freelands to avoid being sent back to their country. Most Freelanders hate Vlean due to the strict ways they enforce their laws and the way they impose their slanted views of Sept worship upon the people. Freelanders do not begrudge the innocent civilians who escape from Vlean, seeing them only as victims. But government officials and Inquisitors that visit the Freelands from Vlean are not often given a warm welcome.



THE EMPIRE OF CIVEN

The first human kingdom to be founded after the breaking of Vargainen by the War of the Gods, Civen

possesses a warm, hospitable climate, lush farmlands and forests, and shorelines as beautiful as they are productive. Ruled by a democratically elected senate, Civen has codes of laws that are publicly available for all to read, a judicial system of regional magistrates appointed for life, and a strong tradition of separation of church and state. While in the past century the goals of Civenites have become largely economic, the country was founded by a military unit and grew steadily through uncontested military expansion for its first thousand years.

ANCIENT HISTORY

The Empire of Civen was founded in the year 6 NL by a great human hero from the War of the Gods, Garan Draisson. Draisson led his legion to what was believed to be a large city, but it was soon discovered to be a great stone fortress stocked by The Soldier with magical arms and armor. This fortress-city would become Civen's capital: Civenopolis. Reptilian forces coveted this warm climate for centuries, and finally besieged Civenopolis in 995 NL. The siege fell apart in 1005 NL after horrific losses finally fragmented the Reptilian armies.



"GLORY FOR THE EMPIRE,
HONOR FOR ITS HEROES!"

- Imperial Legionnaire Motto

In 1151 NL, Maon, the Avatar of Darkness, became principal advisor to the Emperor Gnaeus Magnus, and shortly thereafter took permanent control of Magnus' mind with a powerful Compulsion ritual.

In 1182 NL the Civenites, under the leadership of Maon, invaded their eastern neighbor Adecia (now modern-day Vlean), in concert with other invasions from the Tribelands and Gersh. Rapid gains quickly slowed to a standstill against the opposition of the Adeicians under the leadership of the great general Paolo Vlean. After the destruction of the city of Nalbendel and great portions of the invading armies in 1184, a band of heroes led by an Avatar of the Stranger named Umiel struck at Maon and severed his link to Gnaeus Magnus' mind. By 1185 NL, the invaders from Gersh and the Tribelands were retreating.

Even with the influence of Maon gone, Civen refused to relinquish control of their gains in Adecia, and annexed the entire country into the Empire. Civen ruled those annexed territories for three hundred years, until a rebellion in 1480 NL ejected all Civenites from the city of Vleanoa. Civil war ensued, and raged unabated for over one hundred years, until in 1585 NL the governments of Evenandra and Gersh recognized Vlean as a signatory of the Treaty of Ghage, giving the nation of Vlean equal footing as a sovereign nation. This forced the Empire of Civen to cease overt aggression against Vlean, and led to the two countries signing a peace treaty in the Free Town of Pinedale shortly thereafter.

RECENT HISTORY

Of late, the decades-long civil war with the renegade province of Adecia has come to a close, with the Imperial Senate officially recognizing the name Vleanoa after more than a century of warfare. The peace, orchestrated through Elven negotiations, has brought a boon to the Imperial economy. Trade relations with Vleanoa are opening up, and reconstruction of the battered country has moved many carpenters, stonemasons, and learned architects from the Empire into the region. It is difficult to find a Civenite who considers this peace to be a defeat as the long pall over the Empire is lifting with this new source of commerce. Within a few decades the buildings, fashions, and culture of Vleanoa may be indistinguishable from that of the Empire, but for now each side remains very guarded, with the memories of war vivid in the minds of many.





CULTURAL VALUES

In essence, Imperial society divides itself between two ranks: the more numerous civilian citizenry known as the Plebians and merit-based nobility known as Patricians. When the great machine of Imperial culture is running smoothly, the Patricians take counsel from the Plebians and lead them justly. When the machine breaks down, Patricians scoff at the lower class, and occasionally go as far as to withhold services from them. These breakdowns are often dealt with by diplomatic Senatorial envoys from Civenopolis, local Septon mediations, grand banquets sponsored by the local Merchant's Guild (wherein a large quantity of helpful libations are provided free of charge), or even public duels in the worst of cases. Once the matter is settled, there is enough respect for history and common investment in the success of the Empire that these breakdowns do not repeat themselves for more than a few decades.

Imperial Plebians are who are often referred to when the term "Civenite" is used. These are individuals that contribute some portion of their life to the betterment of the Empire, usually in the form of taxes or civil service, but who generally live their life for themselves. A successful Plebian has a small reserve of sav-

ings, has a modest but clean home, pays his taxes, is educated and hardy, and has an honorable profession that helps feed, clothe, educate, sustain, amuse, or inspire the rest of the Empire. This is the foundation of Imperial society. Plebians are a working class, and have



a wide array of jobs and pathways open to them. Artists, Septons, merchants, artisans, farmers, actors, accountants, soldiers, teachers, sewer workers, apiarists, sailors, drovers, scribes, builders - the list of typical professions is long. These are necessary people doing necessary things, and are the heart of the Empire.



Imperial Patricians are noteworthy individuals raised from the Plebian ranks by virtue of some excellence to lead and manage the Plebians. The Imperial Senate receives hundreds of petitions for Patricianship a year, and usually only awards a half-dozen or so titles. Often, a Patrician who is head of a Household will gather a collection of Clients. These Clients are a group of Plebians whom a Patrician both leads and is supported by. For example, a Patrician who establishes a University would have his professors as his Clients. They would become his counselors and teachers while he made sure they had the best resources and living spaces possible, and in such a way there would be a mutually successful relationship between the Patrician and his Clients. While a Patrician is expected to lead all Plebians in his vicinity it is to these Clients that he or she devotes a greater portion of time and resources. In turn, these Clients provide political and financial support as necessary. In this way, Patricians are always 'about something'. This role is usually tied to the initial reason for their societal uplifting.

Though some Patricians may "buy" their title from less-than-honorable sources (a Senator in poverty can be a terrible thing indeed), this is typically frowned upon and thought to be "low" behavior. Patricianship is semi-hereditary. The offspring of a Patrician family is assumed to be a Patrician by virtue of blood until his or her 25th year. If by that time the offspring has done nothing to earn his own merit, he is expected to voluntarily surrender the title to his head of household. Fail-

ing to surrender a title voluntarily in this instance is cause for the head of household to strip the offspring of name and title alike. This is a sad duty for the Patrician, who will go into a state of mourning as if he had lost a son or daughter.

Patricians are required to sponsor Forum debates, serve as Judges according to their city's election cycle, better the Empire in whatever way they can, and rally Plebians in times of emergency (such as forest fires, searching for a missing child, etc). Not all Patricians have earned a third name: that is a high honor. Patricians are eligible to run for election to the Imperial Senate, or serve as Consuls.

Other balances and tensions exist as well, such as those between immigrant and native, farmer (Chora) and urbanite (Polis), military and citizen, and others - but the primary tension at play in any interaction will be between that of the Plebian and Patrician.

EDUCATION

The Empire supports free primary schooling for the citizens of its cities, but Choran farmers and miners may be too far away to take advantage of this opportunity. By age ten, an Imperial student has a basic understanding of mathematics, the Common tongue, Imperial morality and Imperial etiquette. From this age a student may become an apprentice to a Master Tradesman, may begin training for eventual entrance into the military, may join a Septly cloister, or may begin studying for entrance into one of the Imperial Academies. The costs associated with these later endeavors fall upon the parents or guardians themselves, though the Banking Guild provides loans and liens to assist in these regards where appropriate.





Education is seen as a tool that betters the Empire by ensuring that each citizen has the chance to achieve his full potential. Education is not compulsory, however, and there is very little bigotry between the educated and uneducated within the Empire. An individual is accorded merit in whatever field he pursues, regardless of the nature of the pursuit. It is just as natural for a farmer to help a sorcerer repair a broken wagon wheel as it is for that sorcerer to enchant a farmhouse against accidental fire.

Education helps an individual engage in a cornerstone institution of Imperial culture: debate. Public debates at local forums are not uncommon, nor poorly attended. Within the context of Forum (when not in use for official Imperial government functions) debates, all may speak freely without worries over status wealth or title. As with all things, these public debates are judged by virtue of merit and merit alone. Being open to new ideas is lauded, where holding steadfastly to a failing position is seen as foolhardy.

RELIGION

The Sept is venerated within the Empire, and the Dark Three are cursed, as is proper. But worship is usually a private affair, with small altars being established in unused nooks of a citizen's home. Religious worship centers around the usual affairs: birth, death, marriage and hardship. Again, these tend to be private affairs, with the use of candles and ritual language instead of grandiose ceremony. Sometimes a particularly comforting Septon may visit an individual's home to help in these matters.

Imperial Septons have an unusual role in an Empire rife with debate: they must never challenge the authority of the Empire. These Septons work to ensure that the

gods harmonize with the Empire. If given a choice, Imperial citizens would typically side with the Empire over the gods themselves. To believe too strongly in the gods, after all, is to become their servant, and servants very rarely ever earn their merit. While some see it otherwise, this is the prevailing mindset of those within the Empire. The gods exist for personal comfort and understanding; they do not rule. Rulership of the Empire is strictly a mortal affair.

Temples to the Sept exist within the Empire, but are usually humble affairs. The greatest cloister within the

"THE STRANGER FLICKS
YOUR EAR AND WHISPERS,
[LIVE, FOR I AM COMING.]"

- Common first words to a babe
by her Imperial mother

Empire is found in Epidaurus. Taking up an entire city block, the faithful will make a pilgrimage to the holy city at least once in their lifetime. While it is not as meaningful as a pilgrimage to the Great Cathedral of the Elves, it is enough to satisfy the average Imperial.

Attendance at services and sermons is small compared to other countries of Novitas. As such, Imperial Septons have developed a certain humility about their station, which ironically seems to make them all the more endowed with the grace of the Sept. Imperial Septons are patient, understanding, and listen more than they preach. They are well-trained counselors, peacemakers, and academics. They find themselves in the role of healer, negotiator, teachers, and advisors more than anything else. Imperial Septons may not become Patricians due to a perceived conflict of interest.

ECONOMY

The economy of Civen is driven by a vast collection of natural resources, skilled craftsmanship, learned skills for hire, artistry and culture, and deep financial reserves.

On the individual level, one may pursue any profession one wishes. Of course, proper Imperial parents expose their children to many different experiences and watch for signs of aptitude. If these aptitudes are noticed, they will be cultivated through apprenticeships, formal education, or even by hosting a fete and making sure the son or daughter in question is seated next to a skilled master of the craft in question.

A man who does his job well will earn his worth, and coin becomes something of an indicator of merit for the artisan, working, and merchant classes. But coin is only the beginning, of course. Like all merit-driven Imperial citizens, each longs to be awarded a third name in recognition by the Imperial Senate itself for one's deeds and skills.





On the larger level, most trades within the Empire are mediated by appropriate Guilds. Leatherworking Guilds, Lumber Guilds, even Theater Guilds exist within the Empire. All these specialist Guilds fall under the greater Merchant's Guild, of course, which directly advises the Imperial Senate, sets proper tariffs, and dictates which professions are closed for entry. At times, this seems draconian, and many a hopeful has been denied apprenticeship by Guild dictate. However, in this way the Guild makes sure that no single profession becomes overfull and unprofitable due to too much competition within the Empire.

The Imperial Merchant's Guild holds great sway, with financial resources that rival the whole of the Empire itself. It has been responsible for both blacklisting and whitelisting Patrician and Military promotions, and there are murmurings that it has even impacted Senatorial elections. It holds the liens of many General's farms while they are away making war, it piously supports the construction of new temples to the Sept in exchange for certain favors, and it is an unspoken secret that the Senate maintains a strict but informal no-lending/loaning policy with the Guild due to their power and guile. While the Guild has no official power, this should not be confused with being powerless.

The Empire creates many products that as of yet cannot be reproduced anywhere else. The secret of bending lumber without breaking it, used in the construction of ships is the best example – Imperial ships are the best and fastest. Imperial Academies have developed a program that produces perfect recall in select students. Another secret is in its perfume industry. It is known that the Perfumer's Guild imports many Leviathan carcasses from Gersh, but exactly how this is used in the process is not understood. Recently, the Empire has developed an alchemical amalgam called "curry"

which adds a great deal of flavor to any meal it dusts. Rumors have begun circulating that a tool for making water and fire move iron has been developed, but as of yet the engineer in question has not invented an application for this discovery. Be sure though that if a way to use such a device exists, the Empire will find it. One of the Empire's most undervalued inventions is its paved roads, which allow speedy travel with limited maintenance and upkeep. All paved Novitas roads lead to and from Civenopolis.

MILITARY: THE LEGIONS OF THE EMPIRE

The military of the Empire is the largest in all of Novitas, but after many decades of war, finds itself exhausted. Fewer and fewer recruits have been joining in the last few years, so those that remain have fought ever harder for Imperial glory. While the populace has not lost faith, all the citizens of the Empire are relieved by the onset of peace.



Any may enter the military, though promotion is strictly a matter of merit. While the son or daughter of an Imperial Hero may earn some natural respect, the ethos of the Empire demands that he or she must prove merit through deed. Immigrants may join the Legions as well, though they are typically given the worst assignments and are regarded with a bit of natural suspicion. Military service is one way in which these newcomers may be awarded their citizenship.

Imperial military might is divided into its Legions. Vast tomes have been written about the structure and function of the famous Civenite Legions, and the details therein are too numerous for this document, though easily attainable elsewhere.



SLAVERY IN CIVEN

Slavery exists in the Empire, though certainly there are plenty of idealists who argue against the institution. Slavery exists as a last resort for two situations: poverty and crime. A Plebian in the direst of economic situations may elect to sell himself into slavery to repay debts and sustain his family. No one may sell another into slavery, by Senatorial decree. Slavery also exists as an institution by which criminals may repay their societal debts.

Slave treatment is a direct reflection on the slave owner. Abusive treatment detracts from an owner's individual merit, and is a source of shame. For this reason, there is a trend in some communities to refuse to own a slave.

Slaves perform many tasks within the Empire. From hard punishing labor, to agricultural work, to skilled labor projects, to teaching children of Imperial citizens, to managing finances, slaves can fulfill any number of roles. Slaves are also eligible to earn merit, though such merit does not necessarily grant freedom. Meritorious slaves may earn perks as decided by their owners.

Slavery is a permanent institution while inden-

tured servitude has a finite duration. Both exist within the Empire. Both slaves and indentured servants are not considered citizens of the Empire, even if they originally were. Thus a slave may not vote, participate in Forum debates, make use of Imperial banks, or petition their resident Patrician. Additionally, slaves and indentured servants may not serve in the military, own land, or retain third names. Slaves may marry with their owner's blessing. Children born from such unions are always born free.



GOVERNMENT

The government of the Civen Empire consists of a number of publicly-elected Senators who gather in the capital city of Civenopolis to litigate on matters of taxation, economics, criminal law, military doctrine, public works and construction, to hear the claims of grand criminality, and other matters that affect the whole of the Empire. Senators must be of Imperial birth, of an age greater than twenty years, and in good moral standing. Usually, citizens hoping for election display their concern for the Empire by funding public works, serving in the military, championing a local popular cause, or by finding some other way to inspire voter turnout. The end result? Imperial Senators are strong, savvy, rich, educated, and when needed, cunning leaders.

THE TABLES OF THE EMPIRE

The Empire is a place of laws. The Eleven Tables are the basis for all law and society within the Empire. Crafted by Draisson's First Legion itself in the earliest days of Civenopolis, these granite carvings are replicated in all chambers of law or punishment within the Empire. It is the duty of the Senate, their Consuls, the Legionnaires, and all citizens of the Empire to uphold and support these laws. Many of them are extensions of

common law practice elsewhere in Novitas, and unless one plans to take up residency in Civen itself, are not particularly interesting to study:



ELEVEN TABLES OF CIVEN

THE ELEVEN TABLES OF THE EMPIRE OF CIVEN

ESTABLISHED ON THE
CALENDS OF THE FIRST MONTH, 8 NL BY
THE SENATE AND PEOPLE OF CIVEN

TABLE I: ON PROCEDURE FOR COURT AND TRIALS

1. IF ANYONE SUMMONS A MAN BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE, HE MUST GO. IF THE MAN SUMMONED DOES NOT GO, LET THE ONE SUMMONING HIM CALL BYSTANDERS TO WITNESS AND THEN TAKE HIM BY FORCE.

2. IF HE SHIRKS OR RUNS AWAY, LET THE SUMMONER LAY HANDS ON HIM.

3. IF ILLNESS OR OLD AGE IS THE HINDRANCE, LET THE SUMMONER PROVIDE A TEAM. HE NEED NOT PROVIDE A COVERED CARRIAGE WITH A PALLET UNLESS HE CHOOSES.

4. LET THE ADVOCATE OF A NOBLE BE HIMSELF A NOBLE; FOR ONE OF THE PLEBIANS, LET ANYONE THAT CARES, BE PROTECTOR.

5. WHEN THE LITIGANTS SETTLE THEIR CASE BY COMPROMISE, LET THE MAGISTRATE ANNOUNCE IT. IF THEY DO NOT COMPROMISE, LET THEM STATE EACH HIS OWN SIDE OF THE CASE, IN THE COMITIUM OF THE FORUM BEFORE NOON. AFTERWARDS LET THEM TALK IT OUT TOGETHER, WHILE BOTH ARE PRESENT. AFTER NOON, IN CASE EITHER PARTY HAS FAILED TO APPEAR, LET THE MAGISTRATE PRONOUNCE JUDGMENT IN FAVOR OF THE ONE WHO IS PRESENT.

6. IF BOTH ARE PRESENT THE TRIAL MAY LAST UNTIL SUNSET BUT NO LATER.

"BY THE GRACE AND POWER
OF THE SEPT, MAY THIS
CODE OF LAWS GUIDE OUR
PEOPLE..."

*- Spoken at the
Dedication of the Tables*

TABLE II: ON THE GATHERING OF EVIDENCE FOR TRIAL

1. IN THE EVENT THAT THE CRIME HAS BEEN COMMITTED IN THE PRESENCE OF WITNESSES, THEIR TESTIMONY WILL BE DEEMED AS EVIDENCE.

2. WITNESSES TO A CRIME WILL BE SUMMONED BY EITHER LITIGANT, OR BY ORDER OF THE MAGISTRATE.

3. HE WHOSE WITNESS HAS FAILED TO APPEAR MAY SUMMON HIM BY LOUD CALLS BEFORE HIS HOUSE EVERY THIRD DAY.

4. IF ONE IS SUMMONED AS A WITNESS AND IF HE DOES NOT GIVE HIS TESTIMONY, LET HIM BE NOTED AS DISHONEST AND INCAPABLE OF ACTING AGAIN AS WITNESS.

TABLE III: ON INDEBTEDNESS

1. ONE WHO HAS CONFESSED A DEBT, OR AGAINST WHOM JUDGMENT HAS BEEN PRONOUNCED, SHALL HAVE THIRTY DAYS TO PAY IT IN. AFTER THAT FORCIBLE SEIZURE OF HIS PERSON IS ALLOWED. THE CREDITOR SHALL BRING HIM BEFORE THE MAGISTRATE. UNLESS HE PAYS THE AMOUNT OF THE JUDGMENT OR SOME ONE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MAGISTRATE INTERFERES IN HIS BEHALF AS PROTECTOR THE CREDITOR SO SHALL TAKE HIM HOME AND FASTEN HIM IN STOCKS OR FETTERS. HE SHALL FASTEN HIM WITH NOT LESS THAN FIFTEEN POUNDS OF WEIGHT OR, IF HE CHOOSE, WITH MORE. IF THE PRISONER CHOOSE, HE MAY FURNISH HIS OWN FOOD. IF HE DOES NOT, THE CREDITOR MUST GIVE HIM A POUND OF MEAL DAILY; IF HE CHOOSE HE MAY GIVE HIM MORE.

2. ON THE THIRD MARKET DAY LET THEM DIVIDE HIS BODY AMONG THEM. IF THEY CUT



MORE OR LESS THAN EACH ONE'S SHARE IT SHALL BE NO CRIME.

3. AGAINST A FOREIGNER THE RIGHT IN PROPERTY SHALL BE VALID INDEFINITELY.

TABLE IV: ON PATERFAMILIAS - THE RIGHTS OF FATHERS OVER THE FAMILY

1. THE FATHER SHALL HAVE SOVEREIGN AUTHORITY OVER THE FAMILY, PROVIDED THAT IN DOING SO HE DOES NOT CONFLICT WITH THE LAWS OF CIVEN.
2. A DELIBERATE ACT AGAINST ONE'S FATHER WILL BE CONSIDERED AS SEVERELY AS TREACHERY AGAINST THE STATE.
3. THE PUNISHMENT FOR THE MURDER OF ONE'S SPOUSE SHALL BE DECIDED UPON BY THE FAMILY OF THE DECEASED. IN THE EVENT THAT NO FAMILY REMAINS, THE PUNISHMENT WILL BE DEATH.
4. BOTH PATRICIDE AND MATRICIDE SHALL BE CONSIDERED A SACRILEGE, AND PUNISHABLE BY DEATH.
5. A DREADFULLY DEFORMED CHILD SHALL BE QUICKLY KILLED. THE FATHER MAY DECIDE ON A SUITING METHOD TO ACHIEVE THIS.
6. A CHILD BORN AFTER TEN MONTHS SINCE THE FATHER'S DEATH WILL NOT BE ADMITTED INTO A LEGAL INHERITANCE.
7. IF A FATHER SELLS HIS SON THREE TIMES, THE SON SHALL BE FREE FROM HIS FATHER.

TABLE V: ON LEGAL GUARDIANSHIP AND INHERITANCE

1. CHILDREN SHOULD REMAIN UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF THEIR FATHER. IF NO FATHER REMAINS, THEIR MOTHER. IF NEITHER PARENT IS LIVING, THEY SHALL BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CLOSEST ADULT RELATIVE. IN THE EVENT NO RELATIVE EXISTS, IT SHALL BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LOCAL STATE TO

PROVIDE FOR THEM A SUITABLE GUARDIANSHIP.

2. AS A MAN HAS PROVIDED IN HIS WILL IN REGARD TO HIS MONEY AND THE CARE OF HIS PROPERTY, SO LET IT BE BINDING.
3. IF ONE HAS NO HEIR AND DIES INTESTATE, LET THE NEAREST MALE RELATIVE HAVE THE INHERITANCE. IF THERE IS NO SUCH RELATIVE, LET THE REMAINING MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY HAVE THE INHERITANCE.
4. IF ONE IS MAD BUT HAS NO GUARDIAN, THE POWER OVER HIM AND HIS MONEY SHALL BELONG TO HIS MALE RELATIVES AND THE OTHER MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY.

TABLE VI: ON ACQUISITION AND POSSESSION

1. WHEN ONE MAKES A BOND AND A CONVEYANCE OF PROPERTY, AS HE HAS MADE FORMAL DECLARATION SO LET IT BE BINDING.
2. A BEAM THAT IS BUILT INTO A HOUSE OR A VINEYARD TRELLIS MAY NOT BE TAKEN FROM ITS PLACE.
3. USUCAPIO OF MOVABLE THINGS REQUIRES THREE MONTHS POSSESSION FOR ITS COMPLETION; BUT USUCAPIO OF AN ESTATE AND BUILDINGS IS SIX MONTHS.
4. ANY WOMAN WHO DOES NOT WISH TO BE SUBJECTED IN THIS MANNER TO THE HAND OF HER HUSBAND SHOULD CLAIM HER PROPERTY AS HER OWN EVERY THREE MONTHS, AND SO INTERRUPT THE USUCAPIO OF EACH THREE MONTH PERIOD.

TABLE VII: ON LAND RIGHTS

1. LET THE ROADS BE KEPT IN ORDER. IF THEY HAVE NOT PAVED IT, A MAN MAY DRIVE HIS TEAM WHERE HE LIKES.
2. SHOULD A TREE ON A MAN'S PROPERTY BE BENT CROOKED BY THE WIND AND LEAN OVER HIS NEIGHBOR'S PROPERTY, THE NEIGHBOR MAY TAKE LEGAL ACTION FOR REMOVAL OF THAT TREE.



3. A MAN MIGHT GATHER UP FRUIT THAT WAS FALLING DOWN ONTO ANOTHER MAN'S PROPERTY.

4. ALL LAND WITHIN THE BORDERS SHALL BE CONSIDERED THE PROPERTY OF CIVEN, UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED.

TABLE VIII: ON TORTS AND EDICTS

1. IF ONE HAS MAIMED A LIMB WITH UNJUST CAUSE AND DOES NOT COMPROMISE WITH THE INJURED PERSON, LET THERE BE RETALIATION.

2. IF ONE HAS BROKEN A BONE OF A FREEMAN WITH HIS HAND OR WITH A CUDGEL, LET HIM PAY A PENALTY OF FORTY COINS. IF HE HAS BROKEN THE BONE OF A SLAVE, LET HIM HAVE TWENTY COINS. IF ONE IS GUILTY OF INSULT, THE PENALTY SHALL BE TEN COINS.

3. IF A PATRON SHALL HAVE DEVISED ANY DECEIT AGAINST HIS CLIENT, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.

4. ANY PERSON WHO DESTROYS BY BURNING ANY BUILDING OR HEAP OF CORN DEPOSITED ALONGSIDE A HOUSE SHALL BE BOUND, SCOURGED, AND PUT TO DEATH BY BURNING AT THE STAKE PROVIDED THAT HE HAS COMMITTED THE SAID MISDEED WITH MALICE AFORETHOUGHT; BUT IF HE SHALL HAVE COMMITTED IT BY ACCIDENT, THAT IS, BY NEGLIGENCE, IT IS ORDAINED THAT HE REPAIR THE DAMAGE OR, IF HE BE TOO POOR TO BE COMPETENT FOR SUCH PUNISHMENT, HE SHALL RECEIVE A LIGHTER PUNISHMENT.

5. IF ONE IS SLAIN WHILE COMMITTING THEFT BY NIGHT, HE IS RIGHTLY SLAIN.

6. IT IS UNLAWFUL FOR A THIEF TO BE KILLED BY DAY, UNLESS HE DEFENDS HIMSELF WITH A WEAPON. EVEN THOUGH HE HAS COME WITH A WEAPON, UNLESS HE SHALL USE THE WEAPON AND FIGHT BACK, YOU SHALL NOT BE KILLED. AND EVEN IF HE RESISTS, FIRST CALL OUT SO THAT SOMEONE MAY HEAR AND COME UP.

7. CUTTING THE RIGHT HAND FROM A THIEF IS PERMISSIBLE DURING THE DAY. IF THIS OCCURS

AND THE STOLEN PROPERTY HAS BEEN RETURNED, THE PUNISHMENT OF THE THIEF WILL BE DEEMED FULFILLED.

8. A PERSON WHO HAD BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF GIVING FALSE WITNESS SHALL BE HURLED DOWN FROM THE HYDRIAN ROCK.

9. NO PERSON SHALL HOLD MEETINGS BY NIGHT IN THE CITY.

TABLE IX: ON PUBLIC LAW

1. ANYONE CONVICTED OF TREASON AGAINST THE EMPIRE OF CIVEN WILL RIGHTFULLY BE CURSED BY THE SEPT AND EXILED OR GIVEN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, DEPENDING UPON THE SEVERITY OF HIS BETRAYAL.

2. THE PENALTY SHALL BE CAPITAL FOR A JUDGE OR ARBITER LEGALLY APPOINTED WHO HAS BEEN FOUND GUILTY OF RECEIVING A BRIBE FOR GIVING A DECISION.

3. HE WHO SHALL HAVE ROUSED UP A PUBLIC ENEMY OR HANDED OVER A CITIZEN TO A PUBLIC ENEMY WILL BE DEEMED A TRAITOR AND MUST SUFFER CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

4. PUTTING TO DEATH OF ANY MAN UNCONVICTED, WHOSOEVER HE MIGHT BE, IS FORBIDDEN.

5. SLAVERY WILL BE PERMITTED WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CIVEN EMPIRE.

TABLE X: ON SACRED LAW

1. NONE IS TO BURY OR BURN A CORPSE IN THE CITY.

2. THE WOMEN SHALL NOT TEAR THEIR FACES NOR WAIL ON ACCOUNT OF THE FUNERAL.

3. IF ONE OBTAINS A CROWN HIMSELF, OR IF HIS CHATTEL DOES SO BECAUSE OF HIS HONOR AND VALOR, IF IT IS PLACED ON HIS HEAD, OR

**"PUTTING TO DEATH OF
ANY MAN UNCONVICTED,
WHOSOEVER HE MIGHT BE,
IS FORBIDDEN..."**

- Table IX: 4



THE HEAD OF HIS PARENTS, IT SHALL BE NO CRIME.

4. THE EMPIRE OF CIVEN SHALL PROHIBIT THE PRACTICE OF ANY FORM OF MAGIC CRAFT DEEMED POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS TO SOCIETY.
5. SIMILARLY, THE EMPIRE OF CIVEN SHALL PROHIBIT THE WORSHIP OF ANY DEITIES DEEMED POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS TO SOCIETY.

TABLE XI: ON THE SENATE AND REPUBLIC

1. THE EMPIRE OF CIVEN SHALL JUSTLY POSSESS A REPUBLICAN SYSTEM OF LAW AND GOVERNMENT, FOUNDED IN ORDER TO BEST REPRESENT ITS PEOPLE.
2. TWO SENATORS SHALL BE CHOSEN FROM EACH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT.
3. A SENATOR SHALL BE ELECTED BY A PLURALITY VOTE IN HIS DISTRICT.
4. A SENATOR MUST BE OF CIVENITE BIRTH, MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS OF AGE AND IN GOOD MORAL STANDING WITH THE PEOPLE AND THE GODS.
5. THE CAPITAL OF CIVENOPOLIS, IN KEEPING WITH TRADITION AND THE SACRED NUMBER OF THE SEPT, SHALL ALWAYS POSSESS SEVEN DISTRICTS WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS.

**"THE WORSHIP OF GRAK,
NOX, AND DARKNESS
IS HEREBY PROHIBITED
AND DEEMED A CAPITAL
OFFENSE..."**

*- Supplements and
Amendments 3B*

6. AT THE FIRST OF EACH YEAR, THE TWO PARTIES OF THE SENATE WILL CALL FORTH THEIR PARTY LEADERS. THESE TWO MEN WILL ACT AS CONSULS FOR THE FOLLOWING YEAR.
7. IN TIMES OF NATIONAL STRIFE, THE SENATE MAY DEEM IT NECESSARY TO CALL FORTH A DICTATOR TO SERVE FOR A TERM OF SIX MONTHS, UNLESS THE TERM IS INCREASED BY LEGAL MEANS.
8. IF A DICTATOR REFUSES TO GIVE UP HIS POWER AFTER SAID TERM, HE MAY RIGHTFULLY BE FORCIBLY REMOVED, EXILED, OR KILLED.
9. ANYONE WHO ACTS AGAINST THE EMPIRE BY SUPPORTING MONARCHY OR TYRANNY WITHIN

CIVEN SHALL BE EXILED INDEFINITELY. ANYONE WHO ATTEMPTS TO INSTILL THESE FORMS OF GOVERNMENT WILL BE JUSTLY EXECUTED.

SUPPLEMENTS AND AMENDMENTS

1. MARRIAGES SHOULD NOT TAKE PLACE BETWEEN PLEBEIANS AND PATRICIANS.
2. IF A SLAVE SHALL HAVE COMMITTED THEFT OR DONE DAMAGE WITHOUT HIS MASTER'S KNOWLEDGE, THE ACTION FOR DAMAGES IS IN THE SLAVE'S NAME.
3. THE REGION NOW KNOWN AS "VLEAN" WILL NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED PART OF THE EMPIRE OF CIVEN.
- 3.A. THE REGION OF VLEAN MAY BE RECONSIDERED AS PART OF THE EMPIRE UPON RECONQUEST AT SOME FUTURE DATE.
- 3.B. THE WORSHIP OF GRAK, NOX, AND DARKNESS IS HEREBY PROHIBITED AND DEEMED A CAPITAL OFFENSE.
4. WOMEN SHALL HEREBY BE PERMITTED THE SAME POSITIONS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RANKS AS MEN IN BOTH GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY.
5. WHATEVER THE PEOPLE HAD LAST ORDAINED SHOULD BE HELD AS BINDING BY LAW.



PLACES OF INTEREST

- **CIVENOPOLIS**

The heart of the Empire, Civenopolis is the greatest city in Novitas. Urbane, wealthy, learned, cosmopolitan, it is the center and model of all Imperial life.

- **SOL CENTURA**

A resort city, where the pleasures of the flesh are celebrated in open air salons and spas. Sex, massage, regimented stretching, music, art, and culinary treasures can all be found here.

- **ARGUNTUM**

The womb of ships. It is here that the secrets of Imperial shipbuilding are practiced.

- **MAGEHALL**

Home to the Imperial Academy of Magic. The red towers of this school can be seen for miles.

- **MOUNT HERATODUS**

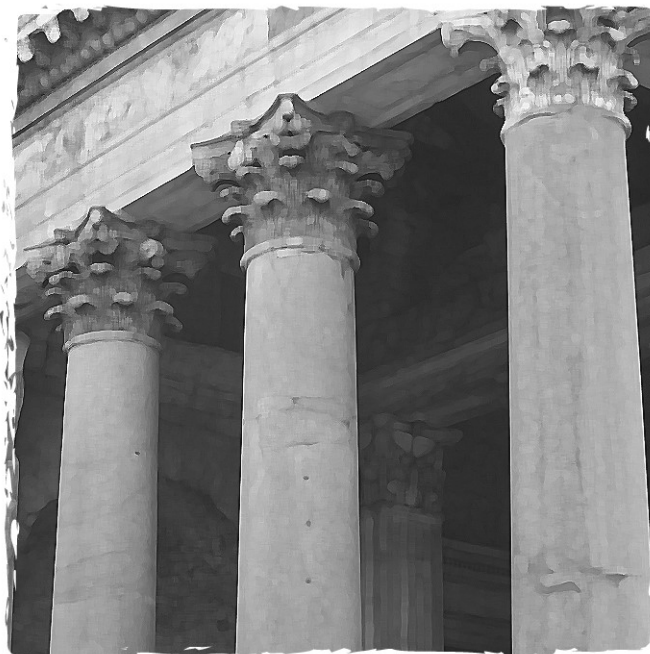
An inactive volcano, where it is said the Craftsman's forge is hidden.

- **EPIDAUROS**

The so called "Mother's Heart". A city devoted to the sorcery, learning, and sciences surrounding the healing of the body and the mind. Home to the largest Sept temple within the Empire.

- **CORINIUM**

A military city in all respects near the Terran border. Corinium is home to the Corinium Military Academy a greatly distinguished forge for crafting young men into loyal soldiers of the Empire.



- **MILLIAD**

Home to the School of War. A place where the finest gladiators are trained. Driven warriors will attend this academy before joining a Legion or mercenary company. A desert city. Home to the Prostitution Guild.

- **HAPHIS RIDGES**

A white marble city, Haphis builds upwards along the cliff face worn away by the ocean. Tiger safaris around the region are not uncommon.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES:



THE
FREELANDS

The Freelands are considered to be a wild and trustworthy land. They have no law whatsoever and this makes leaving on an adventure for only the bravest or most desperate. While it is said a mother may safely walk unescorted with babe in arms anywhere in the capital, no such security exists in these wildlands. Were it not for the absolute necessity of the trade routes and access provided by the Freelands, most Civenites wouldn't venture there at all.



DELLIN
TRIBELANDS

The tribelanders are seen as a brutish and uneducated lot. Some trade of value exists between merchants and select clans, but the aggressive and unclean lifestyle of most tribelanders put off many a civilized merchant. They are generally tolerated in Civen — that is at least until they begin damaging property and committing assault. At such a point, their welcome is swiftly revoked.



REALM OF
EVENANDRA

Trade is good between the nations with raw materials traded to the elves for exquisitely wrought finished goods. The High Elves may be a little snooty, but they are seen as decent folk.



KINGDOM OF
GERSH

Gersh trade is welcome in the southern human nation. While both nations practice slavery, their methods in doing so differ greatly. Snow Goblin adherence to contracts makes international dealing smooth when it does occur.



GREAT
FOREST

Civenites trade with those in the Great Forest primarily for alchemical supplies and some exotic spices and fruits. The elves trade for goods and rarely accept coin, which makes trade slightly more difficult. Wood elves are known to free slaves and defend them if they cross into the forest. Such actions often act as a point of culture clash. There are Verdurans in the Great Forest that make some of the finest wooden artifacts in the realm, and while volume is small, it is always profitable to trade with them.



KINGDOM OF
TERRA

No major culture clashes exist between Civenites and Terrans. Terrans make fine things and Civenites pay well for them. Those with a propensity to hold a grudge and rural-minded folk still harbor ancestral resentment for the Terrans because they closed up their gates and waited out the Avatar War, but the more "modern" thinkers have long since gotten past that sentiment.



THEOCRACY
OF VLEAN

Civen recently acknowledged Vlean as an entity on the world stage, a stance much attributed to outside political pressure by other nations. As such, only the diehards and conservatives still refer to Vleanoans as "rebel scum" and "traitors" in public. Vleanoan commerce has opened slowly and somewhat warily due to the restrictive trade and travel policies that still unnerve many Civenites seeking to deal with them.





THE DELLIN TRIBELANDS

The Dellin Tribelands are a vast area between Gersh, Evanandra, and the Freelands. A land of extreme peoples and geography, the Tribelands are lined with harsh mountains — some so cold that they never shed their snow. There are no cities in the Tribelands, only nomadic villages that move periodically to follow the sources of food necessary at the time. Differences between the tribes have kept the Tribelands from ever uniting into a proper nation, even during those rare occasions where the tribes have rallied together for a common cause.



HISTORY

When man first graced Novitas, it said that only the most powerful and hardy traveled north to the Dellin Tribelands. For a long period of time, each man fought for only himself and his family, with relationships outside of a family or small group of families being exceedingly rare. Few were able to survive these harsh conditions, and those who did couldn't be said to be thriving.

At an undocumented time, a man named Kharnn rose to prominence with terrible speed. He was said to be a man of immense size and greater presence. As he traveled through this harsh environment he took in families with strong warriors who would help him with

further conquest. Kharnn had formed the first tribe within the land.

Kharnn continued to recruit people into his tribe for quite some time, sometimes by simply arriving and declaring his sovereignty, and other times through battle. It is rumored that Kharnn's sword had taken so many lives that the blade itself was colored a vibrant red. The only thing Kharnn took as frequently as lives was wives. Kharnn had twelve of them, and they each bore him one child.

When Kharnn finally died, sword in hand, it was left to his 12 sons and daughters to fight for the right to rule. Legend has it that each son and each daughter fought for days, none willing to submit or relinquish their claim. During a lull in the fighting it was proposed that they split the tribe into 12 smaller tribes, and so it was.

The twelve tribes began to thrive, spreading and traveling throughout the untamed land west of Evenandra. In time, the blood line of Kharnn was lost, and new Chieftains rose up. The peaceable arrangement first agreed upon by Kharnn's progeny was lost, and there came about a state of constant fighting amongst each other for land, resources, and weapons.

Just as it seemed the tribes would whittle themselves to extinction, a new champion would unite them. He was called only Rannigar, and unbeknownst to the tribespeople, he was an Avatar of Grak himself. Rannigar united the Dellin Tribes with ferocity and expedience. Once united, he turned the might of them toward the South and East. The tribes bowed to his will and attacked Evenandra and Nalbendel.

While they had little success against the walled cities to the East, they poured into the south, wreaking havoc and causing incredible destruction. Commonly called the War of the Avatars, this conflict eventually ended with the destruction of Old Nalbendel itself, and it was only after the great explosion that Rannigar's forces were depleted enough to stop their rampage.

Since that time, the Tribelands have been in a constant state of turmoil. The twelve tribes returned to roaming and constant skirmishes amongst each other and themselves, dividing and re-dividing until current day, where the tribes are too numerous and widespread to document accurately.

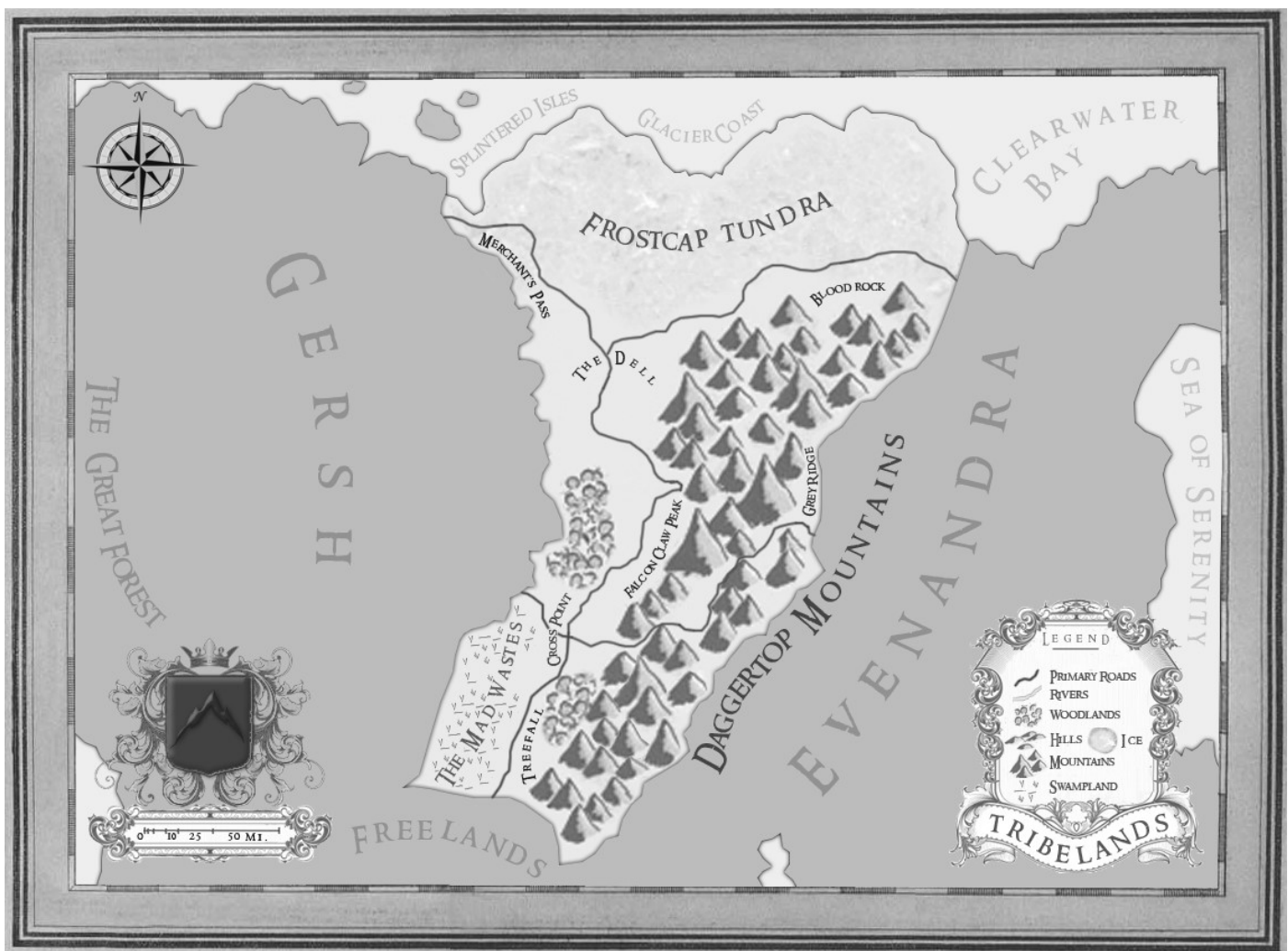


CULTURAL VALUES

The Dellin people resemble their environment: tough, dangerous, and unpredictable. They are a nomadic people, not erecting permanent structures but moving every few months to follow game and plants. The Dellin are varied in their dress. Furs, linen and wool are common fabrics. Metalsmithing is known to the Dellin, but most armor themselves in leather or chain, preferring mobility over protection. Tunics, furs, kirtles, winingas and simple rectangle-cloaks are common, though there are many variations.

The most useful distinction between the various tribes is that between “lowlanders” and “highlanders.” Lowlanders are from the vast center of the Dellin Tribelands. Lowlanders are mostly hunters and gatherers, who may have occasional battles and wars, but who focus more inwardly on their own tribal matters. The Highlanders are from the harsh perimeter of the Tribelands, and are at near-constant war with snow goblins of Gersh, the elves of Evenandra, each other, or Nature herself. As a result, their numbers are far fewer, but the ones that remain are known to be fearsome and accomplished warriors.

Outsiders consider them “barbaric,” but Dellins consider themselves supremely honorable. Many of the social rules and taboos that are common wisdom in the Dell are seen as inane by outsiders.



One such social rule is the concept “Belief begets truth.” If a snow goblin were to adopt a human, the average Dellin would consider that human a snow goblin—though they may still look like a human. When oaths are sworn, a new reality comes about that no amount of fact may overturn. Oaths upon swords are common, and ended with “...and if my oath breaks, so too may my sword break in battle.”

The concept of hospitality is also ingrained in Dellin society. The land’s harshness often means that the kindness of a stranger is all that may keep an outsider from death. The rules that govern Dellin hospitality are as old as the Dellin themselves. If a Dellin is one’s host, one is under his care and protection. One can reasonably expect that the Dellin host will give a guest food, water, shelter, and protection. It is understood that the guest will not take advantage of a host’s hospitality. There are stories told of Dellin with enemies in hot pursuit who seek a Host to protect them. However, a Dellin is within his rights to withdraw his hospitality in these cases.



Gifts and gift-giving is also core to being a Dellin. To refuse a gift from a Dellin is an insult, and may lead to conflict. A good guest will give a gift of some sort, though the value varies on the guest or host. The one exception to this is a gift either from Elves, or of Elven make. In the history of the Dellin, great wars were fought for the possession of these items of quality, so much that Dellin today will often refuse a gift from an elf, even if there are consequences.

Also close to the core of being Dellin is the concept of dominance. Not every fight needs to end in death,

and death is thought of as wasteful. Though the Dellin are often thought of as bloodthirsty, they are much more likely to subdue an opponent or take the defeated in battle as slaves rather than kill them. Killing an enemy is often seen as the mark of an unskilled fighter. Personal duels of honor are common, with the vast majority ending in wounds and shame rather than death. When two Dellin tribes declare war, it is likely that only a handful of warriors actually die.

“... AND IF MY OATH
BREAKS, SO TOO MAY
MY SWORD BREAK IN
BATTLE...”

*- Common oath of loyalty
among the Dellin people*

Rank within a given tribe is typically determined by martial ability. For most tribes, the Chieftain is the best warrior. The idea of a child inheriting his father’s position is alien, unless the child learned to be the best warrior from the father. However, there are certain lowlander tribes that rely upon a council of elders to lead, with one elder chosen as Chieftain.

One nearly universal characteristic of a true-blooded Dellin is that he or she would never carry a shield into battle. The average Dellin sees shields as cowardly, calling those who carry them “Wallhiders,” or worse. In Dellin battle, shield users are universally targeted first by the opposing force, and their users often slain for their cowardice. As such, Dellin are rare who carry a shield. Most use two weapons or great weapons.

THE DELL

Once every 4-5 years, all Dellin tribes go to a massive valley known as the Dell for the entire summer. It is a special time when all tribes meet to celebrate, trade, and to craft alliances. No war or battle is permitted within the Vale of the Dell. Though individual duels are quite common, most of which are non-lethal. The duelists are just as likely to curse each other afterward as they are to invite the other to their tent for drink.

The last Dell ended when a faction of Dellin were ejected from the Dell for battle inside the Dell. They left and began a months-long campaign of raids inside the Freelands, but were eventually defeated.

RELIGION

The tribes of Dellin are known to be influenced heavily by the ideals laid forth by Grak, whose Avatar Rannigar led them to prominence in the War of the Avatars. While not every tribe venerates Grak or have one of his ordained, the Warcallers, in their tribe, every Dellin would know of their teachings. Warcallers encourage battle with any opponent, be it snow goblin, elf, or other Dellin. A common teaching is: “Conflict is strength, and strength is power.” Warcallers whip the tribe into frenzy on the battlefield, sowing chaos in the name of their dark God. It is they who are most likely





to kill or be killed on the battlefield if their side may lose, and it is they who sacrifice the greatest defeated opponent to Grak in the event of victory. The Warcallers are also final arbiters of duels.

Worship of Grak is universal and open in the highlands, and less common and less open in the lowlands. In the highlands, the Warcallers are trusted advisors to the chief, and the will of the Warcaller is known to be the will of Grak. Living sacrifice, public torture and execution, contests of strength, are all common in the Highlands.

In the Lowlands, worship is more mixed. While worship of Grak is still known, ancestor worship is much more common, with many tribes invoking the memory of their grandparents or other forebears. The oral tradition is the preferred method of record keeping, and most tribesmen are proud to tell the stories of their people.

Some tribes venerate the Sept, putting their own particular spin on the worship of the Seven. Still others give respect to powerful animals, and see the world through the lens of that particular animal. Men of the Bear Clan, for example, are hairy, powerful fighters that seek dominance over their fellow man, but would protect their family to the death.



Draconus is not known to be worshipped, but he is respected among the Dellin. There are ancient stories of Draconus' might and power, and for that he is respected. There are also stories of Dellin heroes who achieved avatar-level power after consuming the heart of a dragon, so most battle-minded Dellin (foolishly, perhaps) claim to relish the chance to battle, kill, and eat the heart of Draconus—and gain his power.

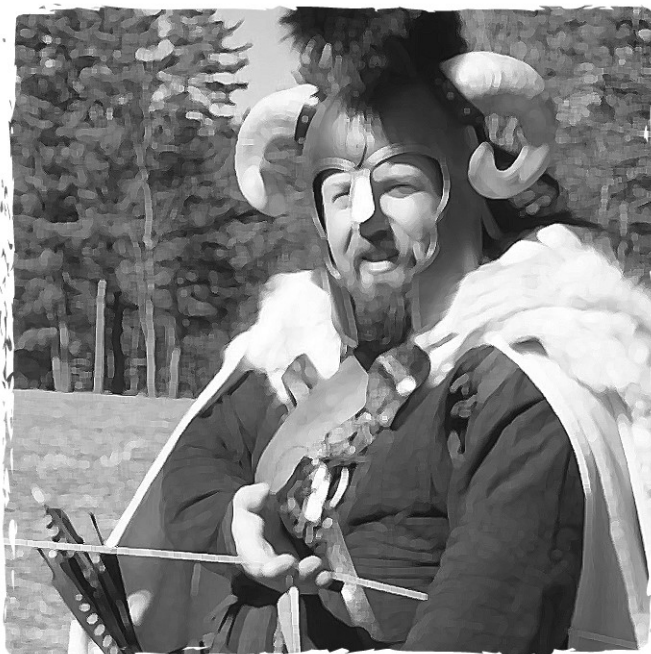
ECONOMICS

The economy of the Tribelands is hampered by its use of barter rather than coin. Coin is more likely to be used near the border of the Freelands, yet is likely to be rejected further away from the Freelands as having no inherent value. To some Dellin, coin is not functional nor useful—it cannot be melted down and turned into weapons, it cannot be eaten, and it is therefore thought of as weight. These Dellin fully understand the concept of coinage, but they find items of utility to be more valuable than their value in coin – not acknowledging the value of a universal and divisible bartering unit. For example, a live goat is worth more in a trade to a Dellin than a like amount of coin (perhaps equaling an axe in trade), but the goat's value in coins would only net one a long knife.

Slavery is a common trade practice, though most slaves are well-treated. Each tribe has their own perspective on slavery. Some do not have slaves of their own, though all respect the practice. One who gains a reputation as a cruel slave-owner will often wind up dead in his sleep, so most Dellin treat their slaves well. A slave owner who significantly mistreats his slaves is thought of as a wasteful person, akin to snapping the blade of a sword because it accidentally cut him. The respect a slave earns is equal to his skill. A slave who can craft swords is more respected than a slave who can dig ditches, for example. Other slaves can rise in status if they defend the tribe they serve, possibly becoming a warrior in the process.

MILITARY

The Dellin Tribelands do not have a standing army or any sort of military hierarchy. Each tribe is essentially a migratory city-state with some sort of warrior class, though the nature of that class is as individual as





each tribe. In some tribes, every able-bodied male is a warrior, and they rely upon slaves for gathering food. Other tribes are full of hunters, medics, blacksmiths, advisors, and craftsmen, all of whom also participate in battle. In some, women fight alongside men, and in still

others, women are never fighters. It is said, "In defense of the tribe, all become warriors."

When an outside force (Gershen slaver party, orc horde, another large tribe) threatens several tribes, it is common for the tribes to band temporarily

together, and then drift apart when the threat is subdued. Often, marriages follow after these temporary alliances as the chieftains seek to solidify the alliance—and cause hesitation in calling war on each other in the future.

The territory each tribe occupies is likely the source of most battles and wars. Each tribe migrates to some extent, and there is no concept of land ownership. Some tribes will claim a particularly good hunting ground for a period of time, but they would not be considered to have a legal claim to anything beyond what they could defend. When two tribes try to claim overlapping territory, some sort of small battle is inevitable.

Rather than have an entire tribe's warriors fight

another tribe, with the risk of enslavement or death of the warriors (which would weaken their tribe), it is common practice for battles to be fought by Champion's Duel. Each side sends its best warrior to fight. The fight is traditionally to the death, but no further violence extends past the Champion's Duel. The winning side gains the claim—for a time. Another Champion's Duel can be called for the same claim, but many tribes are reluctant to send their best fighters unless they believe they can win. There are old stories about especially good combatants in the Champion's Duel who claimed the defeated as a slave rather than killing him.

GOVERNMENT

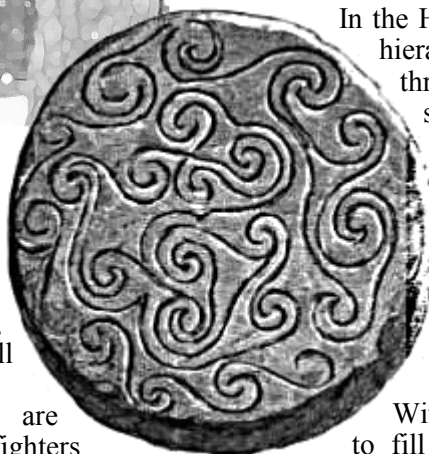
No formal government exists unifying the Dellin, but each tribe will govern itself through various means.

In the Highlands, a simple might-makes-right hierarchy is established and maintained through individual challenges, with the strongest fighter becoming Chieftain.

The strongest magic user (and the most reverent to Grak) becomes the Warcaller, and the two govern tribal affairs together. Many Lowlander tribes maintain the same process of determining the right to rule, but some of them allow the council of elders to select or depose a Chieftain.

Within a tribe, it is common for members to fill fairly static roles. The females are largely left to child-rearing, with some small minority that has shown incredible skill in a given area left to pursue that trade.

Men are divided across distinct lines. Any man who does not show exceptional skill in fighting, crafting, or magic-use will become a slave, left to do manu-



**"IN DEFENSE OF THE
TRIBE, ALL BECOME
WARRIORS..."**

Common Dellin axiom



al labor and menial tasks. Slaves thus number roughly 50% of the male population of a given tribe. The majority of the remainder (roughly 35% of the male population) will become warriors and hunters, feeding the tribe and protecting it. A small handful (roughly 10%) will bring wealth to the tribe via the plying of a special skill at a craft, such as leatherworking, blacksmithing, weaponsmithing, ornamenting, trapsmithing, tracking, performing arts, animal training, carpentry, woodcarving, alchemy, etc). These men are seen as too valuable to be risked in combat, as their skills are not readily replaceable. Men who show great skill in magic become shaman (roughly 5% of the population), leading the tribe in spiritual practice while also tending to injuries by magical means. The greatest of these is chosen to be the Warcaller.

Warriors who manage to live past the age of forty are no longer required to hunt or fight, and will become the elders of the tribe, earning their meat as advisors to the chief, diplomats to other tribes, mediators of internal disputes, and so on.



PLACES OF INTEREST

- **THE DELL**

The Dell is more a gathering than a physical place. It only occurs where the chieftains have decided it needs to. Tribesmen don't share the location with outsiders as simply attending The Dell grants a modicum of respect.

- **FROSTCAP TUNDRA**

A vast expanse of wasteland that rivals the harsh climate of Gersh. It is said to be home to some of the largest Yeti in all of the Kingdoms of Novitas.

- **THE MAD WASTES**

A near uninhabitable region filled with sinkholes and natural labyrinths. Several tribes have managed to survive here and are in a constant state of war over scarce resources.

- **BLOODROCK**

The supposed burial ground of Kharnne.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES:



THE
FREELANDS

While the boundary between the southern Tribelands and the northern Freelands is fairly fluid, Freelanders are often thought to be a soft people from a soft land, untempered as they are through lack of harsh climate and constant warfare. Though individual respect may be bestowed based upon one's martial or magical prowess, Freelanders are usually seen just as good stock for slaves and easy targets for raiding parties.



EMPIRE OF
CIVEN

Civenites are generally held to be as mild as their climate, with their overly-polite social conventions and impractical clothing. The Civen Legions, however, are not seen as soft, though the concept of a rigid military structure is difficult for a Tribesman to understand. Most Tribesmen think Civenites are deluded in their greed for worthless coin.



REALM OF
EVENANDRA

The Elves of Evanandra have not forgotten Rannigar's raid during the Avatar war, though most Tribesmen have. Most Dellin believe the elves to be arrogant and effete. Dellin children fear the elves, and play games where they run over the Evenandran border to bait the deadly elven arch-mages. Some tribes take elven ears as trophies.



KINGDOM OF
GERSH

Gershens are simultaneously respected for their battle prowess and despised for their decadent ways. Conflicts between the two are common on the border, and enmity is shared. A mutual camaraderie based on the harsh climate is also common between warriors and more worldly Tribesmen. Each has made slaves of the other in the past.



GREAT
FOREST

Denizens of the Great Forest are respected as far as their martial ability can carry them. Some respect is given to a people who live in a wild forest, though elven beliefs on slavery are alien to Dellins. It is assumed that most wood elves are Druids.



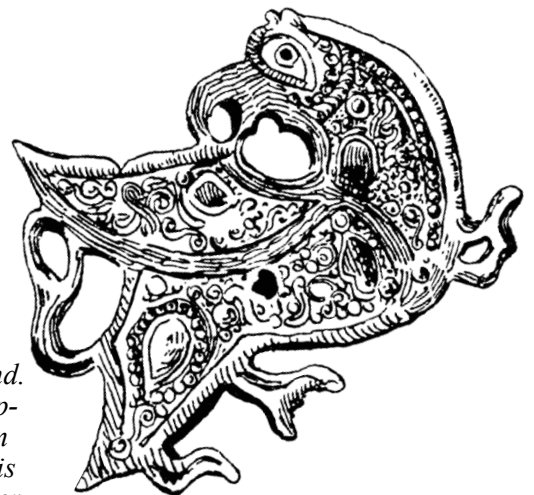
KINGDOM OF
TERRA

Terrans are respected for their drink and the quality of their weapons, though Dellins cannot initially understand how an entire people can live underground, nor how Terrans seem to have an innate subservience to those of higher rank without duels for status. It is assumed that most Terrans are weaponsmiths.



THEOCRACY
OF VLEAN

Vleanoans are truly the softest people from the softest land. The average Dellin assumes that most Vleanoans are Septons dressed in frivolous finery - and that the ones not in finery are slaves. Craftier Tribesmen also realize that this means all well-dressed Vleanoans are spies. While the average Tribesman can understand venerating Grak, the fawning devotion of Vleanoans to the Sept is seen as weakness.



THE REALM OF EVENANDRA

The High Elves of Evenandra believe fully that they are the gods' chosen people. Mortal conceptions of perfectionism do no justice to the detail-oriented nature of the High Elves, who believe that even a single hair out of place is an affront to the gods – a taking for granted of the unerring gifts granted them by the Sept.



Perfection is demanded in any occupation or endeavor, from the simplest uttered word to the most in depth socio-economic planning, and the sacrifices needed to achieve perfection are considered matter of fact and unworthy of complaint. Given their incredibly long life span (350 years, second only to Snow Goblins), High Elves will take whatever amount of time is necessary to realize unerring success.

Once perfection is achieved in some small pursuit, High Elves demand of themselves to seek perfection in something greater. The pinnacle of High Elven achievement is found in works of great complexity, where difficulty in process lends a higher value to any finished product. High Elven architecture tends to reflect its people in this way – surreal spires that give the impression of breathtaking fragility. Evenandran art is universally complex, from its intricate melodies to irregularly metered poetry. Transnational political actions are taken only after strategists have projected an event-tree for every possible interaction. The only way

to achieve beauty in product is beauty in process. Everything worth doing is worth doing well, and taking one's time. Pursuit of idle hobbies is castigated as frivolous, and laziness is akin to heresy.

The High Elven work ethic is a puzzle to the rest of the world. In a nation where no need goes unmet, where safety is essentially guaranteed, and poverty is a foreign concept, one might assume that complacency would rule the day. Nothing could be further from the truth. High Elves pursue their trades joyfully and without the resentment that comes from working simply to eat.

It is thus that Evenandrans live in a constant state of diligence and revulsion. Diligence in seeking ever higher achievement, and disgust that the rest of the world could sit idly by and let the realm crumble. While those High Elves who travel elsewhere often soften their stance, Evenandrans who choose not to leave the city feel interpersonally isolated from the world, and their feeling of utter superiority to the other nations is softened only by a hint of pity.

Taking the extreme long view, one can not help but wonder where the Evenandrans quest for perfection will take them when the whole of Evenandra meets their Sept-centered standards. Scholars assume that they will not be dissuaded by the imaginary lines drawn on the map by dignitaries of the past, and that Evenandrans will not rest while a perfectible world roils on untamed.

HISTORY

When what would become the High Elves were dropped in Novitas, they found themselves at the gates of a city fortress of the Knight. This fortress became the core of the High Elven capital, Evenessa. Through the Knight's blessing, the entire country was sanctified. There are thus no naturally-occurring undead within the borders.

Living with this blessing created a society with inherent advantages to those living in other realms. The combination of a sanctified landmass and a people with a lifespan of 350 years caused Evenandran Elves and their society to develop in a way most unlike any other place or race.



Whereas the rest of Novitas was a wild place, untamed, with denizens living hand to mouth, Evenandra flourished from the very beginning. It did not flourish as a primeval forest. It flourished in the way that a perfectly manicured garden does. Each road and building carefully conceived of before the first stone was laid, and each individual sorted by his proficiency and passion – his destiny decided for the good of the whole.

Unchained by the shackles of individualism, fear of old age, and natural predators, the history of the Elves has unfolded as a storybook lacking conflict. While

minor skirmishes have taken place on the Evenandran borders, no occupying army has ever even reached Evenessa, the Capital City, much less breached its alabaster walls. Dellin hordes pestered the Elves as a distraction during the War of the Avatars, but this skirmish is a mere footnote in Evenandran history. Given this incredibly long time frame, the capital city is now devoid of any wildness whatsoever. Plants which can not be controlled have been eradicated, individuals who demonstrated unpredictability have been exiled, and foreigners who would upset the balance were and are quickly escorted elsewhere.

HIGH ELVEN CULTURAL VALUES

ON THE MORALITY OF ELVES

As much as any other race, The High Elves have a morality completely unto themselves. Where morality for Man is a question of black & white, for the High Elves morality is iron and gold. Iron is base and ugly, whereas gold is rare and beautiful. Iron is crude, whereas gold is refined. Iron rusts, and makes one vulnerable to corruption. Gold is incorruptible. Orcs are of iron: brutish and cruel. Septly Virtue is of gold. Ugliness and Evil to the High Elves are often synonymous, as are Goodness and Beauty.

ON LIFE

To the High Elves, one's journey through life should resemble the creation of a work of art. One's spark is the brush or the tool, one's conscience the hand. Through one's actions one hews the marble of What Is to Be into the forms that one hopes will last through the ages, and paint a history on the fabric of the past. It is the hope of all High Elves to leave a legacy of beauty, to be remembered in story and sung in song. The Elvish have a burning desire to capture the fleeting beauty of the individual, and to preserve a spark of its flame for all time. It is for many the same reasons that their funeral rites are so unique.

High Elves view death as a loss of uniqueness. A body that can no longer speak, think, or create is a quintessential tragedy. In light of this perspective, even a corpse that has been reaped of its spark will be mended, and then encased in Amber or Quartz so that at least the person's physical beauty and uniqueness will live on through the ages. It is considered a tragic loss if the body is not recoverable or is disfigured to the point that the beauty of the body is lost. If a body is considered to be unredeemable, it will be cremated. The dead are universally remembered through art. Gifts

of song, sculpture, or paintings are often the most common methods used to honor the dead.

ON SOCIETY

There are many who claim that Evenandra is a paradise. While many of those making this claim are High Elves themselves, Evenandra is a paradise of sorts. She is free from crime, hunger, poverty, and the undead. She is beautiful beyond compare. Her inhabitants are dedicated specialists that meld perfectly into the greater whole of society, a seamless division of labor that produces marvelous results. Children educate themselves in schools and temples until they reach an acceptable age to venture forth into the world to learn all they can from outside the Realms. By the time an Elf reaches the age of 49, she is expected to find her most suitable profession, join a Caste and become an apprentice. From then on, she learns from a master of her field and continues to strive for job perfection all her life.

One's calling in life is not necessarily that which the individual enjoys the most. The philosophy is, instead, that each Elf does what he is best at. If each Elf does this, society as a whole is bettered. An Elf's duty is to her society, and her society in turn has a duty to provide her all the things she needs in her professional and personal life: housing, materials, tools, a mate, recreation and more.

Evenandran society tends to be rather insular, and as a whole tends to look down on the younger (lesser) races. The worst are racist and stuck on themselves; the best are condescending and patronizing. Those that have not spent much time abroad are known to talk loudly and slowly to foreigners. Those High Elves that do leave are often struck by how similar the rest of the races of the world actually are, and are left shocked by their newfound humility.

“FORM MUST MEET
FUNCTION, AND EACH
PART OF THE WHOLE
MUST RECOGNIZE ITS
ROLE. EVERYTHING HAS
A PLACE, AND EVERY-
THING MUST BE IN ITS
PLACE.”

- Queen Agralana



Some of these elves come to be reviled at High Elven society, and believe that the ineffable weight of this

meticulously constructed society is doomed to crash down upon itself.

THE HIGH ELVEN CASTE SYSTEM

The seven castes of the Evenandran elves are sculpted in the image of the Gods. At the head of each caste are Knights. Caste Knights are responsible for seeing to it that ceremonies, internal disputes, and the general order of the caste are maintained. Within a caste, the Knights are arbiters of lower justice and oversee the selection process of new members. Each caste is ruled internally by its own Knights, and the six lower castes are ruled in turn by the royal caste of The Knight.

Each caste's members are formally known by the name of their caste's deity. However, over time the use of more familiar names for individual practices have become so ubiquitous that it's more common to hear someone called a Matron rather than a Mother or a Muse rather than an Elemental.

MOTHERS: THE BENEVOLENT CASTE

Commonly called Matrons, Priestesses, and Priests

Among the Mothers are the caregivers, priestesses and priests, the healers and the midwives. Their mission is to see to the spiritual and physical health of society. To this end, all Septons are members of this caste. Ostensibly, each of the six lesser castes are supposed to enjoy equal influence, but it is commonly observed that the Mothers receive the most favor from her royal majesty. A Knight of the Mother is known as a Knight-Matron or a Knight-Priest(ess).

SCHOLARS: THE LEARNED CASTE

Commonly called Magi, Philosophers, and The Wisest

Members of the Scholar's Caste are known best for their mastery of magic. Magi hold the deepest held mysteries and secrets of the arcane arts. It is well known that the most influential of the Magi escaped to Evenandra with the most precious mysteries from the Library City of Nalben just before its cataclysmic destruction two (elven) generations ago. Architects, teachers, researchers, theorists, strategists, high ritualists, and professional game players all belong to the ranks of The Wisest. Knights of this caste are formally known as Knights of Wisdom.

ELEMENTALISTS: THE WYLD CASTE

Commonly called Muses, or Artists

There is nothing left of the wilderness that existed before the High Elves asserted control over their lands and erected The Wall. Druids are rare among the Evenandran elves and those that stay within the society become tenders of the vast leagues of mani-

cured parks and gardens that make up the outlands of the country. Artists, sculptors, musicians and composers are members of the Wyld Caste. The famed "Escorts" are also members of this caste (about which there are many tales involving elven courtesans spending centuries to master the art of bringing pleasure to others). Knights of the Elemental are known as Knights of Beauty.

CRAFTERS: THE CASTE OF HANDS

Commonly called Artisans and Makers

The Crafters are the most numerous of the seven castes. They are the makers. Weavers, bakers, smiths, diplomats, jewelers, masons, engravers, and farmers are all members of the Caste of Hands. The primary concern of this caste is the production and smooth integration of everything the society uses and consumes. A smith or weaver will have absolutely all physical, social, and even marital needs met by the society to free him or her for total devotion to his or her work. There is no unmet need in a Maker's life so long as he or she continues to practice his or her artisanship. Knights of the Craftsman are known as Knight-Makers.

STRANGERS: THE DEATHLY CASTE

Commonly called Shadows and The Faceless

The Deathly Caste concerns itself with the handling of sparks and facilitating the denouement of an elf's life. The Caste is thus populated largely with Mediums, embalmers, spies, and assassins. The Deathly Caste is also charged with the keeping of secrets and careful use of misinformation. Interestingly, professional actors are also members of this caste. No one outside this caste is trained to wear another's face, and those trained are schooled rigorously in the use and interpretation of body language to perfect their vocation. Representing another elf in a culture so focused on beauty is considered a sober and solemn duty, even when the character played may be joyful and full of light. As such, actors are held to impossibly high standards of accuracy and perfection. Oftentimes, The Faceless begin living their lives to match the one whose name they will use on stage in order to best bring out the essence of the role. While few in number, members of the Deathly Caste are very well respected members of society. Knights of the Stranger are known as DeathKnights.

SOLDIERS: THE CASTE OF BLOOD

Commonly called Warriors and Wardens

If the Mothers enjoy the most favor in the eyes of the Queen and society at large, then it is the caste of the Soldier that is viewed with the least. Physical acts



of enforcement and violence are seen as necessary evils, almost always lacking in beauty. As such, the art of war is left to the military leaders in the caste of the Knight, the soldiers acting as the brushes and pigments with which they paint the battlefield. Among the ranks of the Soldier are War-Mages, Scouts, and the enlisted army and navy. Also included are City Guardsmen and the Night Watch. Knights of the Soldier are formally known as Knight-Captains, and it often falls to them to take responsibility for any ugliness that occurs in course of military duties.

LAWGIVERS: THE RULING CASTE OR KNIGHT'S CASTE

Commonly called Lords, Nobles, and Lawgivers

The noble's duty is to follow the example of the patron god, The Knight. All members of the Knight's

Caste are nobility to a greater or lesser degree. Among the Ruling Caste are the Lawgivers, Justicars, Agents of the Crown, military leaders, and positions of social prominence. The leaders of the lesser six castes are directly accountable to the Knight's Caste in keeping order and beauty among the Evenandran people. Any disputes or concerns that occur beyond the scope of one's Caste's internal judgment are offered up to Justicars - Knights whose very existence is dedicated to the concept of order.

While among the other lesser castes the leaders may hold the title of Knight-Maker or DeathKnight, only a Knight of the Knight Caste is granted the privileged, simple title of "Knight" in the Elvish language. Outsiders often find this distinction confusing, and it has become a common practice to for foreigners to describe the highest positions within the caste as "Royals".

ON CRAFTING

Beauty is a currency, with form favored over function. High Elven artists create beauty for its own sake. Art and finery are much adored.

Evenandra is the most advanced magical society in Novitas, known for the creation and implementation of all manner of rituals, from practical de-cursing rituals and the arcane technology used by the Crimson Couriers to deliver mail, to fanciful ritualistic magics that produce never-ending melodies, to weapons of concisely efficient annihilation. Those who study do so at Arcana Gorgannash Arcane University of Novitas, founded in Evenessa in the year 1276 NL.

High Elves are credited with the discovery of Elven Steel, although it was the Terrans who first thought to

forge it into weapons. While Elven Steel is now forged throughout the Kingdoms of Novitas, it is the High Elves who use it most regularly, known for making the most intricate patterns in the Steel. In Evenandra, this beautiful metal is used for far more than just weaponry, as it is just as frequently integrated in fine art, sculpture, and even tableware (as it repels poisons and does not decay).

Lore has it that Elven Steel may be the root of the longstanding dislike between Terrans and Elves. The first King Quartzhammer received a gift set of fine Elven Steel tableware, made by the most skilled artisan of the age, but melted them down to forge a weapon, promptly and succinctly replying, "Not sure why you sent such funny-shaped ingots, but they worked great. Thanks! Please send more."

ON THE OBSESSION WITH GARDENING

The High Elves have become notorious in Novitas for their extensive gardening, and not without good reason. All of Evenandra is a garden. Every forest is an orchard in perfect rows. Every city street, every fountain, every river, and every building are the veins and bones of a massive, groomed arboretum. Even farmland is beautified. The effects of this planning are as functional as they are stunning. Wildlife prospers due to the careful accounting and planning done. Domesticated animals grow to huge proportion, as do planted crops and the fruits of the forest - all due to controlled genetic breeding. Still, some wonder if the High Elves haven't gone a bit overboard. The Elves themselves feel they are merely trying to keep the land as they first found it when they inherited it from the Gods.





RELIGION

Worship in Evenandra is uniformly centered around the Sept, and while good Evenandrans attend worship frequently, it is a moral imperative that each citizen consider the Sept's wishes in each moment. Pursuit of a craft, a well considered joke, a thoughtful response to a child – worship of the Sept can be found in each of these moments. Evenandrans spend little and less time pontificating on the Sept's wishes. They spend no time in debate as to what the Sept demands: patience, persistence, and perfection. Evenandrans are thus entirely dedicated to the Sept while being unlearned in theological theories.

Until a time when the undead cross Evenandran borders, or even until a stone is set out of place on a cobbled city street, High Elves will continue to bask in the knowledge that their ongoing achievement and superiority is an affirmation of being the Sept's chosen people.

ECONOMICS

While the High Elves are self-sufficient when it comes to satisfying their carnal needs, they do a fair bit of trade in an attempt to spread their culture throughout the realm. Evenandrans are eager to sell items of their creation: instruments, wine, art, literature, finery, and the like. Form always is preferred over function, and thus other nations tend to prefer weapons of Terran make instead of Evenandran. While Evenandrans are quite ethnocentric, they do value artist works from other nations as well, as being a collector of unique works of art can be a calling in its own right. Thus it happens that Evenandra imports as many luxury items as it exports.

MILITARY

Evenandra is rarely ever assaulted, attacked, or invaded. The Dellins of the Tribelands attempted an attack during the War of the Avatars as an attempt to keep Evenandra occupied, but this siege was held off easily, hardly noticed by any outside the soldiering castes. There has never been a successful outright occupation or invasion of Evenandran soil. Secure in their military position, the High Elves occasionally send out armies to assist other nations, should some unruliness in one corner of the realm threaten to expand elsewhere.

Primarily, though, Evenandrans focus on matters of defense, prioritizing the preservation of what they believe to be an untainted nation. The first step in any matter of defense is political manipulation. High Elven ambassadors are a mainstay in noble courts throughout Novitas. Due to their longevity, High Elves are unbelievably patient, often forgoing what seems like a fruitless parley with a firm monarch and moving directly onto to his more impressionable children. After centuries of carefully cultivating these relationships, the High Elves have favorable trade agreements with nations everywhere, and have little reason to fear external hostilities.

With no real reason to fear outside invasion, one might think the High Elves see no need for a standing army. Nothing could be further from the truth. With an army that rivals only the Civenite in manpower, Evenandra's plan of defense is as carefully cultivated as its cities.

Surrounding the nation is what is colloquially called The Wall, a wall of simple stones, two inches high, all identical in shape and shade. The juxtaposition of the two sides of The Wall is startling to those gazing



on it for the first time. The Evenandran side of The Wall is lush and fertile, with small game animals flitting about with lively fervor. Just beyond The Wall lies desolation. Fields of burnt grass and dusty soil as far as the eye can see, and no wildlife whatsoever. The soil stripped of any nutrients by magical means, nothing grows except for thorny weeds.

Dellin mothers tell their children to beware setting foot over the wall, for fear that the Evenandran arch-mages will use their ability to follow the ley-lines in two directions to eliminate the invasive threat. Burnt humanoid husks of various sizes are littered infrequently on the outside of the wall, daring onlookers to challenge the claim.

Those who manage to breach the two-inch wall are greeted by the Wardens. This elite fighting group is filled with masterful users of magic, dissipating archer corps, and whole legions wielding magical weapons and wearing plate armor. The realms of Novitas should feel grateful that the High Elves have kept their focus on cultivation rather than imperialism.

GOVERNMENT

In Evenandra, ‘Knight’ (with a capital K) is usually synonymous with ‘Noble’, as Nobles take the lessons of leadership, justice and virtuousness from teachings based on The Knight’s principles.

Elven Noble Houses are matriarchal. It is up to the females to manage their estates, arrange marriages with other Houses, and preside over house affairs. Females own the house assets. The Realms of Evenandra as a whole are also matriarchal, ruled by a female monarch. Family names in Evanandra are passed along the female line. Females head up the households and in the case of noble houses, own the estates.

It falls to the males to defend their houses and to be married off to increase their and their house’s status. Nobility is hereditary, and as such noble children are bred for greatness and the qualities of leadership. To

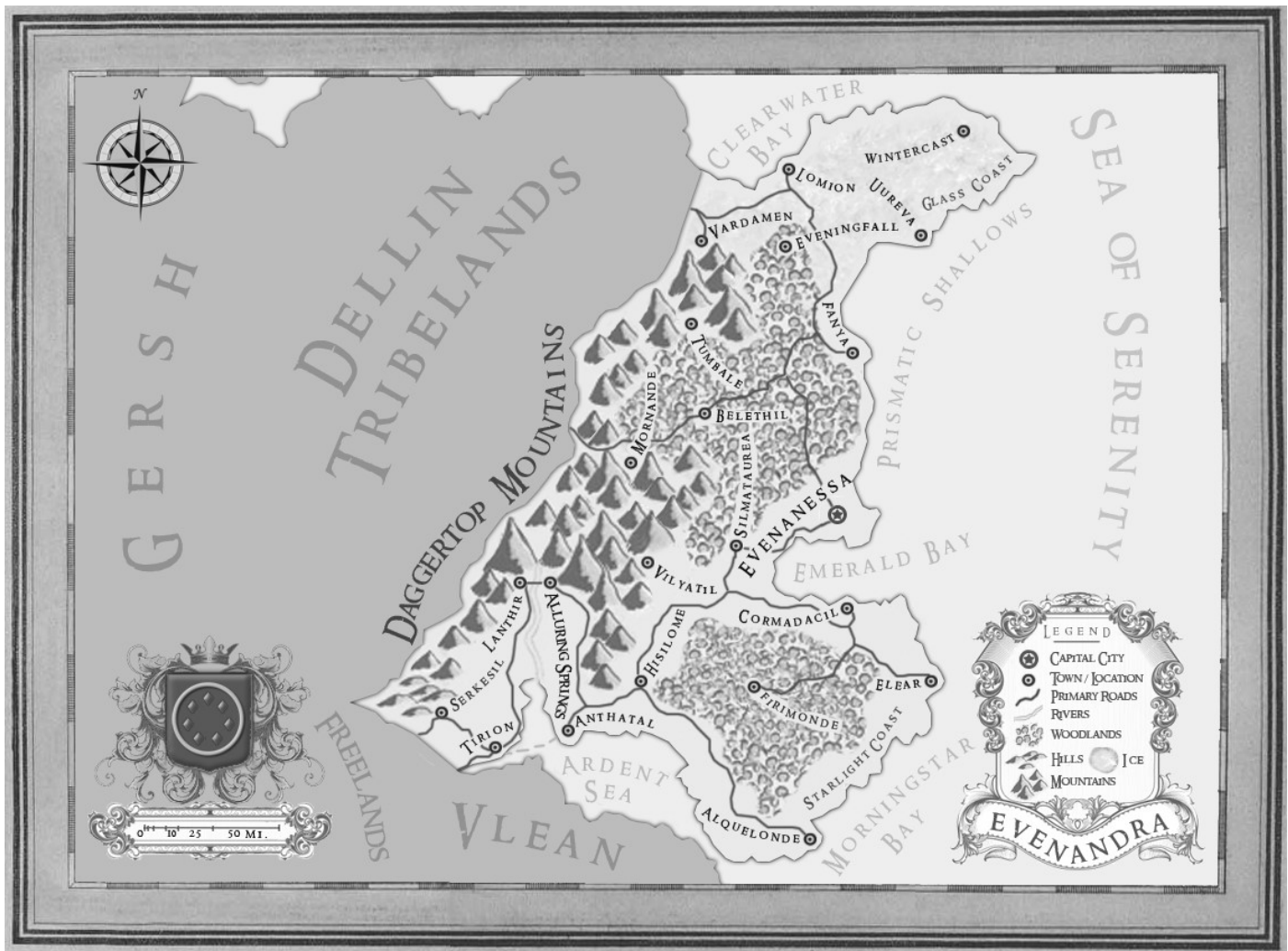


this end, the arrangement of a marriage is a very thorough, scientific process. Young nobles are groomed for leadership and all measures are taken to instill a strong moral foundation.

Nobles preside over the disputes of those within their house’s secondary Caste, and more often than not command at least some retinue of staff, whether it be a small group of artisans or a battalion of soldiers. All Noble Houses bow to the Royal House of Her Majesty Queen Agralana, Blessed by the Seven. The Great Houses, including that of her majesty, preside over the lesser Knights. There are many lesser houses, and even more minor houses – too numerous to name or keep track of for anyone outside the walled city.

Titles of Greater nobles may include Duke or Duchess, Magistrate, Seneschal, or Marquis. Titles held in Lesser Houses may include Knight or Dame, Count, or Baron. Minor Nobles are simply called Lord/Lady, or by an honorific of their profession.





PLACES OF INTEREST

• EVENANESSA

Capitol city of Evenandra, the “Alabaster City” is built in and around the citadel of the Knight himself. The existing fortress is of such scope that entire city districts sit within the many courtyards and gardens possessed within. Seven individual keeps overlook the major districts wherein are housed the distinct castes. There are several books written by Elvish scholars about the intricate layout and history of each district. Art and sculpture in the form of building and living spaces adorn the Alabaster walls from inside and out, granting them purpose and beauty unrivaled anywhere else.

• TIRION

Tirion is a city run primarily by the Caste of the Craftsman. They spare no expense when welcoming diplomats and merchants alike. It is said that the city shines almost as brightly as Evenanessa itself. The city is designed to make itself accessible to large volume trade with warehouses, counting houses, and loading docks.

• BELETHIL

Among rows and arcs of carefully tended trees are tall, narrow buildings paneled in carved rosewood and mahogany. Residences are built atop them with balconies

and glass windows above the glistening green treetops. Dawn from there has been described as seeing the sun rise over a gently rolling ocean of trees. Roaming livestock and tame sika (spotted deer) wander within their enclosures of manicured hedgerows and deep streams stocked with trout and perch.

• FIRIMONDE

Firimonde is widely renowned for its wines, ciders, and sweet scents. The orchards and vineyards span several miles in perfectly groomed rows as far as the eye can see. Firimonde is a very popular vacation spot for wealthy nobles of all nations due to the immense beauty during the autumn season.

• WINTERCAST

A region of Evenandra so harsh that it rivals the Snow Kingdoms of Gersh. The juxtaposition of the outside climate and the inviting indoor spaces are an expression of architectural artistry. Though few, structures are constructed from worked crystal buttresses with polished ice panes refracting light into the spaces beneath. Within the low transparent domes are greenhouses and homes built with open trellises as opposed to rooftops. Subtle heating is accomplished through directed hot springs. The rarified air is used to imbue the much sought after produce grown within with the exotic fragrances and flavors that only the local mineral waters can provide.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES:



Seen as a wild, untamable place, the Freelands and its inhabitants are something of a mystery to the High Elves – even more alien than the Dellin Tribelander, who have at least formed governing bodies and recognizable tribes. With no political structure to parley with (and insert itself into), the Evenandran government does not know what to make of these buffer lands to the southwest. The Evenandran Temperance League has sent representatives to aid Freeland adventurers with the cause of exterminating the undead, but was discouraged to learn that Freelanders themselves engage in necromancy.



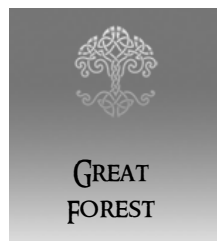
Civenites are a great trade partner with the Elves, and while their militaristic imperialism is seen as distasteful, the productivity of the Civenite farmers, military, and merchants is respected. Some distrust still lingers from when it was learned that the Civen government was overtaken by an Avatar of the Dark Three, as Evenandrans believe themselves to be ultimately incorruptible.



People of the Tribelands are viewed disdainfully, as the actions of Rannigar, the Avatar of Grak, have not since been forgotten. Dellin forces harried the Evenandrans during that war, and while no great losses were incurred, Evenandrans view those transgressions as the ultimate affront to their culture. Dellins are never permitted in Evenandra, and those that attempt to enter are dealt with swiftly and forcefully.



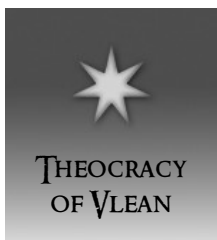
Snow Goblins of Gersh are considered only with disgust and pity. They were elves once, but were robbed of their beauty and grace when the seal of Wakharn was shattered, left twisted and broken. The fate of those beings is considered to be as terrible as the fate of those torn from the Stranger's arms and raised as undead, the fall from elf to Snow Goblin being as drastic as one could possibly imagine. And yet, these creatures were once elves, and are thus pitied and treated with remote dignity. These grotesque parodies are permitted to exist only as a terrible reminder of the dangers the dark gods can bring.



Kin from the Great Forest are always welcome to come into the fold and take up a craft or service within the queen's kingdom. The elves still recall the stories of their grandmatrons and their heritage from when they were all one people. As part of this sense of family and tradition, those High Elves who cannot find a way to integrate into the caste system are welcomed by their cousins in the Great Forest. Elves will often greet each other as "Cousin," a tradition acknowledging that all are one people.



The feud between Terrans and High Elves is not one that has ever been fully understood. Some point to a long standing-offense involving a High Elven discourtesy, but most Evenandrans believe that the pragmatic Terrans are too simple minded to know true beauty. While the Terran commitment to function is lauded, calling a project "complete" before perfect beauty is achieved is incomprehensible. Terrans and High Elves that actually meet each other find that they have more in common than they might have thought, but these meetings are quite rare.



Evenandra and the Theocracy are not hostile toward one another, but aren't exactly allies. The two nations trade frequently due to their proximity, but Vleanoan priests are not allowed to evangelize on Evenandran soil. Evenandrans admire the Vleanoan attempt to create structure and order, and the artist works created by Vlean's master artisans, but keep Vleanoans at arm's length due to their fervent proselytizing.



THE SNOW KINGDOM OF GERSH

The Snow Kingdom of Gersh is a place one has to see to believe. Fortress-Cities are carved from glaciers and stone in sizes that befit giants more than the Snow Goblin people. The ancestral dead walk openly under the baleful moon – one lifetime being inadequate for their plans – and are petitioned for their counsel and blessings. Savage civil wars erupt between the Houses and Clans regularly and give oathsworn samurai opportunity to at last show their quality.

Gersh is a place of Oriental sensibilities, blood operas, secret police, fierce principle, and open worship of the Dark Three. Law is a mixture of tradition and Noble fiat, and life in the frozen north is sustained through rigid caste obedience or treacherous cunning. Gersh is the home of the Snow Goblin people – weaponized Elves from another era – and these people are driven by a cultural spite towards the “warmlanders” to the south. Everything is extravagant in Gersh: The wars, the wealth, the dress, the titles, the tortures, the celebrations, the monsters, the narcotics, the honors, and the schemes.

ANCIENT HISTORY

Snow Goblins were dropped into the icy north of Novitas after the War of the Gods. Out of scorn or fear, these warriors could never decide. Even this manufactured race, cultivated from native elven stock and perfected by Darkness’ own will, struggled mightily for the first 900 years of its existence. Originally using a rigid military doctrine, Snow Goblins embraced tribalism as the race barreled toward extinction. They warred with each other over dwindling resources and isolated arable lands. They fought over herds, females, and fortified caves. They sacrificed to the Dark Three, calling to them for orders and purpose, but no response came. They died by the thousands, but it wasn’t until the Storm that they faced genocide.

In 985NL, the weather goddess of the Sept hurled a mighty storm at the remnants of her ancient enemies. The winds were too strong to allow fires to burn. The cold so bitter that it flash froze the old and the young alike where they stood. The Snow Goblins endured for a year, the storm never abating, and the people of Gersh were forced to commit terrible acts to survive. The storm continued as the Elemental was determined to see them exterminated. In the end, the storm broke

what war and suffering had never been able to break: The pride of the Snow Goblin race.

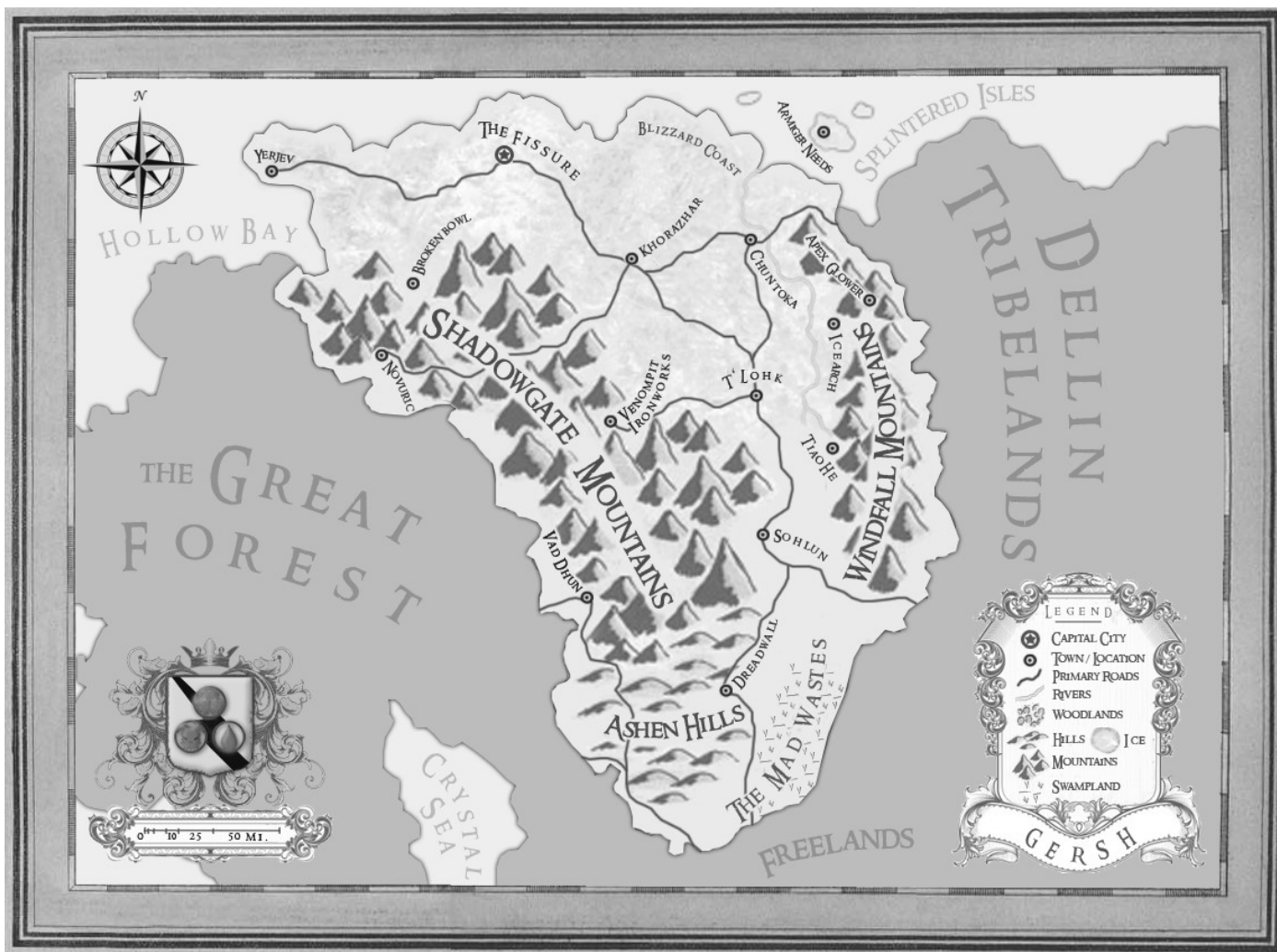
“THE WHOLE OF OUR
PEOPLE ARE BUT THIS:
RECIPROCITY...”

*- The Bitter Mikado's pledge
against the Sept*

In defeat, in humiliation, they migrated south, to beg help from their former enemies. They were denied, and were sent back into that same storm once more. Only the warmlanders had made a terrible mistake. They had given the Snow Goblin people a renewed purpose: to never be weak again.

Two more years the storm raged, and finally, it abated. The Elemental is said to have gasped at what she saw. Beneath this punitive storm, the Snow Goblin race had built the first fortress-city of Gersh. The Fissure, a military city of canyon alleys, stone redoubts glistening with weapons and defenses, and beautiful ice facades adorning warren-homes all defended a singular massive ice temple to the Dark Three. And within that temple, as the moonlight touched the Fissure for the first time, the Bitter Mikado arose and seized power over his people. Order and purpose was restored with aid from the Quv, the death-speaker priests of the Snow Goblins giving advice from generations past. For two hundred years, they rebuilt and reorganized.





In 1180, the Snow Goblin people were found worthy once more, and the Dark Three anointed Erdarusk with power. War preparations began. To enforce the society, the Bitter Mikado created a nameless secret police, to ensure that all were working towards the



great challenge laid before them. They would not fail again. They would never know shame again.

It is said that in 1182, Erdarusk addressed the gathered host of Snow Goblin military might on the icy plains above the Fissure with a single word: "Nalbendel." A mighty roar rose from the armies, and they marched south to deliver vengeance and destruction upon the warmlanders to the south. Glory was found in great destruction, and five of the Great Clans were established by valor on the fields of battle. When the elves finally destroyed Nalbendel in a last ditch attempt to repel the invading armies, three quarters of the Snow Goblin force was destroyed, along with Erdarusk himself.

In the decades that followed, the Bitter Mikado solidified his rule, raised up the Great Clans and the Minor Houses, built new cities, and grew his Kingdom. He engineered complicated games of intrigue and politics to keep the Snow Goblin minds sharp and to cull any weakness from his people. Minor wars between the Houses were encouraged to keep the swords of Gersh sharp. Trade was established with the other nations, beginning primarily with the new Gershen ally of Vlean, which grew the wealth and influence of the nation. In 1371 he agreed to the Treaty of Ghage so no



nation could have possession over the site of his people's ultimate victory. It amused him to do so.

RECENT HISTORY:

For the last two hundred years, matters have been static within the Snow Kingdom of Gersh. Samurai fought wars, peasants harvested food stuffs and raw materials, artisans crafted, slaves served, the Quv advised, the secret police prowled, the Nobles moved for advantage, Liches and their entourages pursued their own agendas, and the war machine that was Gersh prospered.

Prosperity would not last long. Floods came to Gersh. The first was of thawing ice, the second was of blood. After centuries upon centuries of frozen waste, a great Thaw began to take the southernmost lands within the Kingdom. How this thaw came about is rumored to be tied into the death of the legendary Daizo of Brushogun, a hero of the Quv, said to be their secret leader. Others say it was the wrath of the Elemental come again. Whatever the cause, the result was disastrous. Hundreds died in the great raging waters, and in the aftermath there was a terribly bloody land-grab as peasant collectives seized and held new wide tracts of arable land and the Lords rushed in to take it from them in a horrifically bloody civil war even by Gershen standards. It is said that when the Court of the Bitter Mikado was presented with a handful of loamy earth sprouting grass, that they went into recess and have yet to reconvene. Even now, the lines of property have not stabilized and Snow Goblins continue to add blood to the muddy expanses.

CULTURAL VALUES

Snow Goblins have many competing social values, and within those spectrums, there is much differentiation. Before beginning, it's necessary to gain a sense of context about the Snow Goblins of Gersh.

There are a number of events that have shaped them to be who they are today, beginning with their very creation. There is little that Goblins suffer more hotly than the knowledge that they were once elves, who are now some of their bitterest enemies. To have "Elves" be at the root of that long chain of events is difficult for proud Snow Goblins to accept.

These are a proud people, who have cut an Empire from the most uninhabitable place on Novitas -- they embrace savagery, and revenge is perfectly reasonable. But likewise, they value each other and create elaborate caste systems and politenesses to allow each other to coexist. After all, there are many Snow Goblins sharing minimal habitable space. The rules of etiquette, the ways they get along with each other for mutual benefit, are critically important. Where in the warmlands a social slight may be merely annoying, in Gersh it threatens the whole of their communal survival. Such does

not go unpunished.

A sense of defeat also drives the peoples of Gersh. In the first war that destroyed Vargainen, the Snow Goblins were the weapon-race of the Dark Powers. They were elite, well armed, well (if brutally) trained, and deadly. In essence, everything from their minds, bodies, and society were geared for unrelenting war. Yet they lost.

The Snow Goblins themselves were discarded. Despondent and shamed they begged succor from their conquerors: The Elves, the Humans, The Earthkin.



They were given none. Indeed, the worst of this great shame was that these warmlanders would not kill them. Not even that small mercy was to be had. They were cast back into their frozen abyss, damned to suffer for as long as they would before they died -- of starvation, of frostbite. It mattered not to these so called "good" nations. The Snow Goblins walked back to their prison, carrying their shame with them.

Shame claimed many of them. but in many others, shame turned to hate. Hate drove them, hate sustained them, and that hate has since become a cultural touchstone for the species. They mastered the ways of warfare by fighting wars against themselves, culling the weakest from their own ranks. They studied the anatomies and languages of their enemies well before studying their own -- the death of their enemies came before their own preservation. They organized themselves into strict roles within their society. Warriors fought, Nobles led, slaves served, peasants produced raw materials, artisans produced tools and weapons, and merchants established trade with other nations and learned of their ways.

Against those events, we now turn to the culture of



Gersh. Like the physicality of the Snow Goblins themselves, the cultural mores and priorities of the Gersh are varied and distinct. There are regional differences, clan differences, caste differences, and religious differences to account for. In this way there is enormous differentiation within the culture. Gersh culture is a storm -- thunderous malevolence amidst the most remarkable patterns of dazzling lightning.

Of all the races, it is the Snow Goblins who best celebrate their lives with seemingly reckless abandon. They know how close death lingers at all times and a celebration is a chance to taunt the enemy. When celebrating, it is not merely a matter of saying the right things and gesturing appropriately. Snow Goblins indulge in every way they can when permitted to do so. Sake flows, opiates are passed, dancers quickly grow less and less clothed, drumming erupts, and wildness commences. Public intercourse is expected, males and females mark each other with ownership bites, the expulsion of too much alcohol is met with wild cheers, and duels long repressed are fought to bloody conclusions. A Snow Goblin street party is well funded madness, for tomorrow they all may die.

Of all the races, it is the Snow Goblins who have the widest array of taboos. Commonly, only the Quv may touch or speak to the dead. Knives and forks are considered barbaric, and chopsticks are instead employed as a display of delicate control.

COMMON SNOW GOBLIN TABOOS

- *Drakes as harbingers of ruin. They are a degenerate people, and they are therefore drawn to disease, loss, and impending tragedy.*
- *Sunlight as blindness. In many places throughout the Kingdom, Snow Goblins will remain indoors on days when the sun is at its zenith.*
- *Faekin are creatures who are torn between two worlds and thus cannot be trusted. It is best to shun them, as they are inherent betrayers.*
- *Sweets are poison. They encourage addiction. The peddler of sweets is an evil thing and must be killed.*
- *Buzzers are terrifying, and must be avoided at all costs. They are a race doomed to know only joy. No matter the tragedy, death, and loss about them, they may only be joyful. They are incarnated insanity, and evidence of the Sept's cruelty.*

ETIQUETTE

Certainly though, the one unifying cultural doctrine the Snow Goblins share is etiquette. There are limited places in Gersh that can support Snow Goblin life, and thus a complex system of etiquette has formed to facilitate easy relations. Ironically, it is a Civenite by the name of Miles Castigus who has chronicled this system of honorifics, understandings, and traditions in his seminal work *Musings on the Cherry Blossoms*. For more information on Snow Goblin etiquette, the reader is advised to turn to that work.

HONOR

What honor is depends greatly upon what an individual Snow Goblin holds as sacred, what caste of their society they come from, and how independent they may be from the whole of society. Warriors consider themselves already dead, and act thusly. To act decisively, without pretense, is proper. Any other action shows fear, or the denial that the warrior is already dead. Snow Goblin samurai often think of themselves as acting as the arrow from the bow. That is, they are direct, fast, and lethal. But honor does not stop with warriors. All Snow Goblins are expected to speak the truth, for lying shows fear. Losing one's sense of politeness shows a lack of self-control. A lack of obedience shows audacity and an unwillingness to serve the greater war machine.



RELIGION

There is a war at the heart of Gersh that has been raging for generations. The war is a war of philosophy, and for a people trained to make violence at the slightest provocation, this war has been fought with enor-



mous restraint and tolerance overall. Religion in Gersh is dominated by two ideals that share a common root: the origins of the species.

Many Snow Goblins believe that it is to the Dark Gods that they owe fealty. They who made the Snow Goblins for war, who perfected their very blood and bone, who established might and cunning as the ultimate rules for mastery. These are not milkblooded gods of the south, these are hard gods for a hard people. They demand sacrifice. Obedience. Hate. And the smashing of all enemies utterly until the world is over-run with Goblankind.

Those who question the Dark Three are encouraged to look to the shame of the Long Walk Back. To look at how the gods of the blinding light shamed them so profoundly. Snow Goblins who fled south are considered traitors, weak, deserving of the shame and grief they suffered. Gershly worship of the Dark Three accepts endless open warfare, the necessity for thought police and whisper collectors to save Gershians from their own distractions. Gershians accept that they were made for death, and the farther a Gershian strays from that purpose, the greater the toll exacted from the whole.

ANCESTOR WORSHIP AMONG THE SNOW GOBLINS

Gershian Ancestor Worship is vexing to outsiders, and is best understood through the teachings of an unnamed Quv Jaitle 'No (Koov yatle Noh, Honored Speaker for the Dead):

"Once, we were a savage people. Shamed, destitute, apart from each other and reduced to tribes and cannibals. We were the losers in a war that was made for us to fight. And we came here, to this place, in defeat, and were left with nothing. Nothing save ourselves. We remember.

"These selves, these Snow Goblins ancestors, struggled to create the buildings we live in, the roads we travel upon, the words we speak, the celebrations we remember, and the ideals that make us strong. They found and forged iron into blades. They cut stone and made mortar of ice itself. They dug deep and found the hidden warmth within the ground. And in these discoveries, many died, offering up their lives to take our understanding a single step forwards. Powerful Goblins, wise Goblins, dedicated Goblins carried the rest forward inch by tortured inch. They learned what cut of meat nourished and which killed. They discovered the signs of avalanche and frostbite. They mapped the borders of our kingdom and the places where hungry things dwell. We remember.

"They built and struggled under the spite of the Sept. Cold winds blew goblins from peaks and into valleys. Bitter frost stole the lives from our spawn and their mothers. Wild seas swallowed fishergoblins whole. But our forefathers struggled forward, and earned a different kind of glory. A glory born of defiance. A glory that came from pushing back the borders of ignorance. A glory that defiantly endured. We remember.

"Today, we have a Kingdom. We have roads. We have armies. We have enemies. Inch by inch, our people have become mighty. And the progress does not stop. Today we push forward still. We master new arts, new understandings, even as we put new enemies into the afterlands. We build new fortresses, ships, weapons, and agreements. We continue the work of our fathers and grandfathers. We abide by the traditions they developed, we continue the works they started. We honor the past in ceremony, in sacrifice, in song, and most importantly in deed. We remember.

"One day, we shall be gone ourselves. And our spawn, and our scions, and our descendents will carry on our work. They replace us, they supersede our broken hands, our addled minds, and when the afterlands comes to relieve us of our woes at last, they shall remember us as well. They will remember us as we stand shoulder to shoulder with the greatest of our kind who came before. And we will be counted as equal to them, and we will be proud once more. We remember. We always remember."

Gershen Ancestor worship entails many completed rites of birth and death, of ritual cleansing, of Pure Truth, of Endless Vengeance, and others. None can hope to understand these in the same way that a Quv could, but needless to say, Gershen Ancestor Worship is one utterly unique unto itself, and found nowhere else in Novitas.

ANIMISM

This is the religion of the outcast, the insane, the wildgoblin living alone in the tundra wearing furs, or the incarcerated who knows only chains and has named every link. Animists live outside of civilization, be it willingly or otherwise. Animalists are very often skilled herbalists, tinkering with fungi and flowers, creating deadly poisons and potent narcotics. Animalists find their peace of mind in nature, listening, observing, becoming one with a land determined to kill them.



SECULAR MIGHT

Secularism acts as a belief system that puts forth that the gods — all of them — are cowards. And the gods — all of them — are weak. And Gersh does not tolerate cowards. And Gersh does not abide the weak. It acts as a belief system that puts forth that it was mortalkind that made the gods, and not the other way around. The gods are scorned for their weakness in settling their disputes, their capriciousness in fleeing Novitas, their cowardice in sending Avatars. The members of this belief system seem to be pressing at revolution — calling for a smashing of the temples, an execution of the secret police, a slaughtering of cultists.

ECONOMY

Gershians view economics as a silent war, and the products and services of the Snow Goblin merchants are thus diverse and tailored to their particular victim. In places where slavery is condoned, Gershen slaves are regarded as the best in all of Novitas. These slaves, broken and rebuilt by the master SlaveMakers, are all at once diligent, strong, quick-witted, and without hope — fetching a price far higher than slaves raised elsewhere. In the west, the gem-faced dabble in heady

narcotics and lie with Gershen slatterns trained in the Path of Moans, and thus chain themselves to the pleasure dealers. The Elves wish nothing to do with the Goblins, though even there they have need of Goblin Iron, sold at high prices. Negotiations take weeks, and usually in achingly minimal amounts (all while Fae allies of the Snow Kingdom send pawns into the Elf-lands to raise havoc with impunity, of course).

Gersh is a frozen icefield, with only patches of arable land in the deep south or surrounding volcanic vents in the north. Agriculture is mostly an unknown in the Snow Kingdom, and it is for grains and vegetables that Gershens trade for the most.

However, in this frozen hell, there are still native flora. And in order to survive such harsh conditions, they have grown in strange ways and carry strange properties. Most mosses and mushrooms and flowers in the Snow Kingdom are either poisonous or narcotic. Early on in their exile, the Snow Goblins discovered which was which, usually by virtue of creating corpses. As they spent their early years suffering under the weight of winter, they learned how much opiate a Snow Goblin could entertain before addiction was formed. They learned how to render these posies into chewable form. Then into smokeable form. Then into drinkable form. They measured and catalogued the tolerances of their own people, and in the years that followed, they experimented similarly with the other races tolerances and behaviors. This happened as folk wisdom, more than with any sort of House or school's interference. Indeed, many Snow Goblin alchemists debate hotly on how much poppy slurry a warmlander can tolerate and still remain functional.

Narcotic plants are always split into two breeds: a weaker, but longer, effect-granting variety for the Snow Goblins themselves to enjoy, and a stronger. Shorter, more addictive variant for sale to the warmlanders. Usually, mendicants market these substances as assisting with healing arts. Which they do, certainly, by distracting a user's mind from pain and roughly throwing it into the seas of blissful pleasure. It is not long after however, that the saved becomes a victim, and is soon hunting for more of that merchant's particular product. Clever merchants will always camouflage their product to be unlike other Snow Goblin merchant's products: by altering the taste, or texture, or smell through various additives. In this way, each merchant keeps ties on their individual customer's attentions.

MILITARY

The military of Gersh is the most prepared and battle hardened force on Novitas, simply because the Snow Goblins never seem to allow themselves peace. From raids against the Elves and Dellins, to the numerous and constant civil wars it fights against its own, to



a cultural identity that encourages the whole of the species to know its part in whatever great war they await, the Snow Goblins forces are never in a period of drawing down. Peace is merely a pause until the next conflict.

The various forces deployed within the Gershen military:

Ashigaru: Ashigaru are typically spear or bowgoblins pressed into service from the peasant (and sometimes artisan) populations. Slaves never serve in the ashigaru – to have a need to do so would mean that the situation is incredibly dire and would shatter Snow Goblin morale. Ashigaru are kitted in leather or lamellar, issued weapons, and receive minimal training. They do have great numbers and a primal frenzy to not be killed, however.

Samurai: Samurai are the warrior caste. Trained in the arts of the sword, the bow, the naginata, the tetsubo, the war fan, and battle magic, the Samurai are in a constant state of training when they are not actively engaged in combat. As such, they are both the most effective combat unit on the field as well as being the most highly prized targets. Ashigaru typically will only wound Samurai, as it is considered above their station to slay a samurai.

In combat, Samurai will seek to meet their objective in a way that provides the most opportunity for glory. In this, the samurai is typically without guile. Banzai charges are common, attacking the hardest point of an enemy line is common, earning glory by number of dead slain or by the individual merit or rank of the target slain is a matter hotly debated by samurai both



“WHEN PEACE BREAKS
OUT, TIGHTEN YOUR
CHINSTRAPS...”

- Lord Iga Shinzen

before and after a battle. They seek the challenge, and in less orderly armies, may even contest who gets the honor of slaying the enemy general. Such matters are usually settled by duels unless the Gershen general intervenes. Such is usually the content of a worthy general's second order to his troops: No duels until the war is over.

Shinobi: The assassins, scouts, and spies of the Snow Goblin armies. These warriors are trained in very secretive schools and are incredibly costly to employ. These ninja can be either mercenaries or a secret part of an existing House. No Snow Goblin ever reveals that they are a Shinobi, as they are a necessary evil within the culture. No Shinobi ever earns honor for his acts, and are in fact scorned even by their own allies, should they discover their occupation. The Samurai hate them because they eliminate many of the challenges and individual targets that the Samurai are hunting on a battlefield. The Ashigaru fear them because of their punitive role in both peasant uprisings and when employed by the secret police in behavior control operations. The Quv hate them for the disgraces they visit upon their victims' bodies and Qempa. The general are loathe to use them as it is an insult to his honor to have to make use of them in an engagement. Snow Goblin sorcerers hate them because they despise anyone having secrets they are not privy to. However, these ninjas are rewarded with one singular honor: Of all the Snow Goblins that warmlanders must face, it is the Shinobi they fear the most. “Ninja” is warmlander mispronunciation of “Shinobi” – and a name that they have taken as their own to increase their prestige.

Quv: The Quv are a class of goblins who act as bridge between the dead and living, being able to speak with both. They ensure the voice and experience of those goblins departed are heard. The priests of the Snow Goblins have their place in war, though they only attend a war if there is a greater matter at stake. As part of their curious place outside the Snow Goblin social hierarchy, The Quv typically do not fall into the chain of command, either. Though a General certain can (and has) interrogated the leader of the attending Quv for details and communication. Typically, the Quv merely reassures the general with “I am sure we will not be in your way.” Which, coincidentally, is the opening line in any piece of Snow Goblin street theater where the Quv do – in fact – get in the way (usually immediately).

Sorcerers: There are no two Snow Goblin sorcerers who behave the same in battle, and this is their function: To break the pattern of Snow Goblin war. The Ashigaru will always be herded and fight wildly. The Hounds will always be used recklessly. The Samurai will seek their glory. Enemy commanders will know



this, will plan for it, will goad the Snow Goblin people into behaving according to their individual ways – and will use it against them. The battlemages of Gersh then are tasked with harming the enemy, but by corrupting their understanding of the art of northern war. They also serve as advisors and also often are skilled interrogators.

The Hounds: A generic term that covers the assorted lesser beings that the Snow Goblin will throw at their enemy. Originally, these ranks were comprised solely of the trained Kasvaks that many Noble Houses keep. However, over the years, other less-reliable berserkers were added to these ranks as well. Ogres, Orcs, Ettins, Boglurkers, Dellins, Slimes, trolls, waspoids... the list goes on and on. These ranks are used to create distraction, make a great noise to confound the enemy, attack the ancillary units of foreign armies (baggage trains, healing encampments, and the like), or simply thrown directly at the vanguard to test their resilience. These ranks are unreliable, and cannot be put in the direct path of certain destruction, lest they turn on the Snow Goblins in turn.

Healing Slaves: One of the few ways in which Slaves may earn a small portion of honor is to serve as healers to the Snow Goblin armies. In the north, healing is considered a banal form of magic and it is mostly taught as a primer for sorcerers – who soon abandon it in favor of other magics. The majority of Gershen healing practitioners are slaves. These slaves are always ones who have been broken and remade, and have proven their loyalty in other ways before being trusted to treat the Samurai and Ashigaru alike.

The General: The leader of a Snow Goblin military endeavor is the General. This term tends to be a

“TONIGHT, WE BREW THE
SPINAL TEA...”

- Traditional oath when slaying
assassins

warmlander word for the position, of course. Great Goblins have great titles. What warmlanders may casually refer to as a General might be High Fist of the Smashing Northern Winds, or The Longing For Wails and Blood Glinting Edgewise On His Spear. The General is awarded an army by his superiors, but he retains it by his own might and cunning. Every Snow Goblin has an agenda, and with an army comes an army of secret desires, plots, plans, and dictates of the heart. Glory hunting. Reputation accrual. Wealth. Assassination in the chaos of the battlefield. The purpose of the General is as much to crush these individuations as it is to develop strategy to obliterate the enemy. Thus, the General must be as iron itself.

Primal, uncompromising, and deadly when moved.

GOVERNMENT

The rule of Gersh is administered solely through the will of the Bitter Mikado, his minion Clans, and their constituent Houses. Collectively their combined will and willingness to punish the disobedient is known as “Heaven”, and the mandates of Heaven may not be denied.

WHO IS THE BITTER MIKADO?

There are very few facts known about the Bitter Mikado, and instead he or she is hidden in a sea of rumors and conjecture. Longevity, gender, identity, affiliation with the Dark Three, noted mutations – these are all the subject of rigorous debate. One rumor says that he possess a chained Avatar of Darkness whom he commands. Others say that she is a multibodied mutation – able to invest herself in several new incestuous bodies that she has been breeding for decades. Yet others that the Bitter Mikado is but a mythology. Even more that it is a Qempa that has somehow managed to survive the Afterlands. These are the tamest of theories.

What is known is that the Bitter Mikado rules through a series of regents and honored slaves who serve as his voice. Edicts from these body servants that go ignored or challenged are met with repercussions. Oftentimes invisible silent disappearances suffice, though ghastlier ends can be manufactured (and have been) when necessary. The Court of the Bitter Mikado is terrifyingly real, regardless.

THE GREAT CLANS OF GERSH

There are five Great Clans of Gersh, each comprised of a number of individual Houses and families. In conjunction with the Regent of the Bitter Mikado, they provide advice, analysis and strategies for the Snow Kingdom. Then the Regent disappears with his



or her retinue, bringing transcripts and analyses to the Bitter Mikado. Time passes, sometimes minutes, other times weeks. When the Regent returns, mandates are

decreed and the Great Clans are expected to prosecute these edicts.

THE GREAT SNOW GOBLIN CLANS

- **House and Clan Wei:** *Largest and richest of the Great Clans, Clan Wei is respected and feared for its vast wealth alone. Clan Wei is ruled by a rotting creature colloquially referred to as Grandfather Wei. This Snow Goblin Lord is terrifyingly ruthless, and is at his worst when he smiles.*
- **Clan Ishi:** *Always represented by a trio of females, Clan Ishi are known as Dark Three zealots. Clan Ishi are the sponsors of the majority of temples within Gersh, and it is a public secret that they direct the nameless secret police. Clan Ishi is the principal enemy of the Quv. Clan Ishi is represented by Ishi Naojo, Ishi Fumi (the night goblin herself), and Ishi Mao.*
- **House and Clan Yhu:** *An incestuous cabal of sorcerers and Liches, Clan Yhu is unique in that it is comprised of only the single House and Clan. It is said that two of their Honored Ancients became liches under the direct gaze of Darkness itself. Clan Yhu are the lorekeepers, the sorcer-*
- *ous scholars, the ritualists of Gersh. They allow no rival schools to teach the Art.*
- **House and Clan Mazubara:** *Chief rival of Wei, Clan Mazubara are the mailed fist of the Kingdom. They are chiefly concerned with expansion of the Kingdom into an Empire, and have been for three hundred years. The Clan Leader Mazubara Isamu famously committed suicide in protest on the floor of the Court of the Bitter Mikado when he was ordered not to retain the grounds taken during the War Toward Nalbendel. The current representative of Clan Mazubara is Mazubara Yotei, who forever insists on bringing his tigers with him to court.*
- **House and Clan Preya:** *Another financial clan, Preya's wealth is derived from its cultivation of excesses. Opiates, copulation houses, musician colonies, spectacle schools, and the training of slaves are its principle pursuits. It is also rumored that the slaves, bards, and sexual practitioners it exports are spies for the Kingdom.*

Every city, be it major or minor, within Gersh has at least two of these Clans represented in positions of local power. Edicts from Heaven are delivered by multiple means, with codes and ciphers pre-established so as to provide security.

There are a few dozen Lesser Houses that have some regional control but are not part of any of the Great Clans. These Houses, if they are wise, acquiesce to the demands of the more powerful Houses or Clans as is proper. Some years ago several of these Lesser Houses attempted to form a Lesser Clan, which insult-

ed the Great Clans and resulted in their extermination. No Lesser Clan exists today, although the Daizan revolutionaries are considered as such by some.

While infrequent, Undead Ancestors are not unknown in Gersh. It is a widely held tradition that the Undead cannot attain rulership over their respective Houses or Clans. This is deliberate, to prevent stagnation and weakness within the Kingdom. They can, and do, give counsel.

PLACES OF INTEREST

• THE FISSURE

The fortress city is the capital of the Snow Kingdoms and the seat of the Bitter Mikado. This is where the politics of the entire Kingdom are discussed.

• DREADWALL

A city surrounded completely by chiseled ice walls. Though the Thaw has destroyed most of the walls, the Snow Kingdoms have spent a great deal of resources to rebuild the wall as stone.

• YERJEV

Home to the Udo Kazvak breeders. Buyers come from far and wide to purchase the Kazvaks that the Udo breed.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES:



THE
FREELANDS

A lazy people polluting a place of triumph for the Gershian people. The day they forget the victory at Nalbendel is the day they are gifted with another lake.



EMPIRE OF
CIVEN

Admirable organization, military, and a blossoming understanding of politics. Worthy enemies, and productive trade partners. Once they shed the nightmare of democracy, they may be a force to be reckoned with. Until then, they serve Gershen goals.



DELLIN
TRIBELANDS

They make excellent whetstones for young soldiers to sharpen themselves upon. Occasionally, Dellins and Gershens are on the same side, but never allies. They provide the Gersh nation with heavy labor slaves, gladiators, concubines (once broken and washed), and mine workers. These are a race of animals masking as sentient creatures. Whatever is done to them is without concern.



REALM OF
EVENANDRA

Elves may prove useful as slaves, unwitting allies and dupes, or mercenaries -- however, as a people, they are the enemy. Still, whilst not at war, they are civilized enough to trade with. Though never fairly, for true Gershens must use every tactic to degrade them. One day, matters will be settled to Gershen satisfaction.



GREAT
FOREST

The mad elves of the woodlands are the pathetic descendants of a defeated people. They live in a state of joyful poverty, wresting no wealth from their jungle and dreaming of no conquest. Were it not for the wraithlike watchdogs and sap-drinking Druids who patrol the forest edge, Gersh would have conquered them long ago. As it is there is nothing they possess of such value that campaigning there would be worth the trouble.



KINGDOM OF
TERRA

Terra is considered to produce excellent quality goods, have a wealth of resources, and they are blessed with naturally defensible terrain. If Terra were conquered, Terran slaves would endow the Gershen people with remarkable wealth and room for expansion. Until then, Terrans are considered distant partners in trade.



THEOCRACY
OF VLEAN

Allies. They alone have had the wisdom to make overtures to the Gershen people. They are respectful, obedient, and courtly when they choose to be. Of all the non-Snow Goblin races, they understand best how to entreat with Gersh. This wisdom must be cultivated and protected.



THE GREAT FOREST

In the northwest of Novitas lies an enormous temperate rain forest that stretches for hundreds of miles. This is the Great Forest, known as Fionn A'ilean (fee-own eye-lean) in the Elvish tongue, and is home of the Wood Elves, or as they call themselves, "The People." The Elves here live a nomadic, seemingly care-free, existence. They are hunter-gatherers who routinely move through the forest in large familial clans, uprooting themselves with regularity so as to not strain the resources of one patch of forest for too long.

The Wood Elves of the Great Forest are generally perceived by outsiders as chaotic and loosely organized. Typical Wood Elves dislike the staid attitudes of the Earthkin, get along well with Faekin, respect Drakes, and laugh at the so-called "Walled" Elves from Evenandra. For the most part they judge everyone else on their individual merits. Their dress tends towards

earth tones and simple lines – mostly browns and greens with natural themes. Ostentatious material goods and clothing are seen as more burdensome than valuable. Indeed, the nobility of Fionn A'ilean wear clothing whose decoration only matches a high elven commoner by comparison. Their warriors tend to use missile weapons, bows, or dual swords, and avoid heavy armor.

HISTORY

There is a song that The People sing about their history and the coming to Fionn A'ilean. Below are excerpts from the Edda's common translation:

A HISTORY OF THE PEOPLE

Gods-winds swept to Godspeed. Godswept survivors to the Gods-home perfect.

Stewards set free upon the land.

Gifted six god-homes; all but the one. Wild-kept was to be the Elemental's Forest.

There was she grounded. Beloved holy grove.

Her forestsong - Cycles of creation. Cycled into destruction. God-home heartbeat.

Nature's perfect fury withheld.

Glacier, her ice-hard resolve. Tested. Given form.

Firestorms, goddess' wrath, held this way. Held at bay. Her flame would end the Gods-War, and more...

The original settlers of the Scholar's City were primarily men and elves of Andaranien stock. A great many stayed. There is an ancient legend telling of the pact left by the Scholar. Men and elves of Nalben were bound to hold the pact sacred as their part for keeping the Gods-home:

"In staying you take this vow. All designs lay encoded here. The Sigil Stone harnesses the Well. The Runescript holds the Center. The Center holds the land. The Center is the Well. Two are one. Keep them forever one."

~Lore of the Ancients, Vol. 2. Chap. 4

In the time before the Avatar War, the Elemental's Grove was cordoned off by powerful and almost unimaginably complex wards, known to be anchored somewhere within the levels of the Library City. After the

sundering of Nalbendel the First Martriarch, Bethanael, led the survivors into the Elemental's Grove. The elves were the first of The People, and although there were a few human settlements early in those days most taxed the land too steeply and had to leave Fionn A'ilean or risk disturbing its delicate balance. Now The People live within the Great Forest and keep it wild and unharmed, as best they can, as the pact required. The elves arrived with nothing, in a place where mortal feet had never strayed, and under their Matriarchs became the keepers of two sacred duties: to preserve The People, and to preserve the Great Forest. In the eyes of elven elders the two goals have become one.

In the pursuit of the preservation of The People and the Great Forest, the desire for material gain or conventional technological progress fell by the wayside. A tight community sprung forth, with a lively oral tradition for the keeping of histories and lineages. The need

to live in the moment and experience every heartbeat joyfully sprung from a time when they had little hope and great responsibility. Rather than fade, or become corrupted by grief, they sang and played at every opportunity. Possessions faded away. Life and love had to reign, and reign it does. The unquenchable spirit of elven kind lives on.



CULTURAL VALUES

The People work their hardest to live in the moment, refusing to fret over the horrors of the past, or to be anxious about what the future might bring. Nature is seen as the quintessential form of this present-minded lifestyle, as the beasts in the field do not weep over their childhoods, and the trees prepare for winter without worrying over it. Harmony with nature and accepting its wildness is thus at the core of the Wood Elven being. They live, love, and protect the natural world as a part of themselves. Their existence and that of the Great Forest are intertwined. One's quality of life is seen as a paramount pursuit.

Wood Elves are typically willing to share their culture and lifestyle with anyone. They are open to outsiders moving in and living with them, so long as they are willing to adopt the Wood Elven way of life. The Wood Elven lifestyle is nomadic, but given the elven lifespan, that could mean a Lodge may stay in one place for several years or even into decades before moving on. As a matriarchal society, the Clan Matrons consult with Druids to determine when and where to move before they tax the local resources beyond immediate recovery. It is the tendency of Wood Elves to take the long view. Practices that result in lowest impact on their surroundings are favored as common wisdom, though there is more to that particular history than meets the eye of common travelers.

The People organize by familial clans in Lodges, Clans, or Tribes. The categorization of a group tends to depend more on the non-elven observer's language than a Wood Elf's own. The People are an exceedingly family oriented race. Children born out of wedlock are common and bear no particular stigma. Family lines are matrilineal, so children stay with their mothers whenever such a question might be raised. When Wood Elves decide upon a Life Partner (marriage) it doesn't necessarily mean monogamy either.

It is important to note that Wood Elves consider themselves and their High Elven relatives as a single people. They use the same language, consider each others lineages valid, and commonly address each other as "Cousin". Wood Elves tends to make the small distinction by referring to The People (themselves) and The Walled People (High Elves).

There is little crime to be found in the Great Forest. The People generally consider greed to be at the root of evil acts. Jealousy, theft, unfair exchanges - all of these things can be tracked back to covetousness. Wood Elves have not forgotten the time of their exodus to Fionn A'ilean.

It is the general view of the Wood Elf that members of other races obviously couldn't be as happy or content as they themselves are. Indeed how could anyone be happy while tied to a single location or content laboring in support of a lifestyle measured only in material goods and wealth?



RELIGION

The People of the Great Forest worship the Sept, but in a most informal way. Their religious observances tend to resemble parties more than services, and



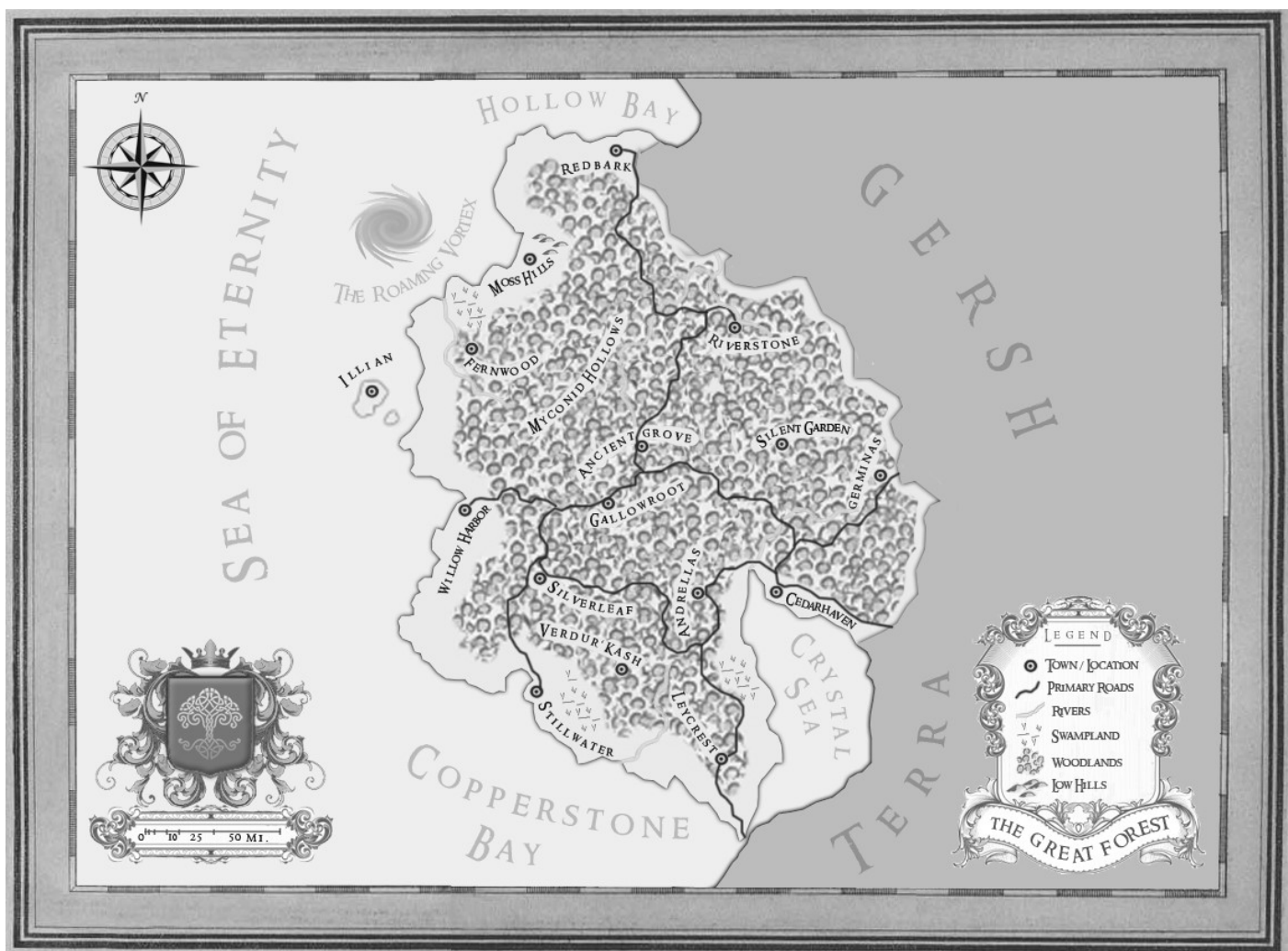
Wood Elves are not identified by outsiders as particularly pious. This isn't an indication of a lack of faith or reverence for The Seven. The Wood Elven lifestyle is such that it integrates the will of the Seven in every aspect of life, and creating a structured division between times of worship and "the rest of life" is seen as most unnatural. There is thus nothing resembling an organized church in Fionn A'ilean. Wood Elf Septons are very uncommon, and when a Wood Elf does take the lead to gather others in worship, it is done organically in a shamanic fashion. Some clans go as far as to refer to the gods with representative animal names. Festivals for the gods occur, but they are worked in around festivals for gathering seasonal foodstuffs or hunting seasons. Stories about the gods are passed along via the oral tradition, with very little written down. In short, Wood Elven culture is not designed around the gods, it simply integrates them into a rather fluid culture.

Since the Wood Elves left the ruins of the Library City to come to Fionn A'ilean, only a precious few have been recognized as Chosen by the Gods. Those that do give up name and family, no mere feat, and adopt the calling they sense in the will of the Gods. Seeker, Guardian, Searcher, and Servant are a few of



the names they have called themselves in the few generations since the Avatar War.

While not a religious practice per se, it should be noted that many of The People become druids. Druids





are seen with much the same reverence as a Septon would be elsewhere due to their incredible sense of oneness with nature. Over decades of living so closely with the trees and natural creatures, nearly everyone with latent druidic talent has had the opportunity to explore it. Druids fill a vital role in Wood Elven society. They can communicate intimately with the land and sense its needs. They are able to tell whether the clan is beginning to overtax a region and can help guide the matriarch to new grounds. Druids can speak to the trees and convey messages between clans as well. This talent lends itself to another purpose as well – the impromptu militaristic force comprised of rangers, known as Wildrunners. The role of the Wildrunner is a sacred duty and considered with some reverence, and will be covered in the discussion about the military of the Great Forest.

ECONOMY

Wood elves have structured their society in such a way that no city would be considered a trade center or capital. Most Wood Elves live in small mobile villages and temporary farming settlements. As such, there is not a buildup of central wealth or a desire for more than can be carried, or at most buried in small cairns to be recovered several decades later. This is done as in the case of the occasional anvil or weapon cache – items too bulky to be moved from place to place with any efficiency. There is little equating a cash economy. Barter is common, profiteering is rare, and group property ownership is the norm. Long-standing property debts, such as they are, are traditionally forgiven on a 49 year cycle.

For the most part The People practice cottage industry on a system of barter with the outside world. Wood carvers, bowyers, and leather workers peddle

handcrafts. Herbalists and those particularly skilled in woodcraft provide drugs, river fish, hunted meats, fur, leathers, herbs, and medicines to fill the wagons of returning Civenite caravans. In general they trade for complex weapons, although some clans have traditional master-smiths practicing the arts handed down from Nalbendel.

A given Wood Elf pursues a trade on its own merit for the benefit of all, and not to accumulate personal wealth. Bartering is not done in order to exchange value for value, but instead to give value where value is needed. Wood Elves are naturally compelled to ply whatever trade suits them for the betterment of their community, and thus the typical problems in a barter economy do not arise (e.g., What percentage of a cow do I need to give you for a new coat?)

Magic is an industry all its own and spell casting is considered a part of regular tradecraft. Alchemy is a common discipline as the portable nature of elixirs and balms suits Wood Elves well. There is an abundance of Alchemical supplies within the Great Forest and the extracts of the plants and fungi are the nation's chief export, when the need arises to procure items that do not occur naturally within the Forest. Some in the cities scoff at the idea of Wood Elves and their "stump alchemy" but few can deny the quality and efficacy of Alchemical products coming out of the Great Forest.

MILITARY

The Elves of Fionn A'liean have no standing army. They have no fortresses or barracks. There is no individual city to defend or paved road to patrol. While not intentionally designed this way, this organic and fluid structure has been the ultimate deterrent to would-be invaders. Since value is not stored in central locations (e.g., no vault for gold), outside intelligence agencies





have historically labeled the Great Forest as a location unfit for imperial conquest. What has gone largely unseen, however, is the fierce defensive force that advancing armies would meet if they tried.

Wildrunners are Elves who have taken up the mantle of the wild. They are rangers who move singly or in groups of twos and fives among the forest and keep the borders safe. The Great Forest is by no means secure in the traditional sense. The border is quite permeable, really. Setting foot into Fionn A'lean, however, will inevitably rouse a nearby Wildrunner, who will begin to contact his comrades in ways unlike those of any other people.

Wildrunners are more often than not Druids, and as such they can communicate with others faster than a hawk can fly. Some can travel through the magical lines of force within the earth, and are reported to be able to disappear from plain view with a word or less. All are masterful archers and skilled with woodcraft. Many are experts in trapsetting and sabotage.

Rarely will survivors from forest raids ever be able to report how many Wildrunners they encountered or even where.

These specialists don't face an enemy directly. Instead, they spoil the invaders' taste for war by whittling down its numbers with arrows in the dark and carefully laid traps. Enemies that prove willing to suffer such attrition find their commanders dead upon waking. Wildrunners continue this guerrilla combat until it becomes apparent that whatever plunder or land was hoped to be claimed won't be worth it. Without treasure to steal or infrastructure to claim, invasion isn't worth the cost. While their numbers would not overwhelm the Legions of Civen on an open battlefield, their abilities within the wood make each Wildrunner worth many times as many invading soldiers, and those who have briefly considered pillaging the reclusive Wood Elven settlements have each learned this the hard way.

As a defensive force, the Wildrunners more than meet the needs of the People. Individual Wildrunners are highly trained and self-sufficient. They are efficient, patient, wily foes, and their ability to move quickly, coupled with an ability to communicate and coordinate nearly instantly puts them at a distinct advantage to any within their borders. There is no known count of Wildrunners.

PLACES OF INTEREST

• CEDARHAVEN

Few visitors to Fionn A'lean ever go further than Cedarhaven. There roams a community of Elven seaside dwellers who broker most of the Great Forest's trade with the outside world. There is a very small human village there, with an actual tavern, a wheelwright, and a permanent well. The Elven people migrate back and forth every season up and down the coast around Cedarhaven working the seasonal resources. Of all The People, those living near Cedarhaven are most known for their gift-giving and generosity. No visitor there is ever denied a meal or a warm pallet.

• GERMINAS

After the War of the Avatars there were a few surviving human communities that settled in the Great Forest. Germinas was once one of them. Left by their Elven neighbors to live within the small confines of their settlement, The People granted them their complete autonomy. Tragically, through internal strife, betrayal, and necromancy, Germinas fell into a local war. While the

threat was contained, the corruption of Germinas stands as an example used by some Matriarchs to do more than dissuade The People from considering a more settled lifestyle, but to consider humans as dangerously unstable and corruptible.

• SILVERLEAF

While no more built up than any other region in the Great Forest, Silverleaf is the closest thing to a seat of power that the Wood Elves hold with. Should one desire to arrange a council of matriarchs at the Ancient Grove, they start here. Clan Silvertree roams Silverleaf and due to their far reaching familial connections, someone there knows a member of nearly each "house" and clan within Fionn A'lean.

• VERDUR' KASH

The warmest, most lush heart of the Great Forest hosts the tranquil community of Verdur' Kash. Verdurans, the Elemental's Children, reside here in their greatest numbers. The People now live among them, warm blooded Elves and sentient plants as neighbors. The Verdurans are a noble, patient, nearly undying people. There are



no finer herbalists or woodcrafters known. There are Verdurans that remember eons before The People arrived, and being slow to accept change, have only just begun to accept that Elvenkind may be here to stay.

- **ILIAN**

Illian is unique among the regions of Fionn A'ilean. The People dwelling here have adopted a less nomadic lifestyle that is deeply bound to the sea. It is rumored that they have become so tuned to the tides and migrations of aquatic species that their Druids speak to the spirits of the sea itself, coaxing leviathons into prowling the waters sinking boats without a Druidic chaperone. They trade pearls, alchemical supplies, and molded shell im-

plements to their sister clans in the Great Forest.

- **REDBARK**

In the northern reaches of Fionn A'ilean rises cold, rugged stony hill country. The People choosing the dwell there endure near constant border pressure from lesser-known Gershan feudal lords. Wildrunners from this region are largely considered the most dour and aggressive. Given their increased exposure to the worst climate and most bloodthirsty neighbors, this is understandable. Additionally Cold-Ironwood grows in the Redbark Reaches and can be wrought by Verduran craftsmen into weapons nearly as strong as steel.

ELVEN VIEWS OF OTHER SPECIES AND GROUPS

- **Faekin:** *Elves tend to be entirely accepting of Faekin and see no problem with fae-mixed heritage. In Elvish, the word "Touched", when used with a positive inflection, refers to the Faekin as in "Fae-Touched".*
- **High Elves:** *The Elves see themselves as one people. This is something human cultures sometimes have a difficult time understanding. Among Elves there are two very different ways of life and either tends to be embraced fully. The Wood Elves, primarily the descendants of the Elven peoples of Nalbendel, accept High Elves as distant cousins. Among the leading matriarchal families they refer to other Elves formally as "Cousin", especially when greeting High Elves. Due to the rigid caste structure of Evenandren society, some High Elves choose to relocate to the Fionn A'ilean and they are welcomed among their forest-dwelling counterparts.*
- **Humans:** *Humans are seen as short lived and wildly varied. Savvy humans sometimes grow tired with being spoken to slowly, or in simple language the way many talk to children, but generally the elves mean no offense. Human beings grow old and die before a newborn elven child will reach what is considered adulthood (even though they will have advanced physically and mentally through adolescence at the same rate as humans), and The People will often consider the human mind childlike. Given this understanding, humans are judged on individual character and accomplishments. It is often a point of fascination that humans seem able to learn complex skills like magic and combat. Though while humans can develop incredible competency, they almost never learn the accompanying grace that ought to go with such mastery.*
- **Slaves:** *There is no slavery in the Great Forest. Among the common Elves living there, the practice is a foreign concept. When they first hear*

about slavery reactions tend to be mixed, but follow along a central theme: the practice is viewed as repugnant. Wildrunners are educated as to the basic concept of slavery and are charged to liberate slaves without exception. Typically this action is followed by an offer of folding any of the freed into the society should they be willing. Those wishing to make their way in the Freelands often try to make their start in Elfmeet.

- **Snow-Goblins:** *The history between Wood Elves and Snow-Goblins is fraught with complexity. They have no love for each other and hardly have any formal trade relationships. In Wood Elven in the oral tradition, Snow-Goblins are typically referred to as "The Tainted". This reference stems from their common ancestry and the corruption of the Goblin people at the time of the Seal of Wakharn's breaking. The violent, ostentatious, and slave-driven culture of the Gershians places them psychologically and culturally at odds with each other more often than not.*
- **Terrans:** *The general view of Earthkin can summed into three words: covetous, greedy, and wasteful. Wood Elven-Terran friendships are uncommon since their many of their most sacred cultural values and views on the nature of antisocial behavior are fundamentally opposed. Wood Elves view greed as one of the basest impulses and often track the roots of destructive practices back to it. The pursuit and acquisition of material wealth is generally judged as the root of all evil.*
- **The Undead:** *Most Wood Elves have no regular encounters with the undead. As such, they tend to feel bad for undead, but don't hate them. Generally they pity such creatures. These Elves view undead destruction as a gruesome but necessary way to send restore balance. In a sense, the culture sees destroying undead as a kindness. While undead are pitied, necromancers who defile the dead and create undead are scorned by all.*



RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES:



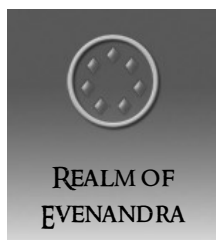
Freelanders hold a special place in the hearts of the Matriarchs. These are the people who either survived or have resettled into the lands once inhabited by The People and the Children of Man. Fionn A'ilean is where The People reside now, but it was not always so. It is a lawless place and can be brutal to the point of hopelessness for some Wild Elven visitors. In other ways it represents hope as humans, terrans, the Touched, and even Elves are able to make lives for each other there. Wildrunners on the path of advancement often spend a few years there learning the ways of outsiders, so much the better to do their duties after they return to The Forest.



The Civenite humans are an enigma. They trade fairly with Fionn A'ilean but they sell themselves into servitude to each other. They fight well but they do it in straight lines. They are short lived but master many crafts and magics. Everything they do seems to be effective yet graceless. Many human merchants from the southern coast travel through the Freelanders to trade in Cedarhaven for alchemical supplies and uncommon woodcraft. The Civenite obsession with coins is a curious thing. There are earthenware pots full of Civenite coins given originally as bribes and tips that sit buried waiting for adventurous young Elves to carry into other lands as they seek adventure.



Barbarians coming down from the tribelands with any business other than looking for a fight are rare. Occasionally a Wildrunner will happen across an escaped slave, or a tribal healer seeking rare herbs, but otherwise the wild humans are seen as a consistent source of violence. A few Elven Clans have established trade with some of the more diplomatic tribes, and these relationships are encouraged and cultivated carefully. It is hoped that with enough positive reinforcement that the Dellins might become a more interesting and approachable people in the future.



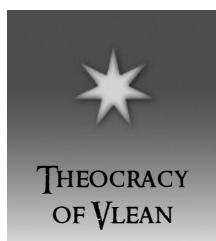
Evenandra is the sister nation to Fionn A'ilean. When our cousins among the Walled Elves find that the pressure of perfection or the stagnation of their castes become too much to bear they are welcomed into the clan of their choosing. It was not so long ago — a mere four or five centuries — that Nalbendel and Evenandra were peers in art and culture and many recall their grandparent's tales of hosting their noble cousins within their homes.



Relations with the Tainted are almost nonexistent. As a race the Snow Goblins are the living embodiment of the corruption and malice the Dark Three bleed into the world. There is no trade between Fionn A'ilean and Goblindkind because there is no fairness to be found. There are Wildrunners permanently assigned to the northern border where diplomacy is regularly conducted at arrowpoint.



Terran philosophies and those of The People are hard pressed to be more opposed. The Great Forest sees little trade with its southern neighbor. There is simply no need for the heavy trappings of comfort that the Terrans provide. There is no other people on Novitas who are more sedentary and inflexible than the Terran people, so while no hostility exists between them their relations are not considered friendly. Wildrunners observe little of a watch on the Terran side and generally leave the way between open to what traffic, if any, exists.



The Theocracy is so closed off and oppressive that The People at large have no desire to trade or travel there. No Vleanoan envoy has made more than perfunctory contact with the Great Forest in decades. It is known that the Vleanoan Septons are ruthless in their hunting down and extermination of The Touched and any Touched Vleanoan refugee is welcomed at the Forest's edge with open arms. The idea of a strict hierarchy that enforces a peasant class on the edge of starvation while pouring wealth into the Church is such a violation of The People's core principles that its existence is considered to be wild rumor.





THE KINGDOM OF TERRA

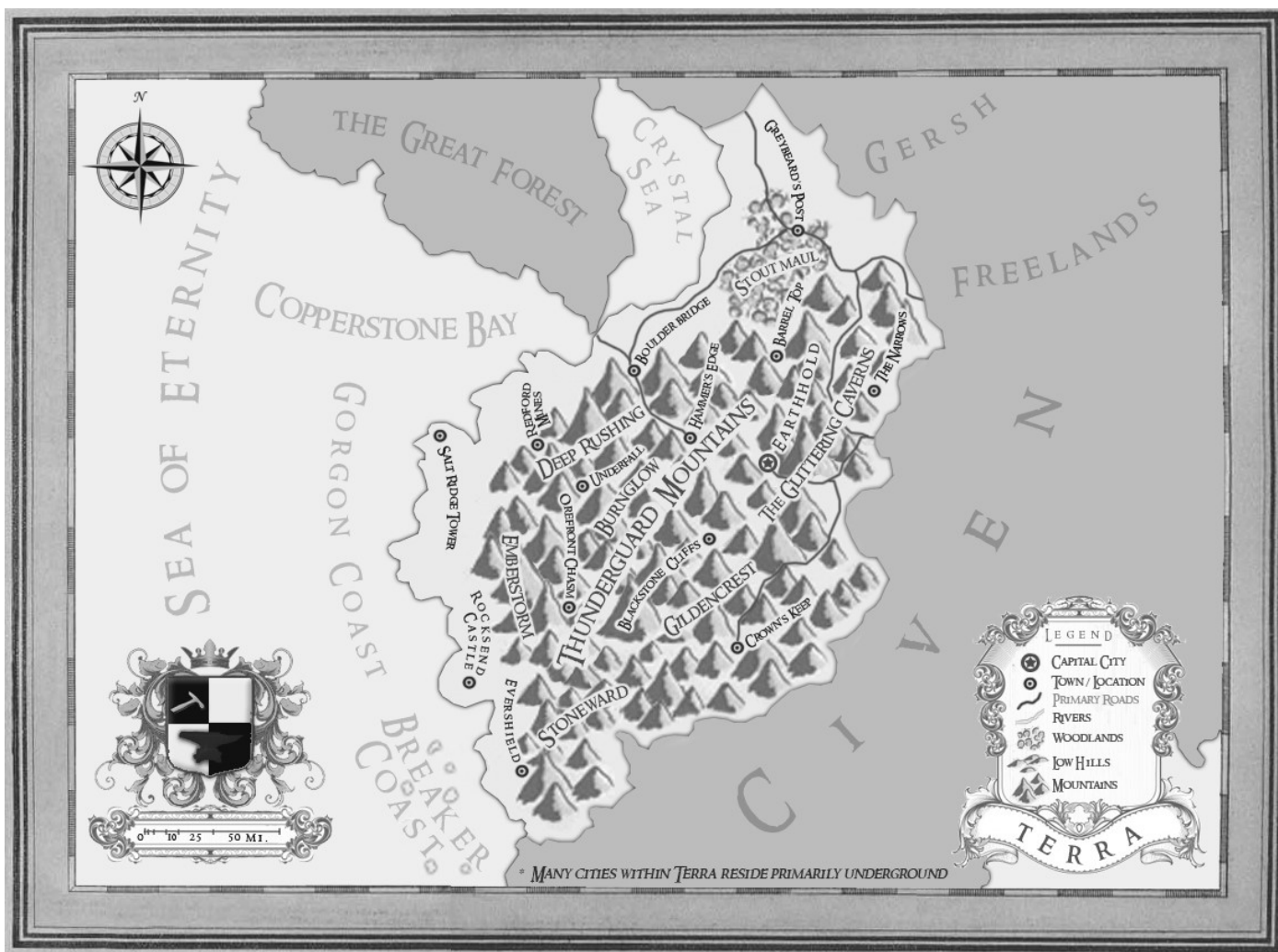
The Kingdom of Terra is the home of the Earthkin - considered some of the greatest craftsmen in all of Novitas. Seeing Earthkin is rare on the surface, as all of their cities are subterranean. Earthkin who find themselves in the rays of the sun are likely to be trading, and those who are not are either disgraced or unique. The Earthkin are a proud people, known for attention to detail and taking great pride in their work. One can spot an Earthkin quite easily, as they all have gems that protrude from their flesh and a generally darker skin tone.

Terran society is split up into three distinct sections: Family, Clan, and Province. To outsiders, the difference between Family and Clan can be confusing, especially because a lot of Clans are just one Family. A Family is the same as it would be anywhere - a group

of people with blood relations. Understanding these associative groups is foundational to understanding the people of the Kingdom of Terra.

HISTORY

When the Earthkin Families arrived in Novitas, they began to inhabit the Thunderguard Mountains. After being immediately confronted by fierce dragons and their reptilian minions, these Families bound together for strength in numbers, thus creating the first Clans. Families that shared an expertise in a particular craft naturally formed Clans together, which is why many of the Clan names were chosen based upon their profession. The Rockcutters, the Brewmixers, and the Steelforgers are just a few examples of ancient Clans that still exist to this day. The first settlements and communities were created by such Clans, which is why one can still find old towns and villages in Terra that





are named after their founding Clan.

The formation of Clans would not prove enough to prevent the early Earthkin from being driven below the surface by terribly oppressive brown dragons. These dragons demanded tribute in livestock, wealth, items of power, and labor, and did so until the Earthkin burrowed deep enough beneath the surface to avoid their tyranny.

Ultimately, these settlers encountered the Glittering

Caverns, a massive enclosure replete with precious gems and ore. It was here that they would establish their largest and greatest city, Earthhold. With Earthhold at the center, the Earthkin established a large network of tunnels and cities embedded in the caverns. Long after the brown dragons waned in power and disappeared, Earthkin remained below the surface, as the surface-land in Terra in only mildly habitable, covered with great mountain ranges.

Out from under the thumb of their oppressors, Clans continued to disperse, populating the mountains and driving off the waning brown dragons from their homes. These clans formed a larger society amongst themselves. Free from the dragons' tyrannical rule, Clans thrived, becoming interconnected in the large network of caverns and tunnels that came together as they dug deeper into the earth. The more powerful of these Clans took on the responsibility of settling disputes and enforcing the local laws of the various communities. The Clans that formed together under one ruling Clan would later become a Province, and the ruling Clan of that Province would be considered nobility.

How a given Clan rose to an elevated status above its peers varies from province to province. Some rose through force in numbers, others through renowned mastery of their craft. There is an old tale of one Clan that rose to power by an act of sheer heroics. The tale of Konbar Oresmelter is told not just in Terra, but all across Novitas. It is related thusly by the bard Eroth Songweaver:

Konbar Oresmelter was of the Oresmelter Clan. He was an Earthkin who lived in the caverns of Voltanicus. His Clan did just its name suggests: it smelted ore and refined it into pure metals. The Oresmelter Clan was a small Clan, and Konbar was just a simple Earthkin who minded his manners and took pride in his work.

It wasn't until the tyrant dragon lord Lithisulus came to oppress Konbar's people that he became more than just an ore smelter. Lithisulus demanded constant tribute and laboring from the local Terran people where Konbar lived, and he would occasionally kill Terrans for pleasure and entertainment.

It was Konbar Oresmelter who rose up against the tyrant Lithisulus, and inspired his Clan and other nearby Clans to gather and destroy this dragon who

tormented them. Some of the more outlandish accounts say that Konbar and Lithisulus fought in a solo combat atop a high mountain cliff, where Konbar wielded a giant hammer made of pure light and with one mighty blow crushed the dragon's head. Most Terran stories, however, emphasize his ability to bring together the people and unite them for a common purpose.

Regardless, he was no longer known as Oresmelter from that day. The people called him Konbar Drakesmelter instead, and made him their leader. He became the first Clanmaster of the new Drakesmelter Clan. Eventually, the Drakesmelter Clan rose to be a high noble Clan, and they still are to this day, ruling the province of Stoneward in northern Terra...

The Provinces and their noble Clans lived in harmony for many years, though minor disputes arose over time. The Province of the Glittering Caverns, the very first Province formed after the Terrans were forced un-

derground, was elevated by the other noble clans to rule over all the Provinces of the Thunderguard Mountains. The noble Clan of the Glittering Caverns, the Quartzhammer Clan, became the Royal Clan, and the

Kingdom of Terra was born.

From that day forward, all Earthkin living in the mountains have been considered Terrans. Many outsiders use the terms Earthkin and Terran interchangeably, though in rare circumstances, the distinction becomes important. To a Terran, the difference between a Terran and an Earthkin is like the difference between a Civenite and a human. Citizens of Terra are Terrans. Earthkin that leave Terra to live elsewhere, for whatever reason, are not considered Terrans, except in very rare circumstances. In even rarer circumstances, a non-Earthkin can become a Terran. Few outsiders have ever been given citizenship in the Kingdom, and the instances in which it has occurred can be counted upon one hand.



CULTURAL VALUES

The values of the Craftsman have played a large role in Terran culture. As a Terran, one's Family and community come first. Everybody contributes to the community, and everyone has a role to fulfill. Many times this role is decided before the Terran is already born. The few that do not fit in with the community, commonly the rebellious or lazy, are gently shunned and encouraged to leave. Most Earthkin that turn out to have Fae blood (and thus become Faekin) develop a temperament that is not conducive to Earthkin communities and end up leaving to travel on the surface.

Wanderlust is not common among non-Faekin Earthkin, and so those who leave to explore the surface and travel the world are unlikely to be fully welcomed back into Earthkin society. The only Earthkin who are seen to have a reasonable need to leave Terra are noblemen, diplomats, and soldiers on specific missions, and even those individuals return within a couple years at the very most.

The large majority of Earthkin spend their entire lives never seeing the sky, and seem to die without regret. Earthkin who have traveled to the surface often report feelings of extreme vertigo, feeling as if they are going to float off and "fall up into the sky". This adjustment can sometimes take years, and only those that are determined to live outside of Terra even bother to become accustomed. Most just prefer to stay indoors at all times.

A given Terran will identify himself first by his Kingdom, and then by his Province, and then by his Community, and then by his Clan, and then by his Family, and finally as an individual. The individual is the smallest piece of a large machine that runs smoothly only if all the pieces are working properly. Many outsiders find this type of lifestyle to be oppressive and restrictive, but nearly all of the Terrans who live in Terra live there happily, taking pride in being an integral part of a greater whole. Those that do not feel this way will eventually find themselves on the surface, whether by choice or by force.

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

There are a few traditions and customs that are so important to Terrans that understanding them is crucial if one is to avoid offense.

Drinking is important. All manner of alcohol is appreciated in Terra and the art of brewing is considered just as important a craft as masonry or metalsmithing. The most popular drink in modern times is the Terran Thunder brew, crafted with various types of fermented mushrooms and other mysterious ingredients. But those who know the Terrans know they will drink just about anything.

All important business is conducted over drinks. When a business arrangement has been agreed upon, the agreeing parties must drain their mug of ale to seal the arrangement. This demonstration of commitment is also made when toasting to others and other situations where proving one's honor and dedication is paramount. An inability to drink heavily is seen as a sign of weakness, and lacking the fortitude to finish a promised drink can result in a highly offended Terran. Once a Terran is offended, it is difficult to make amends. Diplomats from other kingdoms often train for months in drinking large quantities of ale before traveling to meet with important political figures in Terra for fear of causing an international incident. Some scholars believe that it was the elf's naturally low tolerance for alcohol that began the centuries of conflict between the elves and Earthkin, but evidence is inconclusive.

Another important tradition among Terrans is the apprenticeship. The relationship between an apprentice and a master is a sacred bond that many Terrans consider stronger than even family ties. Apprentices find masters in different ways depending on the craft, profession, and region, but one common way is the ar-



ranged apprenticeship through the tradition of Smith-fathering.

When two Terrans are married, all who attend the wedding are expected to give gifts they have crafted themselves or had crafted on their behalf. Weddings are where master craftsmen compete with one another. The finest pieces of craftsmanship in all of Terra have been given as wedding gifts at one time or another. Oftentimes the father of the bride decides which gift is the best, but sometimes the bride and groom will do the judging. The giver of the very best gift has the special honor of being the Smithfather to the second son of the newly weds. The first son is reserved to be apprenticed by the father himself in the family's work.

The Smithfather takes the second son to be his apprentice as soon as the boy is old enough to begin the work. To an outsider, this work may begin at a surprisingly young age. Many Terran babies have been seen practicing hammering tiny anvils given to them by their Smithfather before they can even speak. The arrangements for this apprenticeship vary from master to master, but usually the apprentice must go and live with the Smithfather until he is considered an adult at the age of 65. Many such apprentices go on to become masters themselves, but the bond with one's master lasts a lifetime.

Like a son who always has something more to learn from his father, a craftsman will always have more to learn from the master who taught him. The two are in touch for many decades after the apprenticeship is completed. The master of one's master is called one's grandmaster, and his master is one's great-grandmaster, and so on. There are famous lineages of craftsman that span centuries, and being accepted into this long line of masters is one of the greatest honors a Terran can ever achieve.

Master and apprentice relationships can be found in every type of profession in Terra, from the crafting of goods, to mining, agriculture, fighting, and brewing. Nobles apprentice their own in the ways of leadership, law, and diplomacy. Every Terran is a life-long learner, and every Terran is expected to eventually teach as well. This educational progression is a cornerstone of Terran society. Terrans exceed all other races and cultures in Novitas with regard to passing down knowledge and skill through the generations, and many believe this is how they have remained the greatest crafters in the entire world for over a thousand years.

RELIGION

Religious worship of the Sept is done as a community. While many humans, elves, and even some gob-

lins consider their worship to be an individual relationship with oneself and one's gods, Terrans pray together as an entire community. Even silent prayer is done in groups. They ask the Sept to bless their families, their fungus crops, the fires of their forges and the safety of their miners.

Terran Septons play a large role in society. They teach the value of community and family, the importance of conformity, and will instruct one how to dedicate one's life to the mastery of a craft in order to make Terra as a whole a better place. They teach that honor is working hard, keeping promises, and sticking together regardless of the circumstances. Their interpretation of the Sept's wishes, especially the wishes of the Craftsman, is one of the many contributing factors to how Terrans became so very hard-working and yet insular.

ECONOMY

Terra is the number one supplier of raw materials in Novitas, but Terran craftsmen are also widely known for their finished products. Their craftsmanship is renowned throughout the world as being masterful, and they were the first to perfect the art of masterwork weaponsmithing. Terrans value function over beauty, and most crafted pieces will be far more functional than fashionable, at least as far as the rest of the world is concerned.

The other major export in Terra is alcoholic brews. Brewing alcohol is considered just as important a craft as smithing, and Terran brews are world famous. One brew in particular, Terran Thunder, can be found in



nearly every tavern across Novitas. Some merchants make their entire fortune in Terran Thunder trade and transport.

The Kingdom of Terra is a large importer of foods that cannot grow underground and fabrics for clothing. While some of the lower class working Terrans are willing to wear clothing made from fibrous mushrooms of hemp-like quality and eat a variety of mushrooms and stews, the merchant class and nobles must buy their finer textiles and foods from outside sources.

Trade is often done inside of Terra, or through deliveries. Outsiders are encouraged to travel to Terra in order to buy their goods, and due to the incredible value of Terran craftsmanship and the willingness of Terran merchants and nobles to purchase fineries, most merchants are willing to make the trip.

MILITARY

There is no standing military in Terra proper except for the King's Guard.

Above ground, Reavers act as the first line of defense for the Terran Kingdom. These Reavers form a militia, loosely organized in regional bands. Reaver bands tend to gather near bottleneck areas on the border – mountain passes, valleys, and streams, and will use guerrilla tactics to harangue any armed force that might invade. The fleetest of foot in a given band of Reavers is known as the Runner, and he will be dispatched immediately if an invading force is too large for a given group of Reavers to stop.

When this happens, the Reavers who initially engaged the threat are honor-bound to slow the advancing force using any means necessary while all others retreat below ground to bolster the forces in the more defensible underground. It is seen as a great honor to fight and die while giving time for the Kingdom to prepare its defenses, and Reaver bands are known to try and be the first to engage an oncoming force while all others are



forced to retreat.

Once an invading force has reached the entrances to the great Terran underground, each citizen of Terra is expected to take up arms against the threat.

GOVERNMENT

The governmental infrastructure put in place in the formation of the Kingdom of Terra is still in place today, with King Quartzhammer ruling over the given Provinces and their subsidiary Clans. While once quite fluid, the current arrangement of Clans and Provinces has been quite stable under the rule of King Quartzhammer – with each of them paying small tribute to Quartzhammer's ruling Clan in exchange for protection from the King's Guard and for the settlement of disputes.

PLACES OF INTEREST

• EARTHOLD

Earthhold is the capital of Terra and is in the largest cavern among the wide expansion of naturally formed caverns known as the Glittering Caverns province. Its high ceiling reaches up into darkness, and the fires in the city cause the gemstones within to sparkle, making the ceiling appear as the night sky full of stars. This city is the home of King Quartzhammer, the Clanmaster of the Royal Clan of Terra. Earthhold is relatively close to the surface, and is thus the main trading hub with outside merchants.

• CROWN'S KEEP

Legends of this reclusive city keep are told far and wide by bards and adventurers who speak of the riches within

this "city of made of pure gold." In truth, only the palace of the Goldwright Clan is made of gold, with the rest of the city looking fairly drab and plain. Residing within the palace is the Clanmaster of the Goldwright Clan, Midas Goldwright, who rules the province of Gildencrest while counting his endless golden treasures.

• UNDERFALL

Within the deepest of all the Provinces, the Province of Burnglow, a town known as Underfall can be found by those willing to travel the depths of Terra to find it. The town is seated near a sea of underground lava, with a giant lavafall pouring down from above. The Terrans claim the town is perfectly safe and has existed for hundreds of years without being flooded in magma, but only the most adventurous outsiders dare to travel down to see this natural beauty.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES:



Freelanders seem to be the outcasts of all other societies. They appear to work toward little more than simple subsistence and generally lack the infrastructure for true craftsmanship. However their surface villages seem quaint and they're eager to trade what they have, so do Terrans generally hold no malice toward them. Many respect the iron will and stout resolution it takes to live in such a wild and monster infested land. In recent years, since Prince Quartzhammer has returned, safaris into the Freelands become popular among adventurous Nobles.



Terra and Civen have a long history of trade. Civen coin flows freely into the treasuries of Terran craftsmen, and all of Civen is adorned with the workmanship of Terran artisans. Most Terrans do not understand the individualistic nature of Civenites or their mistrusting need for wordy contracts and other written agreements, but they are usually happy to work with a Civenite in need of craftsmanship.



Terrans do not often interact with Dellins, though they are fascinated by their tribal culture. Dellins do not offer much in the way of trade to Terrans, and often do not have the coin or goods to buy Terrans craft, so trade between the nations is limited. Unlike many other countries, Terrans do not have a hard time keeping track of the different tribes, viewing them much like they view their own Clans. Terra has a different relationship with each individual tribe, and does not treat them as one nation. As long as a Dellin is willing to follow the laws, they are welcome inside the mountains of Terra.



There has been a long-standing feud between Terra and Evenandra, and not even historians know exactly when it began. Their values are opposite in many ways. The Terrans value practicality and logic, while the High Elves value beauty and emotion. The Terrans believe in remaining neutral in worldly affairs and not interfering, while the High Elves believe it is their purpose to meddle and get involved in all international business. To a Terran, the individual is but a cog in the machine and to an Evenandran, the individual is the purest form of beauty.

Terrans do begrudgingly work with Elven Steel, which they revere as a high quality metal, and they claim to take credit for being the first to craft it into weapons.



Terrans are willing to trade with just about everyone, but Snow Goblins rub them the wrong way on many levels. Snow Goblin craftsman work with poisoned metal called Goblin Iron that Terrans find absolutely appalling. Goblin Iron is a tainted metal that is considered an affront to many Terran values. The way that Snow Goblins treat each other, and live in such competition and disharmony with one another, is completely alien to the Terran way of life. While Terrans do occasionally trade with Snow Goblin merchants, and stay neutral in their political affairs, most Terrans do not like Snow Goblins at all.



Terrans cannot understand how or why the Wood Elves of the Great Forest live the way they do, and find their culture just as alien as Snow Goblin culture. From the Terran perspective, Wood Elves are lazy and unproductive, and have nothing of value to trade with. Terrans do not know why the Wood Elves patrol their lands, as they see no assets to protect. The Great Forest is a chaotic land of untamed nature, and not even Terran merchants have a desire to visit it. Friendships between Terrans and Wood Elves are unlikely, but when they do happen, both parties find they have much to learn from one another.



Terra has remained neutral in the Civen-Vlean dispute, and provides masterwork weapons and armor for both sides. Terrans do not worship the Sept in the same way as Vlean, believing that true reverence to the gods comes from hard work and living a good life instead of constant prayer and obeying strict rules. Nevertheless, Terrans do not view the Vleanons as very different than Civenites when it comes down to it, as they are all humans with the same ancestry.





THE THEOCRACY OF VLEAN

Formerly a part of the Empire of Civen, the Theocracy of Vlean (pronounced VLENN, like then or glen) broke away one hundred years ago because of religious differences and longstanding cultural resentment. Intolerant of other religions, the Sept-centered Theocracy rules its citizens and serfs with a strictness not seen elsewhere. This intolerance is also reflected in the common people, and xenophobes and racists are commonplace as the citizenry grows less trustful of non-humans. The fledgling country claims a large portion of the land formerly part of the Empire of Civen, including the large port city of Vleanoa, but many of these claims are still actively contested. The Empire only recently recognized the Theocracy as a sovereign state, ending a protracted civil war. Border skirmishes are still frequent and bloody.

HISTORY

The Theocracy of Vlean has its roots within the former land of Adecea. Originally, this land was a vast part of the Civen Empire. A small cabal of priests began to whisper anti-Civen propaganda around the year 1250NL. These priests eventually became well-known revolutionaries, establishing an armed resistance that would ultimately secede from what they believed was Civenite oppression.

The cabal of priests was the natural successor to the overthrown government, and took the reigns of power eagerly. Thus the Divine Conclave was established – a divine-right government that ruled with the presumptive authority of the Sept itself. The Conclave quickly established the Order of the Divine Aegis – an elite military group that would serve as the Conclave's terrible swift sword of justice. Wasting no time, the Divine Conclave began to select the nobility of their land – granting title and land to those who financially supported the Conclave to the greatest degree during the revolution.

Even as it solidified power and separated itself from Civen, the Theocracy trembled with unrest. The Order of the Divine Aegis was unleashed upon dissenters, killing these presumed heretics openly. While it was understood that these actions were justified by the Sept, the Conclave felt that the Order of the Divine Aegis was more useful when it had the trust of the common people. The Order was thus repurposed for other, less overt tasks, and a much more visible group called the Sodality of the Inquisition was formed. The Inqui-

sion was tasked with weeding out heretics, unruly foreigners, and other undesirables.

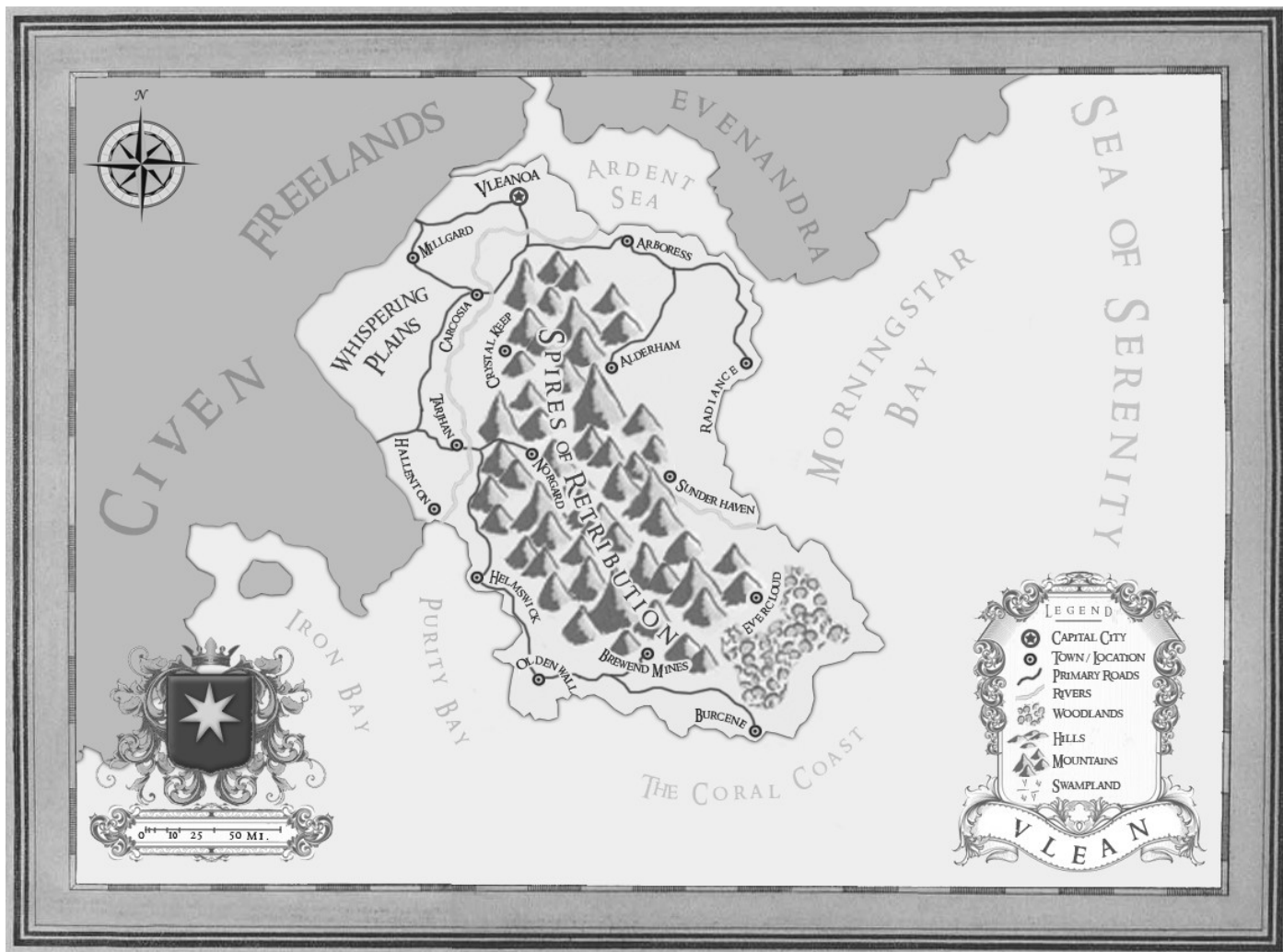
The Theocracy has all but closed its borders to visitors. Those that do visit leave with tales of the radical oppression and the vast disparity of wealth that exists between the Septons and Nobles and the commoners. Very few have kind words to say about it, unless they are official representatives of Vlean itself.

CULTURAL VALUES

Vleanoans pride themselves first and foremost on being the chosen people of the Sept. They believe fully that they are the most pious and righteous of all nations, and indeed, nowhere is Sept worship practiced as commonly, frequently, and with as much zeal.

Becoming a Septon is far more often a matter of birthright than piety. The vast majority recognized Septons in Vlean are those of noble blood. The few uncomfortable exceptions – those of common blood who demonstrate beyond a shadow of a doubt that they have been gifted extraordinary powers by the Sept – spend most of their time being paraded about as token examples of equal opportunity. Septons of common birth are never included in the church's decision-making process, and are expected to serve dutifully and quietly.





VLEANOAN PAPERS

Unique to the Theocracy of Vlean are its papers of identification. One's papers will define one as a slave, serf, tradesman, septon, and noble. Each set of papers has a selection of rights granted to that class. If a right is not specifically stamped, then that Vleanoan does not have access to that right. If a Vleanoan is caught going beyond the strictures of their papers, the consequences are often dire. Papers are issued by the regional Septon in one's area, and only a noble Septon can modify one's papers.

An Inquisitor can ask for papers of anyone of any station. If an Inquisitor asks to see one's papers, not being able to produce them could lead to terrible consequences.

Common life in Vlean is fraught with hardship and uncertainty. Feudal nobility share what they can to keep commoners productive and quiet, but little else.

Death by starvation and exhaustion are lauded as a sacrifice for the greater good. There is precious little unrest in Vlean in spite of severe hardship, as most have internalized the idea that the Sept has chosen its rulers and permitted what goes on. Rumors swirl of loosely organized bands of freedom fighters that play at revolution, but most acknowledge the rule of those in power as legitimate.

Within this rather rigid hierarchy, social mobility is still possible. The truly devout may aspire to become part of their Lord's military or even an Inquisitor – serving the Theocracy to drive out heretics and dissenters wherever they hide. Such ascension is relatively unlikely given all that an individual must overcome, and those who do are often people of exceptional ambition and fortitude. Those who rise from the common ranks to become an Inquisitor are notorious for being the most demanding, and the least empathetic.

REGIONAL WORSHIP

The only recognized worship in Vlean is that of the Sept. Draconus is scorned as a coward or a fable, and even an off-hand remark that does not directly condemn the Dark Three could be punishable by death.





Daily prayer is required to each of the Seven and missing even a single prayer is cause for gossip, and worse if this laziness becomes habitual.

Great Cathedrals are erected in every Vleanoan city, and lesser ones are erected in every town and hamlet. The star of the Sept can be seen in decorations and furnishings in every home, and nary a conversation will occur without the Sept's blessing being offered. Septons bless every wedding, oversee every funeral, and serve as chaplains to every branch of the military, hospitals, and school.

In addition to an incredible tax burden, every Vleanoan is expected to tithe to his local place of worship, and those who tithe only a minimum are watched with a careful eye.

ECONOMICS

The main exports of Theocracy of Vlean are works of art and in a sad irony, food and wine. Nobles take great pride in patronizing artistic works and the system of serfs and vassals leads to large-scale agricultural production. The redistribution of food, however, is another matter. Noble exporters will often cut their margins thin, erring on the side of leaving common people hungry rather than missing out on excess profits.

The fine arts of Vlean are the true gem of Vleanoan society. Vleanoan dance is extremely popular, and wealthy Ladies and Lords from every region come to learn from Vleanoan masters. Vleanoan wine is so delicate and highly regarded that it lines the cellars of royal houses throughout the realm. Vleanoan painters and sculptors are also generally considered the greatest at their craft. In most cases, the Theocracy will purchase the works of art and then sell them on the international

market for ten times or more what they paid, or simply patronize talented artists with above average housing and food and reap continual rewards.

Vlean's greatest imports are arms and armor. They are generally self-sufficient in all other manners, but they lack the functional craftsmanship and healthy middle class that leads to high qualities and quantities of crafted goods.

MILITARY

The military in Vlean is always at arms due to its constant skirmishes with Civen. The Vleanoan military is comprised largely of commoners who act as the vanguard with each squad being lead by the Noble of their land. When two squads come together, the most senior of the Nobles acts as commander.

In special cases, the Order of the Divine Aegis is called upon. The Order of the Divine Aegis are specifically trained as both soldiers and magic users, and are one of the most elite military organizations within all of Novitas. They are feared across all kingdoms, though their particular tactics are shrouded in mystery. Rumors swirl in other Kingdoms about less than wholesome tactics that are used, but the Order and the ruling Conclave decry all such claims as preposterous.

There are five ranks within the Order:

5.) Brother or Acolyte: A member at this rank is not yet truly considered to be a member of the Order. Brothers spend all of their time learning and meditating. Each member is required to take an Acolyte Vow, which could be anything from silence to chastity. Vows are taken as constant reminders that one's personal comfort comes second to the Order. The greater good of Vlean is all that matters.



4.) Sir, Shield or Protector: These members are the soldiers of the Order. They fight and die at the whim of the Praetor and Lord Paladins when in combat, but also spend time settling disputes between commoners, acting as couriers for the Order, and acting as a military police in the unlikely event of civil unrest.

3.) Paladin or Templar: Paladins and Templars do not have as clearly a defined role as the other members of the Order. They are primarily lesser officers, commanding small squadrons of men, and are trained to take over responsibility in the field if a Lord Paladin should fall.

2.) Lord Paladin: The Lord Paladin is the highest ranking field commander within the Order. He commands Brothers and Paladins in battle. Lord Paladins are known for executing devastating strategic maneuvers.

1.) The Praetor of the Order: The unquestioned leader of the Order. This person is hand picked by The Divine Conclave to lead. The Praetor has the authority to move armies at a whim, and arguably the most powerful person in Vlean that is not a member of the Conclave. Public appearances are rare, as the Praetor will normally expose himself only to his Lord Paladins.



THE SODALITY OF THE INQUISITION

The Inquisitors of Vlean are the boogey-men to all heretics. They act in complete silence until they find their target. The lucky heretics are disposed of quietly, the unlucky ones are made an example of. Inquisitors come from both humble and noble backgrounds alike, and are seen as the ultimate confluence of honor and duty.

GOVERNMENT

Vlean is a Theocracy ruled by seven Septons known as the Divine Conclave. They reside in the vast Keep of Radiant Truth. The seven Septons are withheld from the view of the common people, and few nobles would claim to have met them personally. Very few in the entire history of Vlean have ever been granted an audience with their supreme holinesses, and those that do see their house raise in stature over night.

The Divine Conclave communicates through the Arch Septimus. The Arch Septimus is a single man appointed at the discretion of the Divine Conclave. The current Arch Septimus is Gregory Vaztani, an elderly Septon from the Greater Vleanoa District. He also resides in the Keep of Radiant Light.

The Arch Septimus is the direct supervisor to all who hold the highest office in a branch of government. He advises these officers directly, demands they submit written monthly reports, and shares relevant news from these offices with the Divine Conclave.

While there are many branches of Vleanoan government, the most prominent are:

The Inquisition

Ruled by the Lord Inquisitor. While many common folk will rise to the rank of Inquisitor, the Lord Inquisitor may only be one of noble birth

The Order of the Divine Aegis

Ruled by the Praetor

The Army

Ruled by The Supreme Commander of Arms

The Order of Revenue

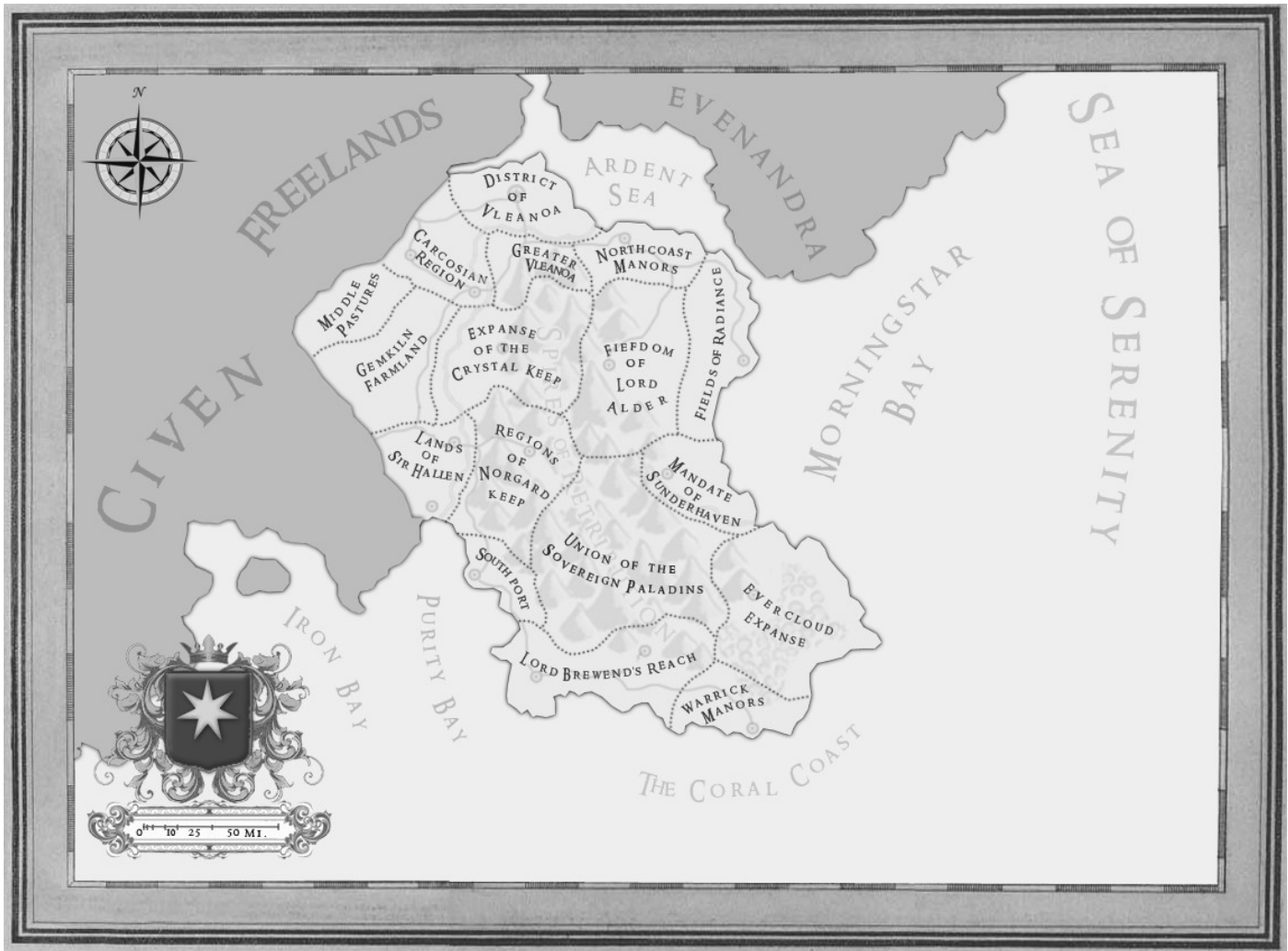
Ruled by the Deputy of Finance. This is the order of tax collectors and book keepers for the Conclave and other smaller governmental offices

The Order of Trade

Ruled by the Master Merchant. The Order of Trade handles matters of international trade, establishing and enforcing tariffs, re-distributing food and other necessary resources, and determining what crops and goods must be produced in a given year



MAJOR REGIONS OF VLEANOA



PLACES OF INTEREST

• VLEANOA

The capital of Vlean and home to the Keep of Radiant Truth. The Keep towers above the rest of the city as a reminder of the glory of the Sept.

• BREWEND MINES

The largest human mine in all of the Kingdoms of Novitas. This vast mine has long been the envy of every Terran who has ever had the pleasure to lay eyes upon it.

• HALLENTON

The training site of the Order of the Divine Aegis. It is the first defense on the sovereign soil of Vlean.

• MIDDLE PASTURES

A well kept border region of Vlean that is commonly used for international trade. This is one of two regions that are easily accessible to international visitation

• CARCOSIAN REGION

A sister region to Middle Pastures that is equally well kept and traveled as it's sister region. It is considered safer because of it's distance from the Whispering Plains where Vlean often skirmishes with Civen.

• NORGARD

A nearly abandoned mining settlement, except for the soldiers that guard the mine. No one knows for certain why the mine was closed, but rumors range from reptilian resistance to things far darker.

• SUNDERHAVEN

One of the eldest cities in all of Novitas. It is an old Adeptan fortress city which fortifications that rival even the great stone fortress found in Civenopolis.



RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES:



THE
FREELANDS

Vleanoans view Freelanders as Dellins with nicer clothing and slightly more polished manners. The Theocracy will often send missionaries there to recruit strong warriors who are ready to cast aside the temptations of the Freelands to better mold the world to the Sept's vision. Vlean also sends Inquisitors on crusades to the Freelands with great frequency to hunt out and destroy creatures and worshipers of Darkness.



EMPIRE OF
CIVEN

No two nations hate each other more than the Theocracy of Vlean and Civen. Once called Adecia, Vlean broke away years ago and has never looked back. The Theocracy takes every chance it can to undermine or embarrass Civen interests. The Whispering Fields which separate the two states is a constant war zone.



DELLIN
TRIBELANDS

Vleanoans revile those from the Tribelands, refusing them entry into the country for any reason. A barbaric people in custom, character, and belief, Dellins are seen as beyond hope for redemption.



REALM OF
EVENANDRA

Evenandra and the Theocracy are not hostile toward one another, but aren't exactly allies. The two nations trade frequently due to their proximity, but Vleanoan priests are not allowed to evangelize on Evanandran soil. In spite of this rebuff, the average Vleanoan still sees the High Elves as the nation second closest to realizing the Sept's view of the world.



KINGDOM OF
GERSH

While the average Vleanoan is wary, distrustful, and disgusted by the concept of Snow Goblins, the governments of these nations get along surprisingly well. Gershian dignitaries are treated with all due respect depending on their station, and Vleanoan officials have even been known to engage in Gershen courtly customs on the occasion that an ambassador comes to visit.



GREAT
FOREST

The Great Forest and the Theocracy have no real relationship to speak of. Vleanoans seem content to leave the Wood Elves to their cavorting, as while they tend to be rather pathetic worshipers of the Sept, the Great Forest is known to be nearly free of worshipers of the Dark Three.



KINGDOM OF
TERRA

The Kingdom of Terra has reasonable relationships with the Theocracy of Vlean. While Vleanoans do not appreciate the fact that Terrans sell weapons to Civenites as easily as they sell them to Vleanoans, Terrans are regarded respectfully for their craftsmanship and their dutiful dedication to order and the Craftsman.



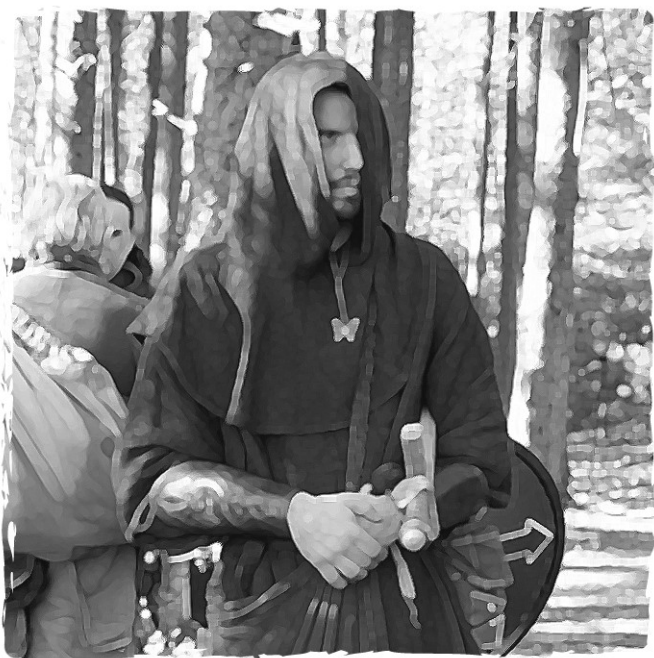
RELIGIONS OF NOVITAS: THE SEPT

The glory of the ancient world has been lost, and with it, much scholarship and understanding of the ascendant beings that touch the world of mortals. The refugees from long-abandoned Vargainen brought only token knowledge with them, and rebuilt their faith from these scraps. Stories persist of ancient temple-cities, elaborate week-long ceremonies, and a belief that lifelong rigorous faith could extend life, increase aptitude, or even change the world.

What is known is this: That the Aspected God Illumitas, the three baleful gods of Nox, Darkness, and Grak, and the serpentine Draconus were the gods that followed their mortal races to Novitas. What is not known is what gods were left behind -- and why.

RELIGIONS TODAY

Throughout the continent and its distant colonies, worship is a natural part of life. Rare are the mortals who have never felt the grace (or spite) of the gods upon their shoulders. In a world where miracles are confirmed, there is very little doubt that divine beings exist and occasionally answer the call of their followers. Still, there persist those who resent the divinities; be it for their errant fate-writing, blasé interference, or mercurial attentions. These secular "orphans" represent only the slimmest of percentages in the mortal populations, however.



The particulars of worship are cultural as well as personal. Only Vlean, with its rigorous orthodoxy, has any formal national doctrines, prayers, and systems of grace and sin. In other lands, worship is much more local or even individual. It may be found in a pastoral chapel, which is as much a bulwark against threats to the flesh as threats to the spirit. Families may keep private prayer circles, usually led by the matron. A sacred grove may be tended by a faithful forest hermit. A complicated hinge may be stamped with the maker's mark as well as a prayer to the Craftsman. A wound in battle may be dedicated to the gods of conflict. Gravetending may be undertaken to please the death-aspected gods. Ritualized household shrines may be dedicated to god, spirit, or ancestor alike, and certainly, black cults might gather in dark dank places for secret ceremony.

Also, it should be noted that stories of the gods often disagree on certain key points and explanations. This is to be expected; the tales that worshippers tell often paint their patron in the most favorable light. Therefore, canon doctrines for each of the gods are often a matter of tradition, propaganda, and mythology.

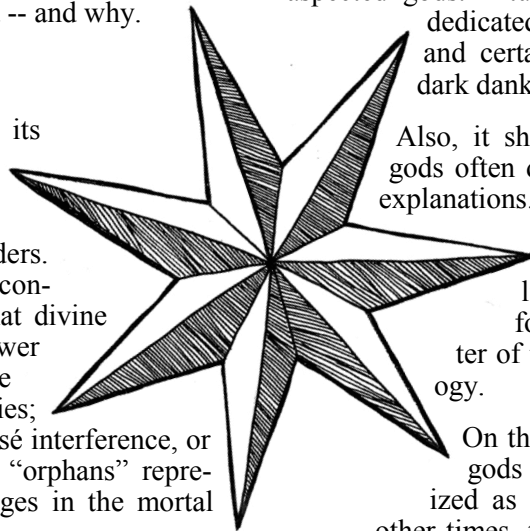
On this, there is little fact. At times, the gods seem as individual and personalized as anyone met in a marketplace. At other times, they are a thunderstorm: empty of personality and intent yet forceful and present in their power. And on many occasions, they are known only by the individual works of their followers.

To be certain, though, there are some truths that have been discovered, recorded, taught, and observed.

THE SEPT

When Illumitas was destroyed he shattered into shards, each shard containing a unique quality of his existence. After his destruction, these shards reformed into the seven children of Illumitas, known today as the Sept. These seven gods fought on against the Dark Three, and still do this day, to preserve Novitas from their foul designs. Most civilized and good creatures of Novitas worship the Sept. Civen, Vlean, Terra, Evenandra, and the Great Forest are all lands in which the seven-pointed star of the Sept is proudly held in reverence.

The Sept work in concert to exemplify the seven aspects of a good life. Through their teachings and actions, they work to guide mortal beings to live a good



life, and the eternal rewards that come afterwards. This divine guidance is their principle concern.

THE MOTHER

Goddess of Healing and Life; Illumitas' Shard of Love

Dominion: Restoration School of Magic

Precepts: Serve life; soothe the injured; forgive the remorseful

The first aspect of Illumitas, the Mother is worshipped by all manner of person – the fighting man lying wounded in the field, the farmer midwife, the temple healer, brides and grooms. She is known by many names: High Mercy, Grace, and The Grieving Goddess are but a few. She is the embodiment of Illumitas's aspect of love.

She concerns herself with all things oriented towards life and living. The raising of crops, the birth of children, charity to those in need, the healing of the sick and wounded, forgiveness of wrongs, the feeding of the hungry are her domains. She is always in contention with her sister, The Stranger, and often the dying will see both of these goddesses struggling for their fate. For all her worshippers, power, and praise, in the end the Mother always loses to Grak, to Nox, or to the Stranger.



The responsibilities of the Mother are pulled between the two opposing poles: All life is blessed and should persist, but some life is corrupt and willfully denies redemption. With life, there is hope for change and for the future, yet sustaining a corrupt life may end the lives of unforeseen innocents in the future. Love for the individual and love for the greater good sometimes find themselves in conflict in the life of a disciple of the Mother. Each worshipper finds his own place on this sliding scale.

Prayers to the Mother are simple affairs, devoid of embellishment or ritual, but often begin with the same word spoken in a reverent pleading whisper: Please. She is always portrayed as a matron, simply dressed, either carrying a babe in her arms, tending to a fallen man, or smiling with radiance. Her cathedrals are the most numerous across Novitas, and are both meeting hall and hospital. In the tradition of her mercy, even criminals may find hospitality at these cathedrals, and no soldier or bounty hunter may take them away. Indeed, there are legendary stories of criminals remaining in these houses of healing for decades, with the occasional refugee eventually converting and seeking redemption.

While the Mother has the largest number of worshippers, each organizes her duties and ethics according to her current circumstances. Midwives of the Mother may jealously hoard what power they have to spend it only in aiding the birth of children. Battlefield medics may have to spend hours in atonement after healing only the wounded on their side of the battle, rather than all who cried out for the Mother's mercies. Pilgrims may spend the Mother's gifts freely and without thought to whether they heal the deserving or the evil. Judges in Vlean may hold elaborate court-room debates on the merits of reviving a particular fallen supplicant, or not.

The Mother is friend to all her Sept kin, though her work often demands that she focus her attention solely on the mortal realm. It is a wisely held belief that the Mother is closer in friendship with her mortal faithful than with her divine brothers and sisters. The Mother is sometimes portrayed as missing the Elemental, however, with whom she was confidante in the times before.

While always in contention with her sister the Stranger, the Mother loves her kin and does not regard them as unkind. However, the Mother stands opposed to Nox, the great corrupter of life, with a closed fist. Some heretical texts suggest that the Mother need only forgive and heal Nox to defeat him. But the Mother, as of yet, struggles to achieve this depth of mercy within herself. To fail the Mother, a worshipper need only renounce life in some fashion, but fallen acolytes of the Mother are always welcomed back, in time.

THE KNIGHT

God of Idealism and Order; Illumitas' Shard of Principles

Dominion: Aegis School of Magic

Precepts: Lead justly; build a better world; consider everyone in your actions

This god concerns itself with the achievement and sustenance of mortal ideals. Honor, Justice, Protection, Fairness, Chivalry, Courage, Discipline, Loyalty, and





Rule of Law. The Knight serves as principle by which ethical mortals chart their own worth and morality. In pursuing these ideals, the Knight also does not yield to peace, and Knightly Adherents spend as much time training for conflict as they do in studying ethics, morality, and leadership. The Knight is the embodiment of Illumitas's aspect of principles.

The Knight has no other names to its followers, as only "The Knight" is the proper title for this deity. The Knight is typically regarded as masculine, though there is a feminine version in some Knightly cults. Knightly abbeys are part meeting hall, part library, and part public armory. Oftentimes, they may be mistaken for a bailey rather than a temple, as they are often adorned with functional battlements. These abbeys are always defensible, public, and are common in civilized lands.

Adherents to the Knight are the rarest of the Sept's worshippers, due to the extreme self-awareness and strict moral paths they must walk. To serve the Knight, one must embody the Knight's virtues. Chivalric orders dedicated to the Knight typically devote their knight-hood to the pursuit of these Knightly Virtues: Faith, Prudence, Hope, Temperance, Charity, Justice, and Fortitude. Adherents to the Knight typically lead from the front, and do not proselytize, choosing instead to exemplify. Successful Adherents are typically the best and shortest-lived heroes of any bard's tale. Paladins of the Knight, the best court barristers and advocates, philosophers pondering ethics and law, and moral Inquisitors are all examples of those who serve the Knight.

Idealism, in the Knight's paradigm, is to be the best that mortal-kind may be. Order is understood to be the Rule of Laws, fairly made, to both protect and represent the citizens of a culture or country equally. Adherents to the Knight struggle with the fact that the

Knight places equal worth on both Order and Idealism. A corrupt kingdom that cares for its citizens embodies Order, and yet violates Idealism. A rebel army that revolts against its rulers may champion Idealism but destroys Order to do so. The Knight's view is codified in terms of absolutes, and can get lost in the murky moral shades of grey. Each Adherent must find his or her own balance between these two responsibilities.

Worshipping the Knight is most often done by deed, rather than words. Raising up the impoverished, defending the weak, punishing the evil, and sacrificing for the greater good are all considered to be more meaningful to the Knight than spoken prayers or ritual.

Of all the Sept, the Knight usually stands alone. He leads the Sept in their missions, and provides the moral compass for his brothers and sisters, who follow him into battle. While all fight with him, only the Stranger speaks with him socially, as her strength of principles is a mirror for his own. While the most highly regarded of the Sept, the Knight's endless quest to be the best in all things sometimes isolates him from his kin; leaving him a lonely deity.

The Knight stands opposed to Grak, in all cases. Violence must have purpose, not be merely contest. The Knight stands opposed to Nox, in every way -- life must be protected, for the preservation of hope. But the true enemy of the Knight is Darkness Itself, who, as the leader of the Dark Three is responsible for all the ills of the world. To fail the Knight, an Adherent need only abandon the cause of Idealism or Order. Redemption that is found through deed and experience may allow the fallen Adherent back into the Knight's auspices. Often, these redeemed Adherents return to the narrow path of Virtue with more understanding and power than they had in innocence, for while the Knight may lose a battle, he has never lost a war.

THE SOLDIER

God of Strength and Survival; Illumitas' Shard of Will

Dominion: The Battle School of Magic

Precepts: Sacrifice for total victory; cunning is a form of strength; accept the leadership of others.

After the Mother, the Soldier is the next most widely invoked god of the Sept. The Soldier is the god of the foot soldier in the field, of the thief evading capture, of the sailor braving a storm, of the general planning a devious battle plan, of the prisoner struggling to turn the wheel. The Soldier concerns himself with the raw application of will and determination to accomplish great tasks and overcome terrible odds. Those that follow the Soldier follow a simple principle: Do what must be done. Though a warrior like the Knight, the Soldier has a more pragmatic view of conflict and reso-



lution. The Soldier knows that if victory changes things for the better, then all impediments to victory must be abandoned. Ethics, chivalry, fair play, and the bonds of friendship and family must sometimes be abandoned if they interfere with serving victory and the greater good. The Soldier values will, strength, and cunning. When Illumitas was shattered, his will resolved into the Soldier.

The Soldier has many names, and many faces. Bold Tidings, Victory, the Resolved Sneer are some of his names though 'Luck' is his most frequent pseudonym. During times of war, Civenopolis will issue pay to their Legionnaires that is minted with the Soldier's likeness. Of all the Sept gods, only the Soldier may find safe passage through the lands held by Grak, as his cunning and defiance are well esteemed by those who serve Glory. The Soldier is always regarded as a male, and never regaled in finery.

The Soldier allies himself with the rest of the Sept, out of kinship and ethos, though his favor sometimes falls on those that the rest of the Sept may regard as heretical or evil. A thief stealing from a well-guarded castle would invoke the ire of the Knight, but would also invoke the praise and attention of the Soldier for his audacity, cunning, and strength of will. Slaying a pregnant mother would violate the precepts of the Mother, but if the babe was destined to become a tyrant the Soldier might grant the murderer strength. While sometimes in opposition to his brothers and sisters in the Sept, there can be no doubt of the aid the Soldier brings to the forces of good when rallied by his kin against true evil.

The paradox of the Soldier is a complicated one. Briefly put, the Soldier's cunning, wits, tenacity, and boldness allow his followers to overcome many obstacles others could not. However, faithful followers of the Soldier soon uncover the central mystery of the deity: His gifts could serve good or evil equally well, for there is little inherently good in the Soldier by himself. Instead, the Soldier must be led by the wiser gods of the Sept. Should there come a day when the Soldier must be unleashed, and forced to lead, one can expect a great contest of dubious result. Thus, devout worshippers of the Soldier tend to keep themselves in check, advancing only to the penultimate level in whatever arena they visit. Civen worshippers of the Soldier may climb to be a General, but they are commanded by a Senate; a sailor may be the best man at the tiller, knowing he would be a useless captain; the Soldier's lot in life is to always be led. The cunning and gifts bestowed by the Soldier usually makes his Destriants the right person in the right place at the right time, provided someone else leads them there.

Prayers to the Soldier are usually short, and may be confused for curses. Spoken in haste at the imminent moment of need, off-color language is forgiven by the Soldier. Some claim that clever uses of profanity speed

the prayer to his ears faster. Temples to the Soldier are found where outnumbered defenders man the parapets above a dread besieging host, or where desperate men form audacious plans. Small shrines consecrated in the moment of need, with each fighting man donating a candle, a coin, incense, or a dagger are the most holy to the Soldier, despite their imperfections and impermanence.

The Soldier stands against all enemies of the Sept, but only when roused either by his kin or by immediate threat. To fail the Soldier, a Destriant must choose defeat over doing what must be done. To date, those that fail the Soldier either are recruited by the powers of Darkness (mainly Grak) or fade away un-absolved into obscurity.



THE SCHOLAR

God of Wisdom, Learning, and Truth; Illumitas' Shard of Knowledge

Dominion: The Compulsion School of Magic

Precepts: Emotions mask facts, so be dispassionate and patient; all problems disappear if understood; the mind controls the body.

Known as the Master Planner, the Great Painter, or by a number of other colorful sobriquets, the Scholar is the divine insistence that reason and research alone can find the solution to any question of chaos or uncertainty. While the Craftsman may have the raw skill to build, it is the mind of the Scholar that plans for the finished product. While the Knight may be the insistent heart of the Sept, it is the Scholar that finds the path to success. The Scholar is a patient god, and often seems to suffer defeat in the short term only to achieve a greater victory (decades later) because of that initial defeat. The Scholar moves slowly, but with great deliberation. Often, those that follow the Scholar will appear



erratic or touched, only to have their actions make sense years later when those strange actions put them in an advantageous position. The Scholar has no jealousies, and is content to let the Knight be regarded as the leader of the Sept. The Scholar is the keeper of all secrets known and unknown, and he alone decides which mortal to enkindle with the spark of discovery or inspiration. His secrets, great mysteries of science and history, are kept in a single volume that never leaves his side. It is suspected that with the absence of the Elemental, it is the Scholar who paints the skies at sunsets. The Scholar is fallen Illumitas' intellect made manifest, and is thought to have been the first such shard to become a god in its own right.

Following the destruction of Vargainen, it was the Scholar who led the reconstruction of civilizations on Novitas. Remembering both the societies of Vargainen, and the intent of Illumitas, the Scholar worked with the all his kin to establish civilization for the sept-faithful. Indeed, language, mathematics, and the principles of engineering and alchemy were passed directly from the Scholar to the races of Novitas.

Worshippers of the Scholar often obsessively pursue a certain academic question. Be they Seekers of Art, Seekers of Numbers, Seekers of Truth, or even Seekers of Power, these are the Scholar's faithful. The great Universities of Evenandra, of Civenopolis, and the Learning Halls of Terra serve as temples, and the thinkers, philosophers, researchers, professors, and doctors serve as the Scholar's priesthood. For his followers, study in search of understanding is worship, examinations and inventions are rites of passage, and the spread of new understandings to those who seek them constitute good works. There are few portrayals of the Scholar directly, though when embodied he is usually sculpted as a wizened old man with his book, the Libri Exemplar, gripped tightly in his hands.

One of the few secrets carried from long lost Vargainen is the Scholar's gift of palaver, or Compulsion, as it is now known. Through this path of sorcery, Seekers may achieve their goals without base conflict or insulting coin. Additionally, this school embodies the Scholar's favorite methodologies of planning, observation, deception, and struggles of mind over contests of flesh. Originally intended as a teaching tool for mortals, they have since adopted Compulsion into a tool for their own uses, which pleases the Scholar. Thus, the Scholar is not only the god of wise academics, but also careful diplomats, cunning courtiers, and deceptive grifters. Any who would succeed through skill of mind, rather than application of force, falls into the Scholar's good graces whether they worship him formally or not.

The great failings of the Scholar are his lack of swiftness and his mistrust. As a divinity of long, careful planning, a sudden need or change cannot be addressed by the Scholar until all aspects of the crisis have been researched, tested, studied, catalogued, and contemplat-



ed. The Scholar is loath to change plans once they have been precisely formed. Immediate demands will often go unattended by the Scholar while he studies. Evidence will not be admissible by Seekers until it has been confirmed to be trustworthy, rather than a dupe or a lie. Dramatic change, or a disruption of long and elaborate plans, will often frustrate the Scholar and will force him back to his studies, leaving the matter to fester as it will. It is thought that the absence of the Elemental, who herself relished wreaking these changes in the direct path of the Scholar, is the result of a scheme by the Scholar to remove her pranks from his work.

Prayers to the Scholar by the uninitiated are often ignored, and the burning of libraries and sacking of laboratories almost assuredly result in some calamitous injury to the vandals... though usually not until years later. Prayers by students, scholars, artists, researchers, and engineers often are composed as poetry. Clever rhymes, mathematically balanced stanzas, and obscure diction reveal the strength of the applicant's mind to the Scholar. If pleased, he will act. If not, the applicant is ignored.

The Scholar stands against everything barbarian and base, which always puts him at odds against Grak and Nox. Sometimes he is pleased by Darkness' labyrinthine plots, and will allow them to persist longer as a matter of study, though the Scholar keeps this fact hidden from his fellow Sept kin. Only an active assault on learning or understanding can earn the Scholar's reprisal. Academics who abandon their research are still considered Seekers to the Scholar. The deity is a patient one, and so when the wayward academic returns to his work she is once again an active member of the Scholar's demesne. Thus do most modern academies support the notion of tenure, in deference to the Scholar's own policies.



THE ELEMENTAL

Goddess of Nature, Elements, and Storms; Illumitas' Shard of Passion

Dominion: The Nature School of Magic

Precepts: Serve passion regardless of creation or destruction; beauty is truth; live well, for your time is short.

The Absent Goddess, Blight, the Fickle Sky, the Bitch of Fire, the Bitch of Floods, Lady Winter, Dawn, The Green Matron, Gaia, The Thorned Lover, Venai, Gale, Auctumnae... The Elemental has the most names in the Sept, and the fewest clergy. The reasons for these phenomena are the same; for hundreds of years, the Elemental left. Those who believe that she was with the heroes of Nalbendel would state that she left for 400 years – the blink of an eye for a fickle goddess. However, those who disbelieve these rumors would count her absence as much longer. The deepest, most primal facets of fallen Illumitas coalesced into the Elemental. Thus, Illumitas' capacity for beauty and passion lived on beyond his death. Though now uncoupled from principle or love, the Elemental's beauty is found equally in careful loving growth and sudden passionate destruction.

Ancient ruins or relics bearing her likeness depict a young woman, in the flower of her beauty, dancing by moonlight in a secluded forest glade. Other times, she is painted as a furious scorned lover, her hair a thunderhead of dark clouds, with lightning crackling from her fingertips. Modern Elvish sculptors in the Great Forest sculpt her as an elf maid, bathing beneath a waterfall, revered by wolf and deer alike. These tributes are always anointed with perfumes and aromatic oils, as these were her earliest gifts to the world.

The inspiration for creation itself, the Elemental within Illumitas chose the colors of each flower, decid-



ed on the taste of venison and hawk, invented rain, and sets stars in the night sky to guide travelers across her lands. She also was known to indulge in mercurial rages, and has burned fields, shaken the earth, ravaged the seas with storms, pushed over houses with great winds, and cursed mortals with famines born of drought. Her priests were known to share her madness, and would endlessly strive to find new ways to supplicate her glory, and assuage her anger. Sometimes, these rituals would approximate the workings of the Dark Three, rather than the Sept.

Other than the natural world, she was in contention with the Scholar over artistic inspiration. The exact esoterica of this divine debate have been lost, but it is thought the two gods contested over who could claim the divine right of mortal inspiration. Even in her absence, some poets and playwrights will make a small token sacrifice to the Elemental as their muse.

Certain heretical texts suggest that of all the Sept gods, she was the only goddess who ever knew romantic love. The texts are unclear if this romantic love was with other deities, mortal followers, or spirits or ghosts. Some say she fell in love with the ugliest of mortal men, and thus were the Druids created. Some say she plucked a spark from the Stranger's Well, and unleashed her fury at all attempts to reclaim the spirit. Some suggest her lover may even have been Nox, who behaves as much like a scorned lover as it does a god of ill intent. Questions of any offspring are similarly muddled. Still, it is said those kin of the Fae all share a similar look about them, and must have a common ancestor in their otherwise discordant lines. Or perhaps the Druids and wardens of nature, who only began to appear after she vanished. Or banshees and other sentient spirits, driven by their own turbulent emotions and passions. None can say for certain.

Where she went, none can say. Some believe she razed Vargainen, and remade it anew. Still others think she was called on to create a new world in some other starlit realm far away from Novitas. No evidence exists to support any of these theories.

What is known as fact is the following: That despite the charity of the Mother, the discipline of the Knight, the strength of the Soldier, the knowledge of the Scholar, or the skill of the Craftsman, the Elemental was the strongest of the Sept in terms of raw power. When Vargainen was destroyed, it was she that laid the continent low. It was she who created winds both strong enough to carry the survivors of that place to the new lands of Novitas, but also gentle enough to keep them asleep for the journey. It was the flora and fauna of the Elemental that fed all mortal creatures alike. It was she who blessed all things young with an instinctive reverence, at the Mother's behest. It was she that hid raw ores and minerals in the land for the Craftsman to make use of. It was she that brokered with the Soldier to save armies and mortals from warlike disaster



with the precise application of lightning, fog, wind, or snow.

Her lesser gifts are equally worthy of note: Romantic love, appreciation of beauty, fallen branches for hearths and forges, wool to spin, streams to drink, pain to teach, snow to clean, and the like. While the Sept embodies the pinnacle of good living, no life would be possible without the Elemental's gifts.

And then, one day, she was gone.

However, in her absence she did not forget the world she left behind. She left a lower form of her Nature magic behind, as tools for those who would act in her stead. She pushed the elemental planes to motion, so that their warp and woof would keep the mortal lands in seasonal balance. She banished her formal priests, who had grown too erratic and insane to be of any use, awoke certain trees to wisdom and sentience. She called the Druids to replace her crazed heretics, and loosed these wardens upon the land.

And now, she has returned. In the last few years, the Elemental has come back to Novitas with far less passion than she once had, and fewer answers as to where she went. Her devotees have many explanations, but she offers none. Nonetheless, followers of the Elemental are active, and bringing more beings to the ranks of her followers every day.

No longer do prayers to the Elemental go unheard, and unheeded. Her mysteries and paradoxes may not be lost to posterity. Temples are being erected to her glory. Her scions, the Druids feel rewarded to have done her bidding in the meantime. They've fought to keep lakes clean, forests free of deadfalls, to coax blight out of farm fields, to incant rituals for rain; these are the self-appointed tasks of the Druids and the Great Trees. Now they wait in earnest for their lost-and-now-found Goddess to entreat them: will they be rewarded with a unified mission? Will their goddess of passion grant them the tools to change the world to her vision? Only the future can tell.

THE STRANGER

Goddess of Death, Secrets, and Vengeance; Illumitas' Shard of Peace

Dominion: The Necromancy School of Magic

Precepts: Keep secrets sacred; embrace the peace of ending; serve the dead who can no longer serve themselves.

The Keeper of Secrets, Lady Dusk, The Late Woman, Crows, or simply Death, the Stranger is the last entity mortals meet on their life's journey. A quiet goddess, the Stranger is the deity responsible for the Emphyrean. At the moment of death, she collects those

freed from life and worthy of her embrace and carries them to this paradise, this Well of Sparks. There, they enter new mysteries and beauty unknown to all mortality. Those who are not worthy are not collected and helpless, they eternally roam. Several philosophers, having noted trends in history, suspect that the Stranger sometimes surrenders worthy sparks to the Mother so that they may be reborn into the world for some divine purpose.



The Stranger did not exist within Illumitas until he was torn apart at the hands of the Dark Three. When his blood pooled into his shadow, his shadow awoke cognizant of the notion of coda, and became the Stranger. She arose, and sided with her brothers and sisters in war against the Three.

Coda, the Stranger's way, conceptualizes death as a peaceful ending to the sufferings of life. Death is the time for the faithful to muse over the lessons learned in life, free of the politics, passions, or divisions that drive conflict. If these passions persist beyond death, these troubled dead must be eased with justice. In these ways, peace is served.

While her crows carry these sparks, the goddess speaks with each one. They speak freely to her, though there is no sorcery compelling them to do so. In these conversations, she learns much about the races of Novitas. She is sworn to keep their secrets, and her natural quiet demeanor is suspected to be a result of her reverie and nostalgia for all that has been created and lost. Sometimes these secrets are so tragic, so horrific, that her quiet contemplation flares to sudden action, and soon thereafter there are many new sparks freed from life. Her secrets are sacred and private. Often times, the Soldier or the Scholar will ply her with reasons and rationales, trying to mine her for information that they



'need.' The others, on occasion, try as well, all save the Knight, who alone respects her sacred oaths. For this reason, the Knight is the only member of the Sept that does not contend or struggle with the Stranger in one fashion or another.

The Stranger is often portrayed as feminine, though sometimes she is also genderless. Most artists envision her as slender and hidden, though particular crafters may simply hide her face with shadow, the hood of a cloak, or even her own hands as if weeping. Her temples are usually built in hospices or adjacent to crypts and grave sites, and her worshippers are often anonymous and unknown until they are unmasked. These places of reverence are marked by veils, curtains, and screens of silk. They are less a meeting hall, than places for quiet contemplation and funerary rites. Often, the smell of incense lingers on those that have visited these places.

Her formal worshippers are often regarded with a mild sense of dismay or discomfort by the populations they serve. Often, these veiled priests and priestesses are responsible for death rites, burial rituals, and counseling the grieving. As their patron goddess exemplifies, these Mutes are sworn to keep all secrets uttered by the grieving and about the dead. They merely listen and in doing so, soak up the pain of those the deceased had left behind. Additionally, this cult tends to the elderly and infirm as they near their meeting with the Stranger. Again, the Mutes collect stories and secrets, in exchange for care and comfort in their dim temples. Some wonder what secrets these monks and nuns have at their disposal.

Aside from the formal clergy, the Stranger is worshipped by anyone with a secret to keep. Often times, she herself is a secret patron. While a King may publicly worship the Knight, for example, in secret he may venerate the Stranger in the hopes that his secrets will remain unknown. Faithful assassins may spend several long minutes after a murder to anoint their victims and compose their corpses so they may meet the Stranger with dignity, and thus please the Stranger, who will in turn keep the killer's identity a secret. The Stranger holds no jealousy in her heart, for in the end everyone meets her alone. At times, she is appeased with incense and small sacrifices to keep her at bay. Merchants going on a long journey will bury lace in a new grave before undertaking their travels. Sailors will burn rose petals before stepping off the dock and boarding a ship. Diplomats will donate small sums of coin to the local graveside temple of the Stranger before undertaking dangerous assignments in foreign countries. Mothers-to-be might pay for a professional mourner for someone else's funeral. Adventurers might contract with the Mutes for a portion of their loot in return for the Stranger's favor while exploring a newly discovered ruin. It is rumored that the sentient Undead have secret elaborate blood rituals to rebuke her and keep their im-

mortality intact. In all these cases, sacrifices and ceremonies exist more to keep her at bay than to invite her presence.

Prayers to the Stranger are often whispered, at night, while something of value is sacrificed to her. The whisper is the reverence for her secrets, and the loss of the treasured item is a little death that acknowledges her eternal presence throughout the world. Her supplication is rarely a public affair, save at funerals themselves. It is said that when one wonders about the sensation of falling off a bridge, or drowning peacefully, that this is the Stranger sending her quiet warning. This sensation is her only communication, until the end.

The central mystery of the Stranger's cult is that a lifetime can only be judged when it is over. In the midst of a life, the individual is caught in their own river, and cannot see further than the bend ahead or the rapids behind. Mortality is often at odds with itself only because it cannot see the entirety of its own lives, how they integrate, and how one action can affect dozens of other lives. This creates conflict, and conflict is the ruin of life. However, when a spark is at the point where it can see this pattern, it is too late for anything to be done. This mystery is, however, natural. And it is this greater understanding that compels newly rescued sparks to speak with the Stranger of what they see, and the part they played. Thus is mortal kind doomed to confusion, the Stranger to knowledge, and is why, of all the Sept, it is the Stranger that has the greatest understanding and sympathy for mortal beings.

All of which is why she fights so terribly against the Undead. These corrupted bodies may be empty of the sparks she has harvested, but their keening sends ripples through the Empyrean Well of Sparks. They may be individuals who, through careful planning and power, have eluded her embrace, thus denying her the



rightful role to filter out the evil from the world and reward the righteous dead. Or they may be those who seek to keep their secrets as their own, eluding death in order to prevent the Stranger from hearing their final whispers and adding their mysteries to her tapestry of tales. As such, she claims dominion over the Path of Necromancy, so that the Undead may be undone, order re-established, and peace maintained.

The Stranger does not stand against any divine evil, but waits for that evil to come to her. To earn the ire of the Stranger is to try to cheat Death, or to reveal dangerous secrets recklessly. There is rarely any redemption from violating the Stranger's order. Instead, the offending mortal is simply collected into her embrace, his secrets added to her own. The Stranger is incapable of forgiveness.



THE CRAFTSMAN

Goddess of Tools, Machines, and Building; Illumitas' Shard of Creation

Dominion: The Enchantment School of Magic

Precepts: Build rather than own or destroy; serve all with your work; coordination is the best tool.

The Craftsman is the patron god of smiths, engineers, miners, carpenters, weavers, stonemasons, and anyone who improves their world through construction, smiling on anyone who builds for the greater good. A bridge connecting two villages allows new friendships and trades to form. A city wall protects everyone from mutual harm. A loom can produce cloth for others to use for any number of purposes. Referred to as Old Sweat, The Great Maker, The Forge God, or First Fire, the Craftsman is both the weakest of the Sept and the most important.

The Craftsman has only one formal temple, and that is Voltanicus, which resides deep inside the mountains of Terra near a glowing river of magma. In most cases, the Craftsman's temples are found in a workman's tools. An anvil stamped with the Craftsman's mark, or the keystone for an arch is inscribed with his rune, or even something as small as the gears for a clock can count as a thing of worship. It is the act of fabrication that turns even the most drafty workshop into a place of divinity. Any worker who loses time, his hurts, and his hunger while making a thing of beauty and worth to all, is counted as an Artisan of the Craftsman. Be it the master sword smith, or the village shoemaker, none of the Artisans holds any rank above their peers.

The Craftsman is often portrayed as a robust man carrying workman's tools. His followers, both formal and private, are known collectively as Artisans. These Artisans will typically have a small shrine in their workshop. A particularly successful circle of potters in Terra call themselves the Craftsman's Brides, thus demonstrating the forgiving ease with which both the god and his followers accept life as it comes.

The Craftsman's powers are only found in what he can build. Without tools and materials, the Craftsman is an empty divinity. The Craftsman borrows materials from the Elemental. He borrows ingenuity from the Scholar. He makes use of the Soldier's strength, and asks the Mother to heal the burns, pinches, and fatigue that come with hard work. The Stranger is asked to extend the life of the construction, so that the builder might not see its end in his or her lifetime. And the Knight's sense of purpose is used to craft an item that satisfies some need. In return, the Craftsman builds roads, so the fields are not all trampled. Libraries, to house the great intellectual works. Shields to protect the fighting men, and beds in which they may rest and recover from their wounds. Sepulchers and catacombs for the Stranger's children. And spurs and swords for those sworn to champion the lofty goals of the Knight. Only through negotiation with all his kin can the Craftsman satisfy his divine purpose. Thus, alone, he is powerless.

However, it is the Craftsman that acts as the chain that links the Sept together. Without the Craftsman to build bridges between these disparate entities, Illumitas may have drifted apart after his seven rebirths. It is the Craftsmen who converses with all his brothers and sisters in turn and keeps the family knit together. He spreads news, collects stories, and hears their various woes and concerns. The gift the Craftsman brings to the Sept is coordination through communication, or the concept of acting in concert. His tools and machines can change the world, but without the Sept acting together the changes would be greatly different. The greatest invention the Craftsman has ever built was this notion of family. But it was not his only invention, by



far.

Time was built by the Craftsman. Envisioned as a Great Dam, time keeps everything from happening all at once. This allowed a slow but steady series of experiences to be relished, struggled with, and learned from.

Promises are a collaborative work of the Knight, the Scholar, and the Craftsman. The Knight's ideals, the Scholar's words, and the Craftsman's parchment and ink still to this day form the basis for binding agreements between sincere cooperating individuals.

Worth and merit were his inventions, and the minting of coins to ease the chaos of barter still exists as a successful (if abused) system. The first coins were blank, and made of soft metals, so that each man could hammer his mark into a coin. In this way, the Craftsman wanted to show that everyone had some worth to their community.

Later, after societies had cooled from the forge, he tooled them with the use of horses, the wheel, the mastery of fire, emptiness as a virtue for vessels, smelting and purification and the like. It is said that the Elemental once asked him to forge the most beautiful ring he could, though she never returned to claim it from him. Artisans today tell that story with a smile, and use it as a parable for making things of beauty just to make

the world more beautiful, and for no other purpose. They suspect that the Elemental simply wanted to see the hard working Craftsman smile, though some think that only the Stranger knows the reason behind the ring, now that the Winter Lady has disappeared.

The Craftsman is the one god of the Sept who has made peace with his own mystery, accepting that no matter how powerful, self-sufficient, or skilled a being may be, the mortal and divine alike are connected to their companions. No one can ever be alone and be thought of as whole. Great experiences are worthless if not shared. Without communication and compromise, nothing can change the world. Thus, while most of the other Sept gods struggle with their essential natures, the Craftsman alone finds peace simply by aiding his family.

The Craftsman does not so much stand against the Dark Three as he stands valiantly with the Sept. When they need him, he is there. Much like certain of his Kin, the Craftsman is not a jealous god, and smiles upon Artisans who keep both he and his brothers and sisters in their thoughts and actions. To betray the Craftsman is to turn against the Sept. Redemption from this error is possible, though like smelting ore, the candidate must work the impurities from his or her spark before they can be reformed.



RELIGIONS OF NOVITAS: THE DARK THREE

The Dark powers are ancient gods that predate Novitas. These powers work against the Sept directly, which they see as holding the mortal races of Novitas hostage with their demands. Each has their own reason for their fight, and their followers are turned against the Sept faithful as well. These gods are worshipped openly only in the Snow Kingdom of Gersh, the Dellin Tribelands, and by small but savage clans of Earthkin.

GRAK THE DESTROYER

War God of the Dark Three

Dominion: None

Precepts: Defiance, strength, and glory!

Grak is the God Under the Mountain, the Maw, the Judge, Glory, the Iron Father. Fires and sacrifice are dedicated to his name by the warlike peoples everywhere: Orcs, Kasvaks, Tribesmen, Snow Goblins, and mannish hunters of glory everywhere. Elves are too weak to join his cause, and pointy-eared supplicants to his name are always spies for other powers. These are not killed by axe or spear, but are chained to Grak's Mountain to die of cold, hunger, or become food for wolves. Earthkin who bring weapons for Grak's chosen are fed and told the truth of Grak by firelight, but come morning they are dispatched. Fascinated only with the tools of Grak's work, they have no stomach for the spirit of his message.

Grak demands that his faithful carry only axe, hammer, or spear, for these are tools in addition to being weapons. Thus, a stoneworker or logger or spear-fisher may use his tools and turn them into weapons. No one is ever disarmed. Everyone can fight. Always.

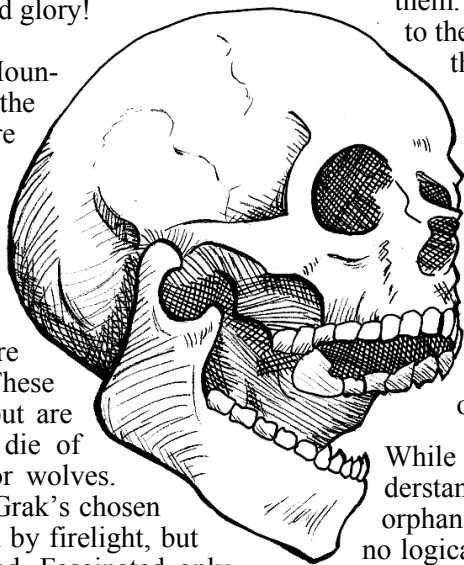
Grak's depictions are usually of a barbaric mortal, of human, Goblin, Orcish, or Wolvish race, glorious in victory, ringed by black lightning. Such statuary or graffiti are often splattered with fresh blood, and have trophies of war piled about them. Prayers to Grak are found in the scars of his chosen. Every wound earned and given is a prayer to the Iron Father. A battle cry, or perhaps a command for Grak to 'Witness!' is all the Wargod requires. Temples to Grak are carrion-ridden battlefields, blood-muddied gladiator pits, war-paint drawn from the veins of the conquered, or a harness of fetishes and war trophies worn about the shoulders of the chosen. Deep within the Tribelands looms the

Mountain of Grak. A black mountain, unadorned by snow, it is said that this is Grak's hall. That Grak alone has the courage to dwell on the face of Novitas and spits on any mystical divine agreements to the contrary.

The Truth of Grak is more than his enemies may suspect. Rather than being a mindless god of destruction, Grak's teachings lead his chosen to strength enough to forsake the gods, one and all, and to cut their own wounds into the world. To be strong, to earn respect, is to be free of gods, kings, coins, and slavery. Thus, Grak pushes his worshippers ever forward, to grow stronger, to defeat everything that rises up against them. And once the chosen is killed, if he comes to the God Under the Mountain, he did not learn this lesson and Grak devours his spark whole. Grak is an unlikely god of independence, and a harsh one at that. Those with great strength, and great will, who learn the failings of the gods and deny their slavery, have walked Grak's Road of Pain, and are only then considered adults to the brooding Wargod. For this reason, Grak claims no dominion and awards his followers nothing. The truly faithful need no such bribes to worship, or chains to obey.

While religious worshippers from every sect understand the nature of divine paradoxes, it is the orphans who point out that Grak worship makes no logical sense. A god who demands that his supplicants obey his wishes that they follow no gods? At this, the secular can only shake their heads and label the entire business of worship as madness.

Grak himself fights for the Three, not out of corrupt malice, but because the odds are against him and that makes the struggle glorious. That he wishes revenge for his imprisonment is also of prime importance to this god. Indeed, Grak is the rebellious ally within the Dark Three. Grak has been known to brew his StormMead and drink wildly with the Soldier before their children meet against each other in battle, for while Grak hates the slavery the Sept confuses for guidance, the Soldier has proven himself to be a wily and worthy adversary, and has earned a grudging respect from Glory. It is sung that despite Nox's lust for torture, Grak killed the Elemental outright and that this almost brought war between the followers of Nox and the chosen of Grak. Darkness forced Nox to capitulate and kneel, thus making him worthless as a prize in the eyes of Grak; the war was averted. It is sung that when Grak dreams, he dreams of new monsters and horrors



from which the chosen may earn glory. When he awakes, he finds that these nightmares have taken form, and harass both Sept faithful villages and Darkness' enclaves alike – and then he laughs with great mirth. Mortals know this as thunder, but the chosen of Grak know this is a sign that he has dreamed, awoken, and that a new chance for glory is near.



Despite his rebellion, Grak has served his role as War Leader for the Three without second thoughts. It is sung that Grak slew the father of the Sept. It is sung that Grak defeated both the Knight and the Soldier, but spared their lives and thus cursed them with eternal shame. The chosen sing that Grak delivered the stroke that killed Vargainen and sank it beneath the seas. It is sung that he wounded the Great Dragon, and sent it back to its cave in the night sky. It is sung that Grak's chosen were the berserkers that smashed the gates of Nalbendel, and terrified the defenders into sudden suicide rather than to have their limbs hewn from them and slung as trophies. Lo, this is good.

Grak stands against all the gods, though first he will pick his teeth with the bones of the Sept before turning on Nox and Darkness. To betray Grak is to die of old age, to surrender, live in comfort, or accept slavery over oneself. There is no penance for this betrayal, ever.

NOX THE PUTRESCENT

Insane God of the Apocalypse

Dominion: Theft and all Schools for his servitors; poisons, disease and undeath

Precepts: Destroy all life; divest yourself of hope of redemption; serve suffering absolutely

Nox, the Turning Worm, Dust and Bones, Lord of Rats, the Wounded God, his name is a curse in every

language. Nox is a god that favors an end to all things. Societies, traditions, countries, history, promises, duties, life, the ground, the sea, the air, the world itself. It is this god's most fevered desire to scour the lands of the world clean of every living thing, and at last find peace from all the screams.

Nox is the amalgamated misery of every being in Novitas. The hunger of the destitute, who languish the shadow of opulent temples to the Sept. The betrayed, whose husbands forsake them for new lords, new wives, new causes. The murdered, bleeding out, whose final thoughts linger on cursing their killers. The grief ridden, who bury sons, wives, daughters, and cousins, yet linger on suffering, forgotten by the Stranger. The abandoned, the sick, the insane, the lost; their cries are heard by Nox, who drinks their sighs from his cupped hands. It is these miseries that have broken him.

Once an ancient god of wine and good tidings, he was tricked by Darkness into listening to all of those that drank from his cup. At first, he heard only those who sought his cup in celebration, reveling in their exuberance. But, in time, he began to hear the sighs of those who used his cup to escape their mortal woes. Shocked at their plight, the god of celebration abandoned his fetes, and turned his attention to the kin of these hopeless drunken mortals, urging his followers to surrender some of their joy to raise the condition of their brothers and sisters around them.

They refused, and abandoned him, content to serve only their own joy to exclusion of all others. Cruelly disappointed and devoid of worshippers, he turned to those that needed a god. But he only knew joy, and found that he could not raise these sufferers to their feet with mindless glee. No, these sparks need a solution, but he could only offer distraction. Desperately frustrated by his inability to serve the stricken, he used wine and play to seduce a nature goddess into revealing the art of poison, to offer the suffering the escape of sleep. Those that drank of his now poisoned cup died quietly, and found rest. But those they left behind began quailing in grief, and the stink of the dead bodies brewed disease that became plague, and the cacophony of misery grew ever louder. The god, who had for eternity known only the joy of celebration and pleasurable abandonment, found himself battered to his knees by the combined grief and suffering of the world. It broke his divine heart. He had no capacity to better the world with play, and even less as a fallen god of wine.

His pain, ever reinforced with mortal suffering, became anger. He missed his privileged place as a joyous god, and realized it was the mortals who had driven him from it. That no matter what could be done, they would endlessly find new torments. That mortalkind was a contemptuous and festering thing. And so he renamed himself Nox, unleashed plague and poison, his



new domains, and killed his world. Then Darkness returned, and whispered that a new world was in the making, and that soon it would be filled with more hungry mouths, more betrayals, more voices that would echo towards him across the cosmos.

Thus did Nox side with Darkness, and come to Illu-
mitas ready for murder.

Now Nox stands abreast with Grak, and plots to bring an end to all things. Only with total destruction and silence can Nox ever hope to be soothed. Early in the struggle, Nox swindled the secret of magic from the Sept, who had first stolen it from Draconus himself. Intended by the Sept to be a tool for only their own servitors and slaves, Nox corrupted it and made it freely available to those who served the Three. However, in doing so he suffered a terrible wound by the Knight, who could not be corrupted.

The pain of this wound in chorus with the pain of the world's miserable outcasts has driven this god insane. He inflicts punishment to all mortals, those who follow him and those who oppose him, equally. He commands disfigurement in his highest acolytes. He created undeath to have an unnatural hungry hate towards life; there is no reason why this should be so save that Nox wills it. He commands kidnapping and torture conversions of both the highest wizard and the most unimportant farm girl alike. He builds diseases that infect through laughter as well as loving touches, and sets them free without plan or intent. His water is sewage, his meat corpses, his bed is ash and he would invite everything to share his home and be welcome in his madness. The punishing torment of disease, the sudden seizing death of poison, a world of servitor undead who have no tongues to voice misery... these are goals of Nox. All in an effort to shut out the noise of the world.



Why would anyone serve such madness? The truly faithful believe that once Nox has erased the world, that he will repopulate it. Such new populations will need masters, and who better the serve as these new masters than those who earned their place by assisting with Nox's pogrom? When confronted with the fact that Nox wishes all life destroyed, the zealots snarl and say that this is propaganda put forth by the hated Scholar, who wishes to confuse Nox's faithful. Indeed, this may not be incorrect, as this notion does agree with the Scholar's use of tricks and mind games to establish his desired result.

Worship of Nox is both incidental and formal. Incidental worship is found even in the happiest of mortals. A suffering disease, the loss of a loved one, the common tragedies of life visit even the most pampered, giving cause for some misery. But the poor and forgotten are the true priests of this incidental worship. Lives that know only suffering do little more than sing to the mad god with every breath taken. Sobbing for the remembered dead, the keening wail of a broken heart, the rash actions of anger, the gnawing pain of hunger, the jagged intent of jealousy; all these miseries place another drop of bile in Nox's poisoned cup. In this, everyone can for a short time worship Nox.

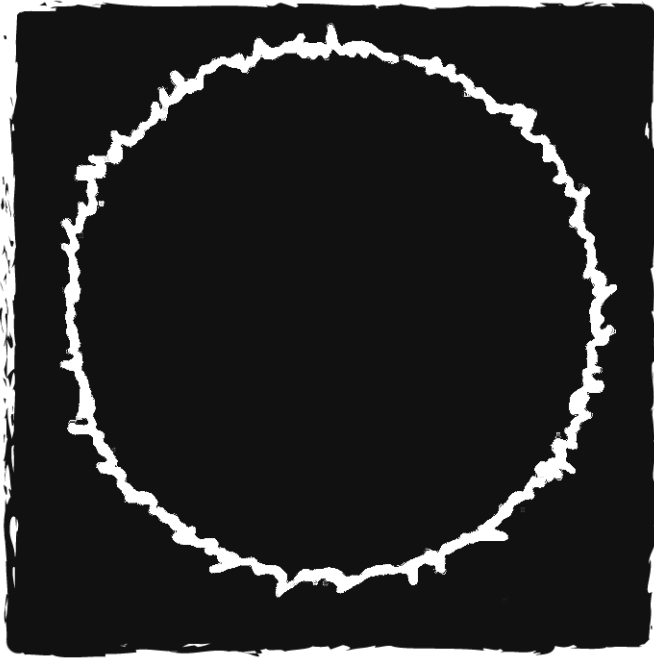
Formal worship of Nox is a grand affair, and reserved only for those fellows the world has broken. Nox only accepts his brothers and sisters into his coven. The insane, the vengeful, the power hungry, the desperate, the corrupt – these are the priests of Nox. Their worship is an overwrought ritualized affair; the coven's subjugation to apocalypse must be complete. Any who drink from Nox's cup, and have any reservations or doubts, are doomed to never die and to know every pain and humiliation that Nox's true servants may visit upon them. Those that embrace apocalypse, and willingly suffer the torments of Nox rise to great power. At the heart of his temples is an Oracle. Kept in delirious pain and suffering, she whispers Nox's black secrets to these covens. Foul ritual magic, blackmail, and dark prophecies spill out from gasping bleeding mouths festering with sores. And with these secrets, covens of Nox work to end the world.

Within these cults, Nox is only ever depicted as a skull. Outside of these cults, Nox is a forbidden god to all civilized lands save Gersh. In the Snow Kingdom, he is acknowledged as a god of mercy, both one who deserves some measure of mercy for that terrible burden he suffers as well as the one who administers it with his quick acting poisons.

It is impossible to break with Nox once formally indoctrinated into the coven. Willing convert, or unwilling victim, life is continued only so long as the mortal is useful and pious to the cause of apocalypse. Those who have a moment of clarity or seek redemption instead find themselves suddenly serving Nox as a member of his undead host.



Nox is the most zealous of the Dark Three, but he is not their leader.



DARKNESS

Dark Lord of the Three

Dominion: Unrevealed to Date

Precepts: Unknown

Shadow, the Black Dragon, He Who Is Made Of And Dwells In Darkness, He Who Must Not Be Named, Malice, Darkness has many aliases. None of these, however, are its true name. That is but one of many secrets surrounding the Leader of the Dark Three.

Its hate for Illumitas and his scions, the Sept, knows no bounds. Yet the reasons for this hate are cloaked in mystery.

Its love of deceit and trickery is known. The recruitment of Grak, the creation of Nox, the seduction of the Templars of Wakharn are the ones known to history. Imagine what deceits have never been uncovered?

Its defeats are also well recorded, and yet it perseveres endlessly. No force is strong enough to kill it entirely, and it always manages to struggle back into the great conflict. Indeed, it is for this tireless suffering of wounds and endless commitment regardless of defeat, which renders Darkness as the chief divinity in the Snow Kingdom of Gersh. Where they endlessly suffer in the most inhospitable of landscapes, like Darkness, they too have stubbornly continued to build and conquer.

Its thoughtful malice is well marked. When Darkness has claimed victory, the loss is always terrible and absolute. No survivors, no clues, no warning. Where Grak seeks glory, and Nox works for annihilation,

Darkness is clever and its goals are occluded. Despite their antagonism, Darkness keeps Grak and Nox moving in concert. Thoughtful men wonder if Grak and Nox, for all their violence and destruction, are nothing more than a distraction in some larger gambit planned and enacted at the will of Darkness. Darkness is not a berserker, and is not insane. It is cunning and clever, and rarely takes the field itself, keeping its reserves and resources hidden from the Sept.

Its depictions are numerous: A black disc, the eclipse, is a representation that chills adventurers descending into a warren of Darkness. Those few records that survive the destruction of Nalbendel speak of Darkness's legions as following a standard bearing black talons on a field of red. Its temples are often built as mazes, making the maze one of the forbidden marks associated with Darkness. In the last century, only one high priest of Darkness was ever found, and when he was at last slain he carried a sword of fire and teeth. Thus the fiery bonesword is sometimes regarded as a symbol of allegiance to Darkness.

Its followers wear dark colors and meet only at night, never daring to strike a light as it displeases Shadow. Its temples, rarely discovered, are opulent, artistic affairs built with a strange black brick that always weeps and drinks in light from any torch, glow worm, or lantern. These temples and meeting places are often underground, and well guarded with traps, zealots, and magic. Its precepts and traditions are unknown to any outside the cult, and Darkness chooses its followers with careful deliberation and testing. No zealots, no madmen, Darkness's recruits are always composed, intelligent, rational beings who leave little to chance.

Certain prophecy dreams from Draconus suggest that at the murder of Illumitas, Darkness stole a piece from that corpse before it could form into a member of



the Sept. That it even now keeps this unclaimed shard in some secret place. The only other clue as to this shard, and Darkness's plan, is that the Shard is rumored to be female.

That is all that is known, but it is enough to inspire concern in the bold, and fear in the thoughtful.

WORSHIP OF THE DARK THREE

The vast majority of the denizens of Novitas worship the Sept, and worship is so varied from region to region that sections have been devoted to the peculiarities of these different practices within their specific regional chapters. The following is an account of how worship of the less popular Gods is practiced. While still somewhat varied, worship of the Dark Three (as well as Draconus) tends to not vary as much region by region as worship of the Sept.

The worship of the Dark Triumvirate is oftentimes a secretive practice, and for good reason. Many Kingdoms have laws against such worship, and so many must hide their reverence for the Three. The ways in which one practices Dark Three worship depends upon which of the Three one favors most. As the Three are quite different from one another, so are their worshippers.

THE WORSHIP OF DARKNESS

Worshippers of He Who Is Made Of And Dwells In Darkness tend to be the most secretive about their worship. These worshippers are typically manipulative Snow Goblins or humans who seek to manipulate the world and help it fulfill Darkness' vision for it. Their work requires them to blend into their surroundings and be good con-artists and actors. They are thought to pull the strings of entire Kingdoms from within the shadows.

Cults of Darkness worshippers are found most often in the Freelands, where persecution comes only from vigilantes rather than organized governments. The higher-ups in these cults speak Black Speech, a unique language developed solely to keep their secrets hidden from others. Being a Darkness worshiper means keeping secrets, manipulating people, and being an executor of gruesome deeds for the Dark Lord of the Three. Darkness is worshiped openly by many in Gersh, and details on Gershen worship of Darkness can be found in the regional chapter concerning Gershen religion.

No universal doctrinal agenda exists for worshippers of the Darkness, but scholarly inquiry into their motivations has uncovered a far more intricate set of principles than one might assume after encountering a weak-minded zealot, driven mad with the Darkness' taint.

Followers of Darkness believe that Illumitas invaded the Void, wherein Darkness dwelt, before creating

His world. With the aid of Grak and Nox, Darkness is said to have punished the Great God and shattered His mind. Rather than destroy the creation that now festered within the Void, Darkness showed it mercy and preserved its existence. Though the Transgression had been punished, new warriors had emerged from the Great God's corpse. The Sept sprang forth and launched an attack on Darkness. Thus did the Holy War begin.

In the centuries to follow, the children of Illumitas never ceased their persecution of Darkness; assault after assault, crime after crime, were heaped upon it. Through it all Darkness suffered in silence, never once lashing out at the world itself. Only after suffering imprisonment in Wakharn and subsequently freeing itself did Darkness wage war in earnest against the realm, and even then it targeted only the Sept and its blind followers.

Indeed, worshippers of Darkness believe it favors generosity over destruction. Trolls were given the powers of regeneration, and Scholar shattered their minds. Darkness gave Orcs strength, and the Elemental cursed them with passions too great for any to control. Snow Goblins were given longevity, and the Stranger spitefully twisted their very forms.

The true Chosen of Darkness attempt to follow its example, and desire not to destroy Novitas, as is conventionally understood, but to unify it. If the goal were destruction, it is thought, Darkness would have never acquiesced to delegate its touch on the realm to its Avatars. No, worshippers of Darkness believe that the entire realm is malleable given enough time to be worked. Darkness is thought to fight the infection of the Septon understanding of morality, parasitically invading the minds and hearts of mortals and rewiring them to do its bidding. Faith in Darkness is faith in the corruptibility



of mortalkind... and worshipers of He Who Is made of And Dwells in Darkness are said to secretly fear what the Darkness would do if mortalkind proved ultimately incorruptible.

THE WORSHIP OF NOX

Worshipers of Nox the Putrescent come in two varieties: the living and the undead. As the undead are Nox's progeny, many gravespawn, Nosferatu, liches, and other sentient undead worship Nox openly, striving to further his goals to eradicate all life in any way they can. Living worshipers of Nox are rare, but they do exist. Essentially madmen, these are tortured sparks that find pleasure in pain, delight in devastation, and want nothing more than to watch all life suffer and die. Some of these unfortunate beings are deluded into thinking that they will be spared Nox's wrath if they offer him worship and assistance. Living Nox worshipers are quintessential extremists – radicals desperate to die for their twisted god of disease and suffering. Nox himself rarely rewards them with anything but the eternal agony of undead existence. Being a Nox worshiper means hating all life, wishing suffering upon others, and consequently being riddled with madness.

There are less twisted living worshipers of Nox – those who delight in the torment of others, imbibe untold amounts of mind-altering substances, and with to sew pain for pain's sake, but these practitioners tend to speak aloud of their patronage only in secretive meetings and private parties (that tend to be horror shows).

THE WORSHIP OF GRAK

Worshipers of Grak the Destroyer are complex and varied in their faith to the Iron Father. While some worshipers are truly evil warriors who wish to fight and kill any who cross their path, many are simply fighters motivated face overwhelming odds, who find glory in combating worthy opponents and pushing their bodies and minds to the breaking point. Strength and fortitude are valued above all else, as strength and persistence beget power and glory. The worship of Grak differs from the worship of the Soldier in motivations more so than actions. A soldier of the Sept seeks glory on the battlefield, but obeys his god in an effort to help his fellow man. A warrior of Grak helps only himself, and cares only for personal glory. Worship of Grak is most often seen in the Tribelands, and to a lesser extent the Terran Reavers, though his followers can be found anywhere that personal ambition and power are valued.

The true Iron Sons are not daggers in the dark, no. They are the first into battle. Their war cries reverberate endlessly in the hearts of the defeated. "Witness!" is the last thing often heard before all goes black, Grak's followers hoping that the God of Glory take notice of their awesome prowess. Following Grak means seeing those around one as a stepping stone – even Grak himself. The most battle-tested of Grak's followers will take a pilgrimage to the mountains of the Tribelands, where it is rumored that an Avatar of the Iron Father himself resides, beckoning challengers to try and dethrone him.



RELIGIONS OF NOVITAS: DRACONUS

Not all gods fall on one side or the other in the cosmic conflict. Those gods who favor neutrality rarely involve themselves in the workings of Novitas or its contested divinities. Their goals and projects are instead alien and unknowable.

DRACONUS

Godbeast of Magic, Mystery, Dreams, and the Moon

Dominion: Unrevealed to Date

Precepts: Unknown, though many cults share the collection of Draconus Lore as a principle

The Great Dragon, the Moon, Nightmare, the God-Beast, Draconus has only a few names. Draconus is represented in two forms; the silvery full moon, or a terrible dragon with wings that shade the world. Its likenesses do not acknowledge its degenerate children, the Drakes, save in their own art.

Above the masses of mortals, above the rivers, mountains, and sky itself, above the other gods and their contested concerns, watches the baleful luminous eye of Draconus. Endlessly waiting, though for what none can say.

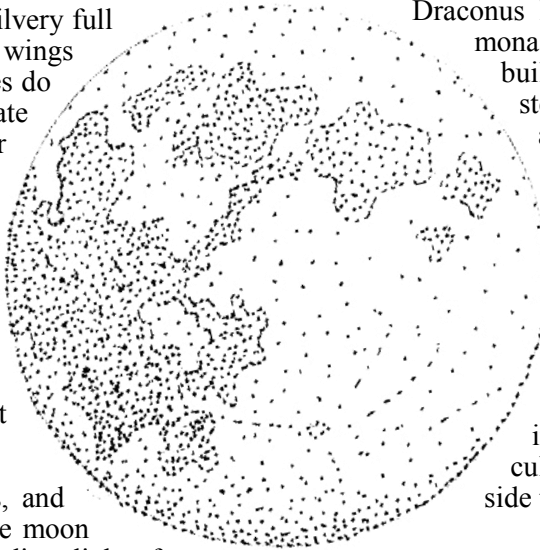
Its power is both mysterious, and undeniable. Some suspect that the moon is an illusion, and is merely the radiant light of the Dragon's raw power. Others think it is a giant fortress, carried up into the night sky, within which the Dragon amasses his giant hoard of treasure. Still others think the moon itself is only the Dragon's Eye, or perhaps an Egg for its rebirth. What is known is that the moon has some mysterious power over the world. From illuminating the night's gloom, to changing its face, to its mastery over tides and birth, to its power over shapeshifters... Draconus does not merely sleep. Something is happening.

Certain oracular dreams inspire thoughts on the GodBeast's designs among the followers of Draconus. From traveling as a companion to the wandering Elemental, to reclaiming all its stolen magic from the world, to reviving the diluted blood of DragonKind, to providing the balance between the Sept and the Dark Three, to hunting all the other gods in return for some great theft, to gnawing on the lost sparks discarded by the Stranger -- these dreams and portents are often turned into hysterical rumor, prophecies of doom,

works of poetic art, or street plays for the poor. A single dream can spawn a dozen theories, which is retold into a hundred meanings. The timid will wail, rub dirt into their hair, and proceed into violent madness. In Vlean and Gersh, it is not uncommon for any such hysterical riots to be crushed by force and its leaders put to the Question -- often the dreamer is lobotomized to keep the dreams at bay forevermore. In the Tribelands, however, the Dellin Tribesmen greet these dreams with great celebration, for many tribes have taken oaths that they will be the ones to slay the last true Dragon and feast on its giant heart.

Whatever mysteries and paradoxes worshippers of Draconus have, they keep secret inside their monasteries and cloisters. Never ones to build anew, the cult of the Dragon instead adopts ruins and haunted towers as its home. Over long generations, they slowly lay a deep mystical claim to the place, through some strange means.

Worshippers of Draconus are not limited to Drakes. Men and Terrans account for a vocal minority of the cult, and while Elves are welcomed, very few seek entrance into their cloisters. Snow Goblin cultists are known by name even outside the cult, as they are so few.





Different sects of the cult believe in different aspects of Draconus. Some worship fire, and use complicated alchemical reagents to somehow transmute it into dragonfire, about which they dance and exhaust themselves into vision and prophecy. Others hoard treasure, and hide whatever they find into great underground caches. One cult has taken a keen interest in Drake bloodlines, and is attempting to breed a true dragon. Still others practice Draconus' neutrality, and either refuse to participate in the events unfolding around them, or act as negotiators and diplomats between the zealots and fanatics of both the Dark Three and their Sept counterparts. One thing all the sects share, however, is the pursuit of lore and writings on Draconus. Every cloister has a vast hidden library. The cultists and monks spend their time trying to establish patterns between these recorded works and the events that unfold in the present. Tracking prophetic dreams also has some academic credibility within the cults. Essentially, the cults are endlessly seeking a direction to rally around. Endlessly trying to solve the mystery of who Draconus is, and what it wants. For this reason, particularly stable cults are often allied with certain colleges or academics of the Scholar. Though usually, most cults of Draconus fall apart under the weight of their own impatience or arguments.

Draconus stands alone, for reasons that remain hidden. One cannot fail Draconus, as the Great Dragon hears no pleas and dispenses no mercy. Certainly, each sect of Draconus-worship develops its own rules, codes, and morality. All these may be failed or betrayed, earning the heretic a severe punishment, no doubt.

DRACONUS WORSHIP

Worship of the Godbeast, Draconus, happens in

myriad ways. As the Nightmare has not sent His Avatars down to share His whim with mere mortals in the same way that the Sept or the Three have, His followers discern His will by observing the world, purporting to use logic, and following the visions that He shares with them. As such, there is no known orthodoxy for the Lord Moon. There was a time that scholars of Draconus met regularly to share their findings and try to find threads of consistency, but these meetings frequently devolved into arguing over apocrypha, with individual religious conviction holding sway over arguments from logic and observation. Great convocations were called in the past, and petty politics made these great compromises fall apart. Some believe that a not-so-asleep Draconus looked on in the meanwhile, sending contrary dreams or visions to His followers out of some master plan. Or boredom. Still others say that His massive, alien consciousness washed over these followers unwittingly, sending visions so incomprehensible that misinterpretation and misremembering led to these conflicts. None can say for sure.

As such, Draconus worshipers have divided off into several different cults and monasteries - each hoarding texts and transcribing alleged visions, each believing it has proprietary knowledge on what the Nightmare's will is for mortalkind.

Judging by the qualitative differences in confirmed Draconic visions, many scholars believe that Draconus is massively powerful but of limited sentience. Primal. A thing moved by moods and animal drives - devastating when pushed to action. If the Sept are the embodiment of how to live a good life, and the Dark Three are necessary evils we sometimes have to embrace, Draconus is those immediate impulses that color what we do, or think, or say: The revulsion of seeing a butchered animal, the flash-red rage of betrayal, the triumphant



roar of dominance after a victory. The untamable, in other words. Unbreakable, undeniable, the "lizard brain" incarnate. Ego itself.

His followers are frequently indulgent of ego as well -- any mortal who claims full knowledge over the Nightmare's desires is claiming opinion as fact. Plagued by delusions of grandeur, followers of Draconus will frequently justify great amounts of greed and vanity. Those who have been given a Draconic vision often feel entitled to model their behavior after His. They hoard items of great value and magical power in the same way the Godbeast is alleged to have stored mountains of treasure on the moon. Draconus is often considered the patron god of Thieves' Guilds, who wear His likeness and invoke His name for luck. Like the Godbeast, perched on his Moon, followers of Draconus are often content to watch the world instead of taking action. They thus favor intelligence over action -- spying and gathering information while rarely putting it to use.

His Drake followers in particular preen in vanity and self-importance rather than taking part in worldly affairs, just as Draconus ignored the realm's need in the war between the gods to coddle his offspring. And since He has never attempted to clarify His intentions, followers of the Godbeast manage to justify all manner of bizarre behavior in His name -- which leads to a great deal of petty squabbling, disagreement, and judgment between those with differing viewpoints.

Cultists and individual followers of Draconus tend to emphasize the chaotic nature of the Dragon God, finding less meaning and pattern in the lore and recorded visions than their scholarly counterparts, who pore over every scrap of lore with the passion of a zealot.

And like all people of faith, followers of Draconus seem to spend more time bickering about smaller points than agreeing on larger ones. Disagreements rage on the nature of Drakes (have they been purposefully neglected, or is Draconus unaware of their decline?), on why Drakes have devolved, on where Draconus is (taking care of something more important? Sitting on the moon and watching? Somewhere else?), on why He left, on whether or when He will return, on His leanings toward the Sept or the Three, on His true desires, on the significance of visions, on the use of necromancy, on His direct impact on the world (does He effect werewolves? Tides? More than we know?).

"WHEN THE STUDENTS ARE
READY, THE TEACHER WILL
ARRIVE..."

- Common idiom of
Draconic Worship

One thing is for sure: all followers of the Godbeast ardently hope for His return. They may not agree on when this will happen, or if it will happen, but many dedicate their lives to preparing the world for this day of reckoning. Etched into the meeting room of any Draconic monastery, and always in Draconic, is this ominous phrase:

*"When the students are ready,
the teacher will arrive."*



THE RACES OF NOVITAS

The world of Novitas is populated with a variety of races, each with their own affinities and traits to make them unique. The following list describes those races that are considered possible for player characters.

DRAKES

Drakes are the offspring of ancient, long dead dragons. While Draconus has been locked away over the millennia, the once-powerful race of dragons has suffered, and has atrophied into their present state: that of the humanoid bipedal Drakes. Lacking fearsome claws, fangs, or wings, the Drakes have turned to magical pursuits to offset their loss of physical power. They are now the foremost practitioners of magic in Novitas. Drakes have no homeland, but live together in broods in monasteries and enclaves throughout Novitas.

Drake culture revolves around the spell casters. The most powerful magic users are the leaders of each enclave, and seniority depends on magical power. Drakes who show little or no aptitude for the art are put to work at menial tasks, which encourages many of them to leave the monasteries and seek their fortune elsewhere. Often, a Drake will come into his magical heritage late in life after leaving the enclave.

Drakes live their lives in service to their monasteries, cults, conclaves, or broods, but they are also quite invested in their own personal power and are often at odds with one another. A very ambitious race, the Drakes wish to restore themselves to their former glory as dragons at whatever the cost. For many, a Drake's life pursuit is knowledge and power and to worship the Godbeast. Many others wish to accumulate wealth and magical items for their personal "dragon hoard". A dragon hoard is considered a sacred thing, and many Drakes are buried with their hoard.

Each individual Drake exhibits a dominant color, which is indicative of what type of dragon they are descended from.

Red Drakes are descended from the red dragons that made their home in the middle Kingdom of Nalbendel before it was the Freelands. Red Drakes are still seen the most often in the Freelands. They tend to be scholarly and pragmatic, friendly with other scholars and educated individuals but aloof towards the uneducated masses. Red Drakes are particularly fond of ancient texts and magical tomes.

Black Drakes are descended from the black dragons that lived deep underground beneath the Daggertop

Mountains between the Evenandra and the Tribelands. Black Drakes rarely come out from their subterranean conclaves. They tend to be mean and prejudiced against non-drakes. Black Drakes are particularly fond of rituals and ancient artifacts.

White Drakes are descended from the arctic dragons who made their homes in the northern wastes. They tend to be aloof and, well, chilly towards non-drakes. Generally, they show friendship or hatred towards Snow Goblins, and judge each other race individually. White Drakes are particularly fond of well-made weapons, especially those with magical properties.

Green Drakes are descended from the forest dragons who made their homes in the forests of the Free Lands and Fionn A'ilean. They tend to be fun-loving and friendly towards non-drakes. They generally dislike Snow Goblins and Earthkin, like Wood Elves, and greatly enjoy the company of light-descended Faekin. They judge humans individually, but fairly. Green Drakes are particularly fond of magical knickknacks and items (not jewelry, scrolls, potions or weapons).



Brown Drakes are descended from the mountain dragons of Terra. They tend to be taciturn and quiet. They get along well with Earthkin and Brownies, dislike the company of Elves, and are disinterested in Snow Goblins and humans. Brown Drakes are particularly fond of precious metals and gemstones.

Blue Drakes are descended from the aquatic drag-



ons that lived along the secluded southern coastlines. They tend to be warm and friendly towards others, almost treating them as equals (especially people who have magical skills). They get along particularly well with the Elves of Evenandra, and many make their homes along the coastlines of that country. Blue Drakes are particularly fond of magical jewelry.

Drakes venerate Draconus, their imprisoned dragon god. They believe that one day, he will be born again from the egg of the moon, and descend to Novitas to restore the Drakes to their former glory. Drakes acknowledge the other gods, but do not worship them.

Their costume requires a reptilian or amphibian facial prosthetic with make-up to blend it with the skin. All exposed skin must be covered or made-up to match the facial prosthetic. Their clothing tends toward ornament and rich fabrics such as velvets and brocades, and can be from any background, as Drakes have enclaves and monasteries in every land.

Costuming Difficulty:

Very difficult and expensive

All Drakes gain Racial Language: Draconic for free at first level.



EARTHKIN

Thousands of years ago, deep below Novitas in the magical caverns of Voltanicus, the humans and elves who were originally the Smith's folk slowly became the dour Earthkin. Their close proximity to the magic of the Smith and long exposure to the bowels of Novitas had seeped into their very bones, causing them to become a part of it. While Voltanicus was destroyed in the chaos after the dark powers were released, the Earthkin survived, and even today thrive.

Earthkin are a race of subterranean miners and craftsmen. Their proximity and affinity for the earth causes small nodules and gemstones to grow from their skin. Earthkin live in the Kingdom of Terra, and their underground capital of Earthhold sprawls beneath the glittering ceiling of a vast cavern. Their culture is law abiding, harmonious, and respects strength, good craftsmanship, and strong ale, which they drink prodigiously. They are an urban and social race, gathering together in their huge underground halls to mine, smelt and smith together. A typical Earthkin is slow to act, deliberate, taciturn, and untrusting of strangers - but once you have gained their trust, they are loyal friends.

Earthkin hate Snow Goblins, and dislike elves. Humans of all lands are welcome as long as they follow the laws. Faekin are alternately a welcome distraction and a nuisance with their frivolity. Drakes are accorded much respect. Earthkin worship the Sept. Some few venerate Grak the Destroyer, but they are usually not found in the cities.

Earthkin must affix at least five coin sized gemstones to clearly visible areas of their body with prosthetic adhesive. Earthkin are also encouraged to darken their skin with grey or brown make-up, but this is optional. Their costume is typical medieval European garb, tending towards dark colors and earth tones. Earthkin often wear aprons. Jewelry of metals and gemstones are common. Their warriors fight with whatever they are most comfortable with, but they exhibit a general trend toward axes, hammers, maces and pole arms.

Costuming Difficulty:

Very easy and inexpensive

All Earthkin gain Racial Language: Terran for free at first level.

ELVES

Elves are long lived humanoids with pointy ears. While similar to humans, the typical Elf can expect to live about 300 years. This tends to make them more patient, and less ambitious, than other races. For an Elf, there's always tomorrow. And the day after. Or the day after that. Elves in Novitas live in two distinct countries, the Great Forest (who refer to themselves as Wood Elves) and The Realms of Evenandra (who refer to themselves as High Elves).

All Elves gain Racial Language: Elvish for free at first level.

WOOD ELVES

The Wood Elves of the Great Forest are chaotic and loosely organized. They have no cities that serve as capitals or trade centers - everyone lives in small villages and farming settlements.





Wood Elves dislike the staid Earthkin, and get along well with Faekin. They laugh at elves from The Elven Realms, respect Drakes, and judge most everyone else on their individual merits.

They worship the Sept, when they bother to pray. Their religious observances tend to resemble parties more than services, and Wood Elves are not known for their piety.

Wood Elves must wear ear tip prosthetics. These must be affixed with prosthetic adhesive and blended with the surrounding skin using make-up. Their dress tends towards earth tones – mostly browns and greens. Warriors tend to use missile weapons, bows, or two swords, and avoid heavy armor.

Costuming Difficulty:
Fairly easy and inexpensive

HIGH ELVES

In stark contrast to the Wood Elves, the elves of Evenandra are urbane, lawful, socially stratified, aloof, and dignified. They revere the study of the magical arts and Alchemy, at the expense of martial prowess. They like trade, but engage in unfair trade practices like tariffs and quotas to always gain a favorable advantage (which agitates the Empire of Civen).

Elves in The Realms of Evenandra are fascinated by Drakes, and accord them much respect. They enjoy the company of Faekin (who they view as entertaining), tolerate Wood Elves and humans from the Empire, dislike Earthkin and Snow Goblins, and have outlawed tribesmen from Dellin and priests from Vlean.

They worship the Sept with great pomp and circumstance, if less sincerity.

Their costume is long ears and finery. Elves must wear ear tip prosthetics. These must be affixed with prosthetic adhesive and blended with the surrounding skin using make-up. Their clothing tends to be rich and ornate, if not always practical. Warriors (such as they are) tend to use spear, bow, or sword and shield – but elves from The Realms are far more likely to make their way in the world as scholars, mages, or alchemists.

Costuming Difficulty:
Fairly easy, but expensive



FAEKIN

Faekin are human, Earthkin or Elvish individuals whose ancestry indicates a dalliance with a fae. The evidence of the union appears every few generations. As the Faekin grows up, his hair and eyes gradually change color to indicate the type of ancestor he is descended from - brown for brownies, green for dryads, blue for nyads, etc. Almost any color can be rationalized, and the coloring of a Faekin often gives a clue about his demeanor. Red Faekin might have fiery tempers, while green Faekin might be earthy and wise. By the time the Faekin reaches adulthood, he is clearly different from his family and friends. (The change to Faekin ALWAYS takes place before a character enters the game. Characters who do not start as Faekin at first level will NEVER change to a Faekin during play.)

Faekin have no cities and no homeland. They tend to be flighty and irreverent wanderers and adventurers, rarely staying in one place for very long. They laugh frequently, and have a generally cheerful demeanor.

Faekin like elves and humans, although the repressive government of the Theocracy of Vlean disgusts





them. They sometimes find Earthkin society too dour, and Snow Goblins too cruel. Tribesmen alternately terrify and delight them. They avoid Drakes, as a Drake's dedication to study and scholarly pursuits is totally alien to them, and makes them uncomfortable. Faekin venerate the Sept, with varying degrees of piety.

Their costume can reflect any background, or none, as they are wanderers. The distinguishing characteristic of a Faekin is colored costume contact lenses and a matching wig or colored hair. All facial hair must be colored to match the contacts, and a player must color his hair or wear a wig – you can't claim your natural hair color is "red enough", nor may you be bald. It should be visibly different and unnatural. Likewise, it is never acceptable to say that your green eyes are "green enough". Costume contacts are a required part of the costume. Faekin warriors reflect their varied ancestries, and anything is possible.

Faekin who choose to play a character who was an elf or Earthkin before undergoing their change in adolescence are required to fulfill the racial makeup requirements of both races, although their race is always considered to be Faekin. Faekin who grew up as Earthkin will need to wear the appropriate gems with their Faekin contacts and wig; players who are playing an Elvish Faekin are required to wear ear tips exactly as elves along with their Faekin requirements.

Costuming Difficulty:

Fairly easy, but expensive

All Faekin gain Racial Language: Sylvan at first level for free. Faekin players who choose to play Elvish Faekin additionally get Racial Language: Elvish. Those who choose to play an Earthkin Faekin get Racial Language: Terran in addition to Racial Language: Sylvan.

HUMANS

Humans in Novitas come in three basic varieties: citizens of the Empire of Civen, barbarians from the Dellin Tribelands, and subjects of the Theocracy of Vlean.



CIVENITES (EMPIRE OF CIVEN)

The Empire of Civen is grounded in democracy, industry, free trade, and the rule of law. It is an urban society, and its citizens congregate together in several large towns and cities. Their capital is Civenopolis. Their culture is a Greco-Roman amalgam.

Civenites judge people on their individual merits. Individual merit is judged mainly by the size of your purse. Drakes are highly respected. Priests from Vlean are outlawed, and although Septons are still not uncommon they are often viewed with suspicion by government officials. Civenites like Earthkin and Elves, and tolerate Snow Goblins. Tribesmen are allowed until they start breaking stuff or killing people.

They worship the Sept, but religion is separate from government, and individual citizens exhibit varying degrees of piety.

Their costume is typical Roman or Greek garb of any class. Togas, robes, tunics and skirts are common for men and women. Warriors tend to use swords and shields or spears. Some films that give a good idea of life in Civen are Troy, 300, Gladiator, and the HBO series Rome.

Costuming Difficulty:

Fairly easy and inexpensive





DELLIN TRIBESMEN (DELLIN TRIBELANDS)

Tribesmen believe in force of arms, self-reliance, martial prowess, and a lot of drinking. They are hard fighters and even harder partiers. Tribesmen are a nomadic, tribal race. When tribes meet on the steppes of the Tribelands, they are as likely to fight as they are to trade - and sometimes do both! There are no cities in the Dellin Tribelands, and each tribe sees their chief as a king. Their culture is a northern European barbarian amalgam.

Tribesmen judge individuals without respect to their race or country on their physical prowess. Anyone not a warrior is a second-class citizen. Tribesmen are scared of Drakes, although they'd never admit it.

They worship Grak the Destroyer. Individuals sometimes venerate other gods as well.

Their costume is typical dark ages northern European garb. Furs, leathers, and kilts are all common, as is woad and war-paint. Warriors eschew shields as cowardly, but fight with whatever else they feel comfortable with. An Irish or Scottish accent is sometimes affected, and sometimes a Tribesman will simply yell everything using small words. Some films that provide good insight into Tribesmen characters are *Braveheart* and *Conan the Barbarian*.

Costuming Difficulty:
Easy and inexpensive

(VLEANOANS) THE THEOCRACY OF VLEAN

The Theocracy of Vlean is new, having recently (100 years ago) broken away from the Empire of Civen in a vicious civil war. The civil war was precipitated by

a cabal of priests who distrusted the "greedy and atheist" government of the Empire. They believe in religious piety and strong religious government led by strong leaders. The Theocracy of Vlean is a cruel, repressive place, ruled by a council of Septons who often twist the meanings of things to justify their own ends. There is one main city, Vleanoa.

The Theocracy distrusts Civenites and Elves. Tribesmen are outlawed. Drakes are openly welcomed and secretly feared. Earthkin and Snow Goblins are tolerated if they bring trade. Faekin are ignored, or reviled as bastard offspring of monstrous unions.

Everyone worships the Sept with great devoutness. Worship of other deities is officially forbidden. Religion is used to justify many barbarities and crimes, including crushing taxation, slavery, *Jus Primae Noctis*, aggression against their neighboring states, and mutilation as punishment for minor transgressions.

Their costume is typical medieval European garb, but only Septons have finery. Everyone who is anyone in Vlean is a Septon, and everyone else works for them. All nobles from Vlean are also Septons, but not all Septons are nobles. It is rare that an individual from Vlean does not wear the circle of seven somewhere on their person. Good films to watch for insight into Vleanoan culture are *Ladyhawke*, *The Name of the Rose*, and *The Seventh Seal*.

Costuming Difficulty:
Easy and inexpensive



SNOW GOBLINS

Might makes right to a Snow Goblin, and the strong are destined to rule the weak. Failing that, the devious will rule the trusting and stupid. Snow Goblins



possess a fierce sense of honor and personal reputation, and insults or slights are often settled by elaborate duels. Snow Goblins follow their laws, and lawbreakers are punished severely. Snow Goblins live in the Snow Kingdom of Gersh. Their capital is The Fissure, a town cut into the walls of a deep crevasse in the icy plains. Snow Goblin culture is an oriental amalgam, with evil tendencies. It is well known that the leaders of the Gersh are often seen as a malicious, evil, and oppressive regime. However, it is important to note that the average Snow Goblin is often oppressed and unhappy with the state of affairs. As such, many of them turn to lifestyles as merchants, mercenaries, or travelers to get away from this lifestyle. Snow Goblins travelling outside Gersh in an unofficial capacity are pretty much just regular folks trying to make their way in the world.

Snow Goblins typically hate Drakes, as they fear their magical prowess. They see Tribesmen as useful tools, and have no use for Wood Elves, who they see as chaotic and flighty. Likewise Faekin are not liked in Gersh, and no Snow Goblin ever became a Faekin. They tolerate elves from Evenandra as long as they don't make trouble, and welcome trade from the Empire, Terra and the Theocracy. Many powerful Snow Goblins have social and economic contacts in Vlean.

Snow Goblins worship anyone but the Sept, who they see as responsible for their ancient banishment to the frigid north. Worship of Nox, Grak, Darkness, and odd forms of ancestor worship, spiritualism, or animism are all common. Religion is very much a private affair in the Snow Kingdom – there are no public sacrifices or dark rituals held in town squares. Even so, the leadership and nobility of Gersh are fairly open about their homage to the Dark Triumvirate, forcing many of the average citizens to pay lip service to these gods, particularly in the military and government service. However, most of the general population of Snow Goblins actually follows a religious path of animism and ancestor worship.

All Snow Goblins share two distinct traits, white skin and stark white hair. Snow Goblins have long hair of pure white that they often intricately braid or attach bones, decorations, or trophies to. Players are required to completely hide their hair under a long white wig, or be bald. Players may not claim that their own hair is sufficiently white. Players with facial hair must completely cover it with a white fake beard and moustache, or color it white.

Snow Goblins must also cover all exposed skin with white makeup. This need not be completely opaque, but must be noticeably lighter than even a pale-skinned person, particularly on the face. If the player chooses to not put makeup on certain areas, such as the hands, and instead cover them with clothing (like gloves) they cannot remove that clothing unless they first apply makeup to that area.

All Snow Goblins are further required to add at least one item of additional costuming in the form of physical irregularities. These can include :

These irregularities in no way grant the Snow Goblin special abilities or penalties, and once used become a permanent part of the characters costume and may not be discarded later for convenience. Unique additions and irregularities are highly encouraged and will help your character stand out.

- *Pointed ears*
- *Oversized nose*
- *Fangs*
- *Extra limbs*
- *Tail*
- *Extra eye*
- *Deformities (hunchbacked, etc.)*
- *Horns*
- *Large claws*
- *Extra fingers*
- *Costume contacts*
- *Severe ritual scarring*

Snow Goblin clothing is an amalgam of oriental clothing or armor pieces. Warriors fight with standard oriental weapons such as katanas or naginatas, as well as oddly-shaped weapons such as the Klingon Bat'leth from Star Trek, the war fan, butterfly knives, the moon-tooth shovel, or hook swords. For those choosing to play a Snow Goblin, a simple Google Image search for "Chinese kung fu weapons" is extremely interesting and enlightening. Some films that give appropriate cues are Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Seven Samurai, and The Last Samurai, as well as episodes of Star Trek involving Klingons or Ferengi.

Costuming Difficulty:

Moderately difficult and expensive

All Snow Goblins gain Racial Language: Snow Goblin for free at first level.



OTHER CREATURES OF NOVITAS

Those wandering the realms of Novitas will undoubtedly notice that Earthkin, Humans, Elves, Drakes, and Snow Goblins are far from alone in their inhabitation of the realm. While none have documented each individual type of creature that one might encounter, there are known to be 12 different general categories, each with their own unique history, abilities, and place in the realm. These are Constructs, Elementals, Fae, Goblinoids, Humanoids, Insectoids, Lycanthropes, Piscenes, Plants, Reptiles, Spirits, and Undead.

CONSTRUCTS

Made of flesh, of earth, of metals, of magic, the term Construct names any creature brought to life by powerful magics and sciences rather than natural birth. These golems, scarecrows, and homunculi can usually be traced back to their "parent" sorcerer, though it is not uncommon for some types of golems to exist beyond the lifetimes of their creators.

The appearance of a Construct certainly means that the will of a powerful being is in play. Never do golems decide to guard a tower, or sack a village, or rebuild a bridge on their own. Instead they are best understood as the extensions of powerful distant sorcerers. Flesh Golems may be their messengers. Earth Golems their beasts of burden. Iron Golems their war machines. Homunculi their poisoned lovers.

In all cases, the advice is the same: beware.

ELEMENTALS

Elemental creatures are beings native to one of the elemental planes of existence (air, earth, fire, and water) and usually bear traits in keeping with their plane of origin. The two most common sub-categories are elementals and genie. For each type of element, there is a direct opposite. Air is opposed by earth and fire is opposed by water. These opposing characteristics manifest themselves in the creatures' personalities as well as statistics.

FAE

The fae are descendants of a race called faeries in the old world, created by the dreaming god Illumitas. When the trio of dark powers was released upon the world from its prison, the dark ones tainted the hearts of many faeries into malevolent beings. In the aftermath the faeries lay divided into two separate offshoots, differing first and foremost by their general outlook and moral foundation. Today these two types of faeries are

known as dark and light fae.

GOBLINOIDS

The first foe any new adventurer is sure to run across is a member of the twisted races broadly categorized under the term "Goblinoid". While academics have dissected and categorized these creatures, the easiest way to tell if something is a Goblinoid is to follow your nose. If it smells like a bad night at the tavern that you'd rather forget, chances are fairly good that the lumbering idiotic thing in front of you is one of these beasts. And, chances are just as good that he isn't alone.

HUMANOIDS

The term humanoid is a generic one describing many of the sentient bipedal beings who roam the lands of Novitas. In reality, humanoids are anything but generic. Humanoids are spread all throughout the world, living in nearly every environment possible. From the Yetis in their mountain dwellings, to the nomadic, plains-roaming Catfolk, to the underground Skaven, all humanoids have made their mark on the world and have found some way to survive. Outlivings based on their knowledge. Perhaps the humanoid's greatest strength is the wide variety of skills available to them. Some creatures may only know how to hunt and defend themselves like the fearsome, predatory Kazvaks.



INSECTOIDS

Of the wild and dangerous flora and fauna of Novitas, the Insectoids are perhaps the most bizarre creatures wanderers may encounter. These giant bugs, beetles, and the like are found seemingly at random throughout the lands, though curiously they are most numerous in the Freelands themselves.



LYCANTHROPES

Simply put, a lycanthrope is any being who shifts its body and mind between two forms: civilized and bestial. Lycanthropy is a curious matter, part curse, part disease, part psychology. Scholars often say it is the perfect expression of Nox's touch. Others claim that it is a gift shared by Draconus, as transformations take place either in conjunction with lunar cycles or high animal emotions, such as rage, lust, competition, or hunger. Some individuals are infected with Lycanthropy, some inherit it, and others - in rare cases - seek it out.

PISCENES

The Piscenes are the aquatic children of the dragon Pisces. The great dragon found the other races not to his liking and thus traveled far into the seas. It is rumored that he gave intelligence to the sea life, but no detailed information exists.

PLANTS

While the Elemental is the god concerned with agriculture and re-growth, she is also the facet of The Sept that espouses mindless destruction. Faced with the nearly insurmountable task of protecting all flora and

fauna on Novitas, the Elemental was forced to seek help. But rather than beg help of her other brothers and sisters, she chose to create her own guardians.

She took plants of many types, and gave them minds so that they might speak and communicate. She gave them mobility so that they might move about doing her will. She granted them reason, so that they might know right from wrong. She gave them emotions so that they might know passion. Finally, she sent them out into the world to grow and mature.

REPTILES

The races comprising the category of reptiles include a number of bipedal, cold-blooded, scaled creatures of mixed intelligence. Reptilians are an ancient people, children of the dead god Illumitas. When the old god fell, Draconus rose up from the remains and created the true dragons, mythical creatures of ages past. The sordid relationship between drakes and reptiles started long ago when the newly created dragons began subjugating entire species of reptiles to be their servants. This relationship was mutually beneficial at first, as the dragons provided protection for their underlings and taught them many things, including the use of magic.

SPIRITS

Spirits linger between the living world and the afterlife, like a hurricane - a powerful, massive swirling nothingness. Immaterial beings who can stalk the manors and footpaths of their previous existence, Spirits are cousins to the Undead, but their genesis is more remarkable than mere Necromancy or curses.

UNDEAD

Many believe that the undead are a haphazard collection of zombies and ghouls, mindless in their purpose yet single-minded in their malevolence. They point to the roving bands of flesh-eating monstrosities, the shambolic hordes moaning for brains, the reclusive Lich in his subterranean lair, and say that this is evidence of a lack of collusion amongst the various undead.

Mortals who would meddle in the affairs of the undying would do well to move with extreme caution, lest they become that which they seek to destroy. The undead are not forgiving, their reach is long, and their memories are infinite.



PLAYER NOTES

[illegible]

