



IIThe Shrouded Lands

Hexcrawl Setting Write-up

Once the setting is developed enough to have coherent regions, I'll write-up outlines for each region and organize the hexes by region, but right now we just have a network of interesting hexes. What follows is a description of various hexes and the connections between them. The entries have been edited slightly, merged in some cases and hooks that have already been addressed in the thread have been deleted or amended.

If you want to contribute to this project, just skim through until you find a hook that looks interesting and address it in the thread. For an index of creatures, gods and other miscellania see the end of this document.

Hex 00.06

The Ocean of Bitter Regrets

Connects to hex: 01.07, 02.07 and 31.07.

With Hex 00.06 begins the Ocean of Bitter Regrets which stretches far away to the west. All sailors know that it is foolish to drink sea water. This is nowhere the case as much as with the Sea of Bitter Regrets for even a small sip of the water immediately brings to mind one's most bitter memories. Strong warriors have been known to collapse in tears after drinking from the ocean, an effect that persists even in the evaporated residue of the ocean (i.e. sea salt).

One of the many dangers of this ocean is the great wereshark that swims in it, attacking all shipping that it comes across. In days past one of the greatest of the Pirate Kings was a storm giant whose pride was only exceeded by his greed. He raided far and wide, adorning his cloud palace with treasure from a dozen nations. On one of his raids he managed to capture a queen of fairy and demanded, as the price of her release, that she grant him a boon. He asked that he be given the strength to smash any ship, even those that sail from the moon and that he become king of all the ocean.

The queen of fairy complied and the Pirate King felt his flesh twist and warp itself into that of a great shark with jaws strong enough to crush any ship. He is now a king indeed, the King of Salt and Brine, but it brings him no pleasure for he can now never return to his lost palace in the clouds and he can keep none of the wealth of any of the ships that he destroys. The King of Salt and Brine can return to his true form but one night a year, the night when he struck his bargain with the queen of fairy, but this but serves to remind him of all that he has lost.

Now he lives only to share his wrath with all he meets, tearing out the hulls of countless ships and tainting the blood of those few who survive his bite with his curse and they become lesser (and non-infectious) weresharks as well. One such unfortunate is Zuc the ogre who now picks through many of the King's wrecks on the coast of the Ocean of Bitter Regrets.

The whales of the Ocean of Bitter Regrets sing and the song must never

cease or the Dreamsong itself will fail. Before the world was made there was the Dreamsong of the Great Dreamer and now only the songs of the whales sustain it and within the Dreamsong the leviathans learn great secrets before their their mothers bring them into this world.

The Dreamsong

Human dreams are feeble things but sometimes even they can touch the Dreamsong in a few moment of deep slumber. Many of these dreamers are found dead in the morning with a smile on their faces but other awake with images that if spoken set the minds of their fellow men on fire.

Few men know this but the druids of the Bitter Coast do and their great redwood didgeridoos (02.07) can call the leviathans up from the depths so that the druids can hear the Dreamsong with their own ears.

Connections: Zuc the ogre, one of the victims of the King, lives in 01.07. The grave of the lost wife of the King lies far to the east (31.07) and east year he tries to reach it and each year he fails. The whales that swim in the ocean can be called by the druids who harvest the great sequoias of Broderick's Grove (02.07).

Hooks:

-How did Zuc the ogre come to be bitten?

-Any other interesting victims (either new weresharks of sunken ships) of the King of Salt and Brine?

-Would killing the King cure his victims of lycanthropy? Is there any way to cure the King himself?

-After the King became a wereshark what happened to his floating cloud palace (the one with all the treasure in it)?

-Where have the druids set up their didgeridoos? What is their goal? Jungian collective unconscious hacking?

-Why don't elves dream?

-Is there any way to enter the Dreamsong?

-What do the whales learn before they are born?

-What would happen if the whales sang no more and the Dreamsong failed? Who is trying to make this happen?

Hex 00.09

Salt Point

Connects to hexes: 01.09, 25.04 and 46.10.

This narrow, mostly barren strip of land juts out into the Ocean of Bitter Regrets (00.06). There is a ruined lighthouse here, but few ships now pass along the coastline here. Long ago, it is said that this lighthouse was operated by the lion priests of the King in Splendour (25.04), those same who ran the Lost Lighthouse (46.10). However, there was a schism between the two lighthouses, and the heretics of the ocean lighthouse were wiped out by their former brethren.

The lighthouse and the old catacombs beneath it are now inhabited by a wizened old monk named Pou Roon. Formerly of the Temple Indivisible (25.14), he was a regular pilgrim to the peaceful place at

Fernsbank (01.09). However, he became frustrated by the presence of other monks there from other cults. He wished greatly to strike them down for their heresy, but the general truce of the area prevented him. Several times he attempted to muster up a crusade from the Shuttered City to Fernsbank, but was met with indifference. At last he withdrew from the Temple and set up residence in the nearby lighthouse. It is he who is responsible for the evil aura that has recently come over Fernbank. His hope is to drive the other cults to make war against each other.

Connections: It is Pou Roon who has disrupted the peace of Fernsbank. The lighthouse itself was built by the same priests of the King in Splendour (25.04) who ran once ran (but did not build) the Lost Lighthouse.

Hooks:

- Why don't ships sail is part Ocean of Bitter Regrets anymore?

- What was the schism that divided the lion priests?

- What remains in the lighthouse and the catacombs of its original owners? Any treasure?

- How is Pou Roon causing the disturbed atmosphere of Fernsbank? Has he made traffick with dark powers?

Hex 01.02

The Scorshia Birches

Connects to hexes: 03.04 and 13.08.

In the northwestern approaches of Mount Scorshia (02.03) lies a difficult to reach stand of trees known as the Scorshia birches. The bark of these trees can be used to brew a subtle tea and if their wood is turned into charcoal, doused in blood and then burned it produces smoke that grants mystical visions concerning the source of the blood. The monks of the dwarven monastery (03.04) (what is the name of that monastery anyway?) value this wood greatly and soak it in their own blood before burning it in the holy forge fires of the Drinker of Iron in order to gain wisdom from its smoke.

Connections: The dwarven monks (03.04) value the birches that grow here, as did the wizard Severard of the Seven Circles, who left a chest of charcoal doused in dragon blood that came from these birches (13.08).

Hooks:

-Where did Severard get the dragon's blood from? Is it all from the same dragon?

-Most of the charcoal in the chest has been doused with dragon's blood. What about the rest?

-Why is the stand of birches difficult to get to?

-What is the source of the wood's magic?

-What visions have the dwarves seen from breathing the smoke?

-Who else wants the wood of the Scorshia birches?

Hex 01.06

The Warbling Coast

Connects to hex: to be added.

A smooth, sandy beach runs for miles along the edge of the ocean here, broken only by the occasional small stream. Trees border the edge of the sand and exotic birds fill the air, making their nests in branches, larger pieces of driftwood and on the occasional rock jutting from the water. Among these birds, there sometimes flies a mystical white raven which some claim serves as a messenger or prophet for some higher being. The bird has only ever been glimpsed for moments at a time among the massive and colorful flocks though, so these claims remain unproven.

Connections: to be added.

Hooks:

- Why have so many different birds chosen this one length of beach to nest, and how do they manage to coexist?

- Is the raven really a divine creature, or just of an unusual colour?

- Some of the especially exotic birds here are probably quite valuable, could one or two such specimens be captured alive (although those attempting such a hunt should be wary of massive swarming flocks)?

Hex 01.07

The Saltwood

Connects to hex: 00.06

The air here is thick with the smell of salt water from the nearby ocean and the woods are filled with coastal creatures. Most of these are what one would expect, but several more unusual magical beasts dwell here as well. Strangest of all are the rumours of those who have seen a particularly large shark swim upriver to this wood from the Warbling Coast. Some even claim to have seen the creature crawl from the water onto a far bank, transforming into a grotesque, mutated ogre and walking off into the woods. Among more civilised folk these are simply rumours, but they are in fact the truth! The Ogre, Zuc, an afflicted wereshark, makes his home in a cabin deep in these woods.

Connections: Zuc was infected by the King of Salt and Brine, a great wereshark that swims through the Ocean of Bitter Regrets (00.06 and points west).

Hooks:

-Some people say the treasures that wash up on nearby beaches all end up in the woods sooner or later. Maybe there are still some in there.

-The more dangerous magical beasts around here have been numerous lately. Maybe someone would pay to have a few hunted to thin their numbers.

-Who is Zuc anyways, and why has he only been seen from a distance? Perhaps he eats those who get too close...

-Zuc is only a symptom of a greater evil. Somewhere out in the waters must swim a true wereshark, the one who infected him. Heroes would do well to hunt down such a menace (see 00.06).

Hex 01.08

Broderick’s Estuary

Connects to hex: 02.07.

Here the miles-long Broderick’s River river meets the vast western sea, widening considerably as it rushes to its salty destination. Flanked by the relatively small Saltwood to the north, and the plains of Fernsbank to the south, the estuary is a popular and relatively safe destination for those land-dwellers who fish to feed their communities. It isn’t without its dangers of course, as the occasional sea monster will find its way inland through these waters, or a drake will follow the river west to sea, but for the most part this is a peaceful place. It is named for a hero of the past, his deeds long-forgotten, his body long-dead and only his name living on.

Connection: upstream from the estuary is Broderick’s Grove (02.07), where druids harvest giant sequoias for the didgeridoos they need to call whales with.

Hooks:

- A massive and ancient kraken has found its way into the waters of the estuary, perhaps by mistake, but it now seems to intend to turn these lands into its own personal kingdom! Heroes of the highest caliber will be needed to face this threat.

- These waters are no stranger to the occasional drake passing through, but rumor has it that a full-blown dragon is coming, intending to carve out an underwater lair beneath the river. The nature of this dragon, friend or foe, remains a mystery though.

- Broderick’s ghost has been seen haunting the area. Perhaps uncovering the lost history of his exploits and properly honoring him would lay him to rest for good.

Hex 01.09

Fernsbank

Connects to hex: 20.04.

The open plains here form a peninsula with the river to the north and ocean to the west, their leafy grasses giving way to long stretches of beach in many places. This is an idyllic place, with little of note living here and no real history to its name. Monks from monasteries far to the north, south, and even east make long journies to this place to meditate and find inner peace, with the fields being a sort of neutral-ground between even diametrically opposed monastic religions.

A renegade monk named Simar claims that under the soil of Fernsbank lies the very clay that was used to form the first humans. If he is correct, that would explain that strange properties of this place (although not the recent changes in it) and why this clay is the only proper material for making clay golems.

Something has corrupted the air here lately, and those who go to find peace have instead found violence and bloodlust. Its cause is a disaffected old monk known as Pou Roon (00.09).

Connections: currently the abbot of the Keepers of the Sainted Foot

(20.04) is spending his time in meditation here. Pou Roon (00.09) has disrupted the peace that once reigned in Fernsbank.

Hooks:

- A discredited scholar is looking to reestablish his name by proving that these plains are not just peaceful, but in fact have some innate mystic aura of calm. He is looking to hire adventurers to investigate.

-Is Simar actually right? What/who made the first humans?

-What happens if clay golems are made out of clay from elsewhere?

Hex 02.03

Mount Scorshia

Connects to hexes: 03.04. 04.06 and 07.01.

Rising above the Draugmere Peaks which loom over the Dwarven Monastery (03.04) kiss the coastline, and extend to the Giant’s Lake (07.01), Mount Scorshia is the highest mountain in the realm, just shy of 14,000 feet. Twisted basalt spires surround the mount, and the giants claim these are their slumbering brothers; when viewed under the long light of sunset one might see sharply carved eyes staring at them from the stone or seem to imagine a giant shifting posture. None of the local people, semi-nomadic shepherds, come near the mountain, believing it is cursed. Only Dwarven monastics, garbed in flowing orange robes and their faces smeared in ash, bear fat, and dyes, come here on pilgrimage in some sort of a test. However, the last group of dwarves to ascend Scorshia never returned.

In the dead of winter no living souls come here, though mountaineers of the past claim to have been saved from an unusually early winter storm by a giant shepherd with a frozen beard, burning white eyes, and a golden cudgel. No one is sure if the mountaineers were delusional, but “The Shepherd” has become a popular story and many believe he hides a treasure under the mountain.

Interestingly enough, all of the people dwelling in or near the mountain range radiate enchantment magic. Strangely, no humans remember where the mountain got its name, but one dragon claims to know. A certain dragon claims that “Scorshia” is a mispronunciation of a draconic terms that means “mother of mountains” or perhaps “the first stone,” draconic is difficult to translate. According to this dragon, when the world was created it began with Mount Scorshia. Although the mountain now stands older than anything else in the world, it still radiates the magic of creation itself. In midwinter, at the heart of the Long Night, if there is a new moon, then Mount Scorshia is as it was at the dawn of days, with neither sun nor moon to rival it. At that time, a spell cast from the summit of the mountain will have its effects and range amplified in difficult to predict ways, for Mount Scorshia is the keystone of the world and to master it is to be as a god.

Connections: The dwarves come from a nearby monastery (03.04) and the petrified giants could be related to the giant who makes his home at Giant’s Lake (07.01). Rhyond Deismark (04.06) is planning an expedition to Mt. Scorshia.

Hooks:

-What befell the Dwarven monks lost on the mountain?

-If there really are slumbering giants what do they wait for?

-Is “The Shepherd” a kindly frost giant, a hill giant pariah, an angel, or a figment of the imagination?

-Who or what was Scorshia? Was some sort of massive epic memory-altering spell cast? Or is the dragon telling the truth? Where does that dragon live?

-Has anyone ever tried to cast spells atop Mount Scorshia on a Midwinter new moon? What happened?

-Who or what created the world?

Hex 02.07

Broderick’s Grove

Connects to hex: 00.06 01.08.

Perhaps it is the rain that blows off the Ocean of Bitter Regrets (00.06), perhaps it is something in the soil, but where Broderick’s River (01.08) rises up to meet the mountains there is a stand of great sequoias that rise far above the riverbanks.

Due to the rough terrain in the area, the trees are generally left to stand in silence except for when druids arrive to cut one to replace the didgeridoos that are too old to properly call the leviathans out of their depths.

Connection: Broderick’s River flow empties out into Broderick’s Estuary (01.08) not far from here. The druids call to the whales of the Ocean of Bitter Regrets (00.06).

Hooks:

-Who was Broderick anyway?

-Where do these druids set up their whale-calling didgeridoos? How do they get the tree trunks there? How does one play a didgeridoo made out of the trunk of a redwood tree?

Hex 02.08

The Tashtan Plains

Connects to hex: 03.08, 04.06 and 13.08.

The low hills of these grassy plains are quiet here, though not eerily so. Small animals graze the grass, the sun and moon shine bright through most days and nights, and the wind often blows gently, unobstructed by walls for miles. Just beneath the surface however writhes a grotesque sight, a massive colony of man-sized centipedes lives in tight tunnels beneath the dirt, their colony’s tunnels extending for miles in all directions beneath most of this part of the plain and descending who-knows how deep.

Connections: Severard of the Seven Circles, a wizard who once lived in 13.08 is responsible for the unnatural growth of the centipedes in the Tashtan Plains. Rhyond Deismirk and Nara Olmstead (based in 04.06) have had some success in an expedition to the Tashtan Plains and have some useful knowledge about it. Recently a pair of rich young citizens of the City of Shuttered Windows crashed their balloon here, after the tragic death of a valet they escaped and are now staying at Uncle Bertie’s (03.08) and want to recover their gilded gondola.

Hooks:

-An unwary digger tunnelled into the bugs’ lair. He’s almost certainly dead, but the entrance he made is still there, for now. This could be a chance to exterminate this vermin menace for good!

-Rumours of treasure in a centipede colony? But why would bugs have treasure?

-It’s been theorized that a forgotten relic of some ancient magic is responsible for the growth of these creatures. Perhaps it could be retrieved. If such a relic exists it is probably in Severard’s tower (13.08).

-Why does such a vast colony of bugs so rarely disturb the pristine surface of the plains?

Hex 03.02

The Ice Mummies

Connects to hex: 03.08.

High up in the mountains is an ancient burial ground in which people were buried (often alive) in pits dug in alpine rubble. The cold dry air of the mountains preserves the bodies so that their features can still be made out. Over the centuries the burial grounds were looted by generations of grave robbers, with Maris (the owner of Uncle Bertie’s Trading Post 03.08) cleaning the last few out of the way graves. She found little gold, but many of the grave goods were so ancient and well-preserved that they were valuable anyway, which allowed her to fund her retirement. Some say that she kept one special piece of treasure for herself and refuses to talk of it or show it to anyone.

These days wise travelers hurry past the ice mummies, for the discarded skulls that dot the mountain paths grin evilly and perhaps the ice mummies are not happy at having their rest disturbed and their wealth stolen.

Connection: Maris (03.08) made much of her wealth here.

Hooks:

-What ancient culture buried these people? Is there anything else left of them?

-What were the people who were buried alive given as an offering to?

-Is it true that sprinkling beer across the path will keep any vengeful dead away?

-Are there any graves left that haven’t been looted yet?

-Why were woolly rhinoceroses and other strange beasts buried along with the humans?

-What did Maris find?

Hex 03.04

The Monastery

Connects to hexes: 01.02, 02.03, 03.05, 03.07, 04.02. 04.06, 04.05 and 33.00.

A cadre of dwarves has long lived in a small monastery overlooking the Pool of the Firebirds. Occasionally, the dwarves travel in pairs - never more than two, never less than two - to the pool to collect small orange stones. Outside of the monastery the dwarves will interact with others in a friendly manner. However, they will never speak about what happens inside their monastery. Each dwarf carries an iron symbol shaped as a firebird, the symbol of The Drinker of Iron, the dwarven god of the forge.

A dwarf vagrant also roams these lands; he claims to be the former master of the monastery who was driven out during a coup d'état. He claims that an evil presence has taken hold of his former Brothers.

This dwarf, once known as Father Dorek, did indeed once lead the monastery. Before his ouster, he often took long walks in the forgotten tunnels beneath the dwarven monastery while contemplating the mysteries of the divine. On one such ramble, he came across a passage of tunnel that radiated heat and, when he ran his hands along the tunnel wall, the pattern warm areas spelled out the dwarven Forge Rune, or at least so Dorek claimed.

Excitement raced through the old dwarf and he quickly sent for mining equipment and delved into the rock for the source of the heat. There he found, encased in the rock, a being of fire and smoke. To Father Dorek, this creature could only be an avatar of The Drinker of Iron, and he set about freeing the creature from the rock that imprisoned it.

Alarmed at Father Dorek's apparent heresy, and even more alarmed at the thought of a monster loose in their halls, the Brothers of the monastery ousted Father Dorek from his position and his home and packed him off screaming of disloyalty and evil. Too afraid to confront the being of fire and smoke, they redirected the flow of the springs of the mountain to pour through the tunnel where Dorek found the creature, hoping that water would rob the creature of its power.

So far it seems that the plan of the dwarven Brothers has worked. That spring water, heated by the imprisoned being of fire and smoke, now pours out in a mountain pool. Enjoying the heat of his new pool, firebirds came to bathe there from their distant nests, which the Brothers took as a sign of divine approval for their actions.

At night, strange cries from deep in the mountain can be heard by the dwarven monks and strange orange rocks have begun to turn up at the Pool of the Firebirds. These rocks, perhaps the tears of their prisoner, become smoky orange gems of breathtaking beauty when cut correctly. Every so often two dwarves of the monastery are chosen by lot to venture to the Pool of the Firebirds, one to gather the orange stones and one to ensure that the gatherer keeps none for himself.

Connections: the ousted Father Dorek maintains a small shrine (03.07) and the being of fire and smoke provides the heat that warms the Pool of the Firebirds (04.05). The monastery can be reached by climbing the Long Stairs (03.05). Monks from the monastery sometimes climb Mount Scorshia (02.03) as some kind of pilgrimage or test. The mountain of 04.02 (the Drinker's Mouth) is holy to the monks' god (the Drinker of Iron). The dragon cultists of Cragsend (04.06) claims seem to indicate that the being of smoke and fire once held the keys to the otherworldly laid of the legendary phoenix. The dwarves make charcoal out of the Scorshia birches (01.02), douse it in their own blood and burn it to gain visions of wisdom from its smoke. Many of these dwarves comes from Titan's Skull (33.00) and have left the decadent dwarven society there.

Hooks:

-Who are the dwarven monks? Where did they come from?

-What exactly is the being of fire and smoke? Was Dorek right about it? Or is it a demon? An elemental? A demigod? How did it wind up imprisoned in solid rock?

-Do the gems that are cut from the orange stones have any interesting properties?

-Who do the dwarves sell the gems to? What have they done with their new income?

-What would happen if the being of fire and smoke ever broke free? What is the vagrant dwarf doing to make this happen?

-What else is down there in the tunnels beneath the monastery?

Hex 03.05

The Long Stairs

Connects to hex: 03.04.

Carved over the long years by neophytes into the very stone of the mountain, a long series of smooth stone steps lead up towards the dwarven monastery (03.04).

The stairs are splotched badly with dove droppings for many of these sacrificial birds flock around the Long Stairs. Some of them have had their feathers dyed orange in honor of the holy color of the Drinker of Iron so that the monks can judge the auspices by watching the course of their flight among their white brothers. The doves also serve to alert the monks to intruders for they always fly into the air in one vast peeping cloud at the approach of strangers.

Connection: the stairs lead to the monastery (03.04)

Hooks:

-Can you really predict the future by looking at birds?

Hex 03.06

The Gardens of Lord Deismark

Connects to hex: 04.06.

The rocky landscape of Cragsend (04.06) continues for miles beyond the village to the southwest. Although seemingly of little value, these stunted mountains contain an interesting feature that was discovered by Jehan Deismirk soon after the death of his father: a small sheltered valley where it never rains or snows and where the weather is always warm. Delighted by his discovery Lord Jehan Deismark had soil carted in to carpet the bare rock of the valley and set up simple irrigation ditches.

Soon enough, the valley bloomed and its produced has helped feed Cragsend. Until the recent trouble with the dragon cult, Lord Jehan Deismirk spent much of his time (especially in winter) in a hunting lodge that he maintains in the valley.

Lord Deismark is proud of his gardens and does not ask many questions as to why this strange feature exists, but others wonder why the peas are blood red and the carrots are as twisted as serpents.

Connection: the gardens are owned by the Lord of Cragsend (04.06).

Hooks:

-What is the cause of this climatic anomaly?

-What's wrong with the vegetables? What affect do they have on the people who eat them?

Hex 03.07

The Shrine of Father Dorek

Connects to hex: 03.04, 03.08 and 04.02.

In the rocky hills of this hex, a vagrant dwarf maintains a small shrine dug into a hillside where as small fire is kept eternally burning with a slow smoky blaze. No matter how far the vagrant dwarf wanders, he always returns here to feed the fire and look mournfully into its flames.

Connections: Father Dorek's story can be found in the write-up of 03.04. The regulars at Uncle Bertie's (03.07) have noticed Father Dorek's Shrine. The mountain of 04.02 (the Drinker's Mouth) is holy to Dorek's god (the Drinker of Iron).

Hooks:

-Is there anything else of interest in hex 03.07?

Hex 03.08

Uncle Bertie's Trading Post

Connects to hexes: 02.08, 03.02, 03.07, 06.10, 07.01, 09.06, 13.03, 29.14.

Here, where the high plains meet the foothills stands the small outpost known as Uncle Bertie's Trading Post. Hunters and trappers come here to resupply before heading out into the foothills and mountains nearby. Uncle Bertie's also offers space in a large hall for people to rest, as well as some poor quality food and ale - often, sausage with goat cheese and turnips.

Uncle Bertie's is owned and operated by a tough, no-nonsense retired adventurer named Maris. She set up shop here some fifteen years ago after a short (but profitable!) career as an adventurer. She is assisted by a goblin known as Shep whose life she saved from a vicious boar. Shep is grateful to Maris and assists her willingly, but secretly longs to return to his tribe. Only his fear of the boar keeps him at the Trading Post.

Ilace and Jerrod

Recently a storm blew in off the Keening Sea and hit the City of Shattered Windows (29.14). The balloons of those fools who were still aloft were blown far and wide, but none farther than that of a minor Elector named Ilace and her brother Jerrod. After their tow cable snapped, they were blown all the way to the Tashtan Plains (02.08) where their golden gondola crashed into a nest of giant centipedes.

Luckily, the thrashing of Jerrod's valet as he was eaten alive so distracted the centipedes that the rest of the party was able to flee to safety. They are currently rooming at Uncle Bertie's Trading Post where Ilace and Jerrod often engage in heated discussions of all manner of subjects:

how to recover the gondola? what duties should Ilace's maid perform for poor Jerrod in his valet-deprived state? should they ask for help from the Delasars (07.04)? is it safe to eat that? should they pawn the rubies in Ilace's earrings? whatever are we to do?

The rubies in question were given as a gift to Ilace last year after a young bravo by the name of Giles Chosard pried them from the eye sockets of an idol that lies in the Ziggurat (06.10).

Connections: The regulars at Uncle Bertie's have noticed Father Dorek's Shrine (03.07). Shep gathers narcotic tea leaves from the ziggurat at 06.10 that can serve as an anti-toxin. It could be possible to make a profit by selling supplies from Uncle Bertie's to the elves of the Timberlode (13.03). A riddling giant (07.01) sometimes frequents the trading post. Maris made a lot of her wealth by raiding the ice mummies (03.02) and sold almost all of her look except for one piece that she keeps hidden and refuses to talk about. Ilace and Jerrod of the City of Shattered Windows (29.14) have been staying at Uncle Bertie's after their balloon crashed in the nearby Tashtan Plains (02.08). Ilace's earrings hold rubies that were stolen from an idol of the Ziggurat (06.10) by Giles Chosard (09.06). Ilace and Jerrod are considering asking the Delasars (07.04) for aid in recovering their gilded gondola and returning home.

Hooks:

-Hunters and trappers have been commenting on a strange site nearby - an ever burning fire! - who, or what, made this strange site? Note: it's the shrine of Father Dorek, see 03.07 for more information.

-Supplies are running low and Maris is growing worried that something has happened to her supply caravan.

-Why did Maris name her trading post Uncle Bertie's?

-Who is this strange little goblin hanging around? Is he a spy? Are there more nearby?

-What happened to Old Willie the trapper? He has not been seen in over three months! Note: see 07.01 for more information about Old Willie.

-Was it wise for Giles to pry the rubies out of the idol's eye sockets? Why did he give them to Ilace?

Hex 03.30

The Cornfields

Connects to hex: 04.31.

This area is covered in ripe fields of corn which seem to grow all year round. The farmers of this crop dwell in a small and dusty village at the centre of the hex. Insular in the extreme, they are also dangerously hostile to anyone who they think they can defeat. However, a show of force will easily cow them into submission.

The corn farmers drug and kidnap unlucky adventurers who pass through their town. They then steal all their victims' possessions and, bizzarely, pull out all their teeth, before dumping them in the nearby Thorny Gulch. The teeth are ground up and used to fertilize the corn crops; each corn has a different property depending on the type of tooth. Molar-corn, for example, grants the ability to crush objects between one's palms. Corn from wisdom teeth is used by shamans of

the corn people, though its exact properties are still a secret.

It is a strange fact of the corn farmers that they consider teeth to be a rich treasure, but have no use for gold or magic items. These objects make them a target for bandits who are rife in the area, so they dispose of them by dropping them down the old well in 04.31. There, the treasure is consumed by the sentient black sphere known as the Nothing.

One would assume that such treasure is irretrievably lost. However, Dormond of the Crooked Oak returned to the Shuttered City (29.14) bearing a single gemstone of unique colour but relatively low value. He claimed that he had traced this gem’s lineage from the Hoard Bank to a party of adventurers lost in the southwest over a century ago. This was proof, he claimed, that matter could be retrieved from within the Sphere. Before he could explain more, however, he disappeared.

Connections: the locals dump unwanted treasure in the Nothing (04.31).

Hooks:

- What other types of corn can be grown, and who would pay for them?

- Tell me more about the bandits of the southwest.

- There must be an incredible treasure hoard hidden inside that Sphere! But how to get it out?

- What’s in Thorny Gulch? Will adventurers survived being dumped there naked and unarmed?

Hex 04.00

The Nests of the Kagu

Connects to hex: the Kagu claim sovereignty over nearby hexes and 29.14.

Although the aarakocra tribe known as the Kagu nests here, they claim all of the land from the Giant’s Lake (07.01) to the east, Mount Scorshia (02.03) to the south, the Ocean of Bitter Regrets to the east (00.06 and points west) and as far as they care to fly to the north, feeding on wild mountain sheep and the like. Luckily for travelers of these remote mountains, the Kagu can generally be bought off with “shinies.” They know little and care less about what objects humans value and prefer objects that are shiny and that they haven’t seen before. Especially shiny tribute can even secure one of the Kagu as a guide. However, most of the Kagu speak no language aside from their own and travelers who do not respond to their shrieks about “shinies!” with gifts will be attacked (generally by having rocks dropped on their heads from just beyond arrow range and similar tactics).

High in their mountain nests the Aarakocra possess a single enormous ruby. They claim that if it is ever removed from its place in their shrine a great evil will come over the world, but perhaps they are merely trying to scare away treasure hunters. Several decades ago, one of the storm giant Pirate Kings was not so dissuaded and unwisely sailed his cloud castle away from the coast and into the mountains where it was shattered.

Connections: the Kagu claim sovereignty over nearby hexes. The Doge of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) keeps a band of aarakocra as slaves and other notables of that city might be interested in procuring

some aarakocra slaves of their own.

Hooks:

-What will really happen if the aarakocras’ ruby is taken?

-How did the aarakocra defeat a storm giant?

-What god do the aarakocra worship at their shrine? Or is the object of their veneration just some powerful creature that claims to be a god?

Hex 04.02

The Drinker’s Mouth

Connects to hexes: 03.04, 03.07 and 05.05.

Rising behind the dwarven monastery is an ancient volcano. Even the elves of the Kingswood do not remember the last time it erupted but the dwarves say that it will vomit forth pure molten iron on the appointed day. For the first time in centuries, however, smoke has started to leak out of the ancient peak. Only the dwarves have noticed thus far, as it only happens at night and only on those nights when the black dog prowls the Glass Rapids (05.05).

Connections: Smoke only comes from the Drinker’s Mouth on the nights when the black dog prowls the Glass Rapids (05.05). The Drinker’s Mouth is holy to the worshippers of the dwarven forge god, the Drinker of Iron, both the monks (03.04) and the ousted Father Dorek (03.07). They do not take kindly non-dwarves intruding on its holy slopes.

Hooks:

-When will the volcano erupt?

-What is the connection between the old volcano and the black dog?

Hex 04.05

The Pool of the Firebirds

Connects to hexes: 03.04, 03.07 and 04.06.

High in the mountains, a series of hot springs feed into a steaming pool where the beautiful and elusive firebirds fly from their distant nesting grounds to splash and cavort. In a series of mist-shrouded waterfalls, the overflowing waters of the pool flow down to the valley floor far below.

As long as a firebird lives, its feathers give off a warm glow as of a bonfire just past its peak and a single caged bird can easily light an entire feasting hall throughout the night. Many of sought to brave the dangers of the mountains to capture a living firebird, but the cliffs below the Pool have proven steep and the perils many...

Connections: The dwarves of a nearby monastery (03.04) frequent the Pool and collect orange stones from it. Father Dorek (a wandering dwarf who maintains a small shrine (03.07) is also interested in this pool for reasons of his own. The dragon cultists of Cragsend (04.06) believe that ritually sacrificing firebirds will help to awaken the legendary phoenix, which plays an important role in their beliefs.

Hooks:

-Who would be interested in buying a captured firebird? Who already owns at least one? Why?

-Who has succeeded in capturing a firebird?

-Can firebirds be used as a material component for any magic? Are they favored as sacrifices by any cult?

-Does the pool have any magical properties?

-Where do the firebirds nest?

-What is the origin of the firebirds?

-What dangers lurk in this hex?

Hex 04.06

Cragsend

Connects to hex: 02.03, 02.08, 03.04, 03.06, 04.05, 04.07, 05.05, 05.06, 18.07 and 31.04.

A miserable village which began as a refugee camp during wartime, Cragsend has scant arable land, being surrounded by crags and rocky badlands. Half the population are permanent residents, the other half are shepherds practicing transhumance. Few realize that the village rests on the precipice of a ley line contested by the Seelie and Unseelie fey long ago. The ley line seems to flow between Glass Rapids (05.05) and Cragsend; strange humming blue crystalline deposits mark the path of the ley line traces for the uninitiated eye.

Cragsend’s first lord was a refugee mage, but eventually she turned to the dark arts; the people revolted, burned her at the stake, and today the Witch Queen’s name has been stricken from all books. They say her ashes were placed in a magically sealed lead urn which was buried in the Mocking Hills (04.07) so that she would not return by any ritual.

The current lord, Jehan Deismirk, struggles to retain control of the village against a rising dragon cult led by the charismatic cleric turned sorcerer Edrin Tain. Once Tain led the local temple, but was constantly stymied by the pagan and savage ways of Cragsend folk. When a fearsome dragon appeared one day, darkening the skies, he took is as a sign of the gods’ justice and righteous wrath. Tain’s cult of dragon-worshippers sacrifice firebirds captured from the Pool of the Firebirds (04.05), believing these actions will awaken the phoenix so that the dragon may mate with her and bear offspring which will usher in a terrible era of draconic glory. Esoteric books held in the dragon cult’s secret library detail an ancient elemental being of fire and smoke which once held the keys to the the phoenix’s otherworldly lair. This being may indeed be the very one found at the dwarven monastery (03.04).

A group of mercenaries led by Rhyond Deismirk, Lord Deismirk’s illegitimate son, are preparing an expedition to Mt. Scorshia (02.03) and are hiring able adventurers; Rhyond is an honorable but merciless leader who often comes into conflict with other strong-willed individuals. The trip to Mt. Scorshia (02.08) will not be the young bastard’s first such expedition. He has previously enjoyed some success at the Tashtan Plains (02.08) and, while he did not bring back any great treasures, he was able to recover some equipment from some of the centipedes’ previous victims. His success was mostly due to an alchemical compound developed by his lieutenant, a half elven

sorceress named Nara Olmsted, that keeps most centipedes away most of the time. However, Rhyond was not able to save one of his crew of mercenaries from being eaten alive by centipedes in a most unpleasant manner. The victim’s family is now among the most fervent adherents of Edrin Tain and nurse a deep grudge against all Deismirks.

Connections: Rhyond Deismirk is planning an expedition to Mt. Scorshia (02.03) and he has knowledge about the Tashtan Plains (02.08), there are books here that seem to speak of the being of smoke and fire imprisoned at the dwarven monastery (03.04), there is dragon cult that sacrifices firebirds (04.05), the Witch Queen who used to rule this area has here ashes buried at the Mocking Hills (04.07), there is a ley line between here and the Glass Rapids (05.05) and dwarves might have been smuggled through the Battle Hills (05.06) to Cragsend. Lord Deismark owns extensive property beyond the village itself (03.06). Cragsend was founded by refugees from the Citadel of the Verlimes (18.07). Nara Olmsted hails from Olmsted Keep (31.04).

Hooks:

-To reconcile differences between fighting humans and dwarves, the PCs are directed to find evidence that dwarves once smuggled refugees through the Trench and Battle Hills (05.06) to Cragsend.

-Why is Rhyond Deismirk going to Mt. Scorshia?

-The dragon cult led by Edrin Tain has begun preaching in the day, using uncovered draconic prophecies to captivate and terrify the people of Cragsend. Lord Deismirk seeks to discredit them but to do that he needs to know where these draconic prophecies came from.

Hex 04.07

The Mocking Hills

Connects to hex: 04.06, 04.08 and 30.15.

The foothills running through this hex are short but steep, with many areas of scree and sparse vegetation. Because of their steepness, there are a number of areas within it that could be described almost as chasms, intersecting to form a shallow but hard-to-climb maze. More than one traveler has lost his or her way amongst the Mocking Hills, nearly (or actually!) starving to death before escaping.

Some claim that the area is haunted by some sort of malicious beasts that can speak, but others claim this to be mere superstition. Nonetheless, the nearby Dogtar tribe (04.08) uses a trek through a portion of the Mocking Hills as a test of adulthood, and most of the locals return safely. Despite this, some insist that they heard mocking laughter and/or saw some sort of terrifically ugly quadruped stalking the forlorn hills.

Connections: young Dogtar (04.08) warriors are initiated here. The ashes of the Witch Queen who once ruled Cragsend (04.06) are buried here. Bogarus Bolger of the Wedding Band (30.15) is seeking to buy captured leucrotta from these hills.

Hooks:

Are the rumored ugly quadrupeds real, and what are they? (Note: they seem to be leucrotta).

Who are the nearby locals that send their youths into the canyons and gullies of the Mocking Hills, and why do the rumored monsters not

molest them?

Might there be lost treasures amongst the hills, lost by travelers or adventurers who did not escape? Might there be an organization dedicated to seeking such treasures?

Hex 04.08

The Plains of Dogtur

Connects to hexes: 04.07 and 05.07

The long yellow grass of this wide expanse of plains moves lazily in the wind and hides the presence of the multitude of wild dogs that live in the area. The dogs make these plains a dangerous place for most common people, but there are some who have adapted. The nomadic people of the plains live in a mobile village called Dogtur, and capture and train the wild dogs of the plains to serve as hunters, guardians, and faithful companions.

The people of Dogtur only ever remain in one place for a few weeks at a time, picking up their village and moving it according to some unknown pattern understood only by the local shamans, though always staying in the same general location, known as the Plains of Dogtur. The do this partly out of a mistrust of outsiders and anyone not of their home is likely to be met by a ring of posts surrounding their village, each with a guard dog tied to it and warriors standing ready. Those few outsiders who have been allowed in to the town don't often understand why, but describe it as a surprisingly peaceful place for a town with such strong warriors that move about in such dangerous terrain. Most are not granted access a second time however, and some have met their end from this unexpected hostility.

The Chasm of the Hounds

Few know why the shamans of the Dogtur choose to move their camp constantly around the plains. However, if they were ever to set up permanent residence in the area, they would soon learn. An evil curse was placed upon these plains, which takes the form of a massive sinkhole opening up suddenly beneath one's feet. Though it can appear anywhere, the sinkhole is most often drawn toward large concentrations of human activity, especially if they stay in one place for too long. None have settled for longer than a month in this place before they draw the attention of the terrible chasm.

Those who approach the chasm from the side, or somehow survive its initial assault, will find it possible to descend into that place and visit the tunnels beyond. No matter where the sinkhole appears, the same tunnels will be found, right down to the items (and skeletons) left there by previous delvers. The tunnels are inhabited primarily by dogs. Some are harmless, while others are vicious. The most dangerous are the enormous wolfhounds, big as boars, who can bite a man in two.

These tunnels are the source of the Dogtur Plains' profusion of dogs. However, nobody is sure where the dogs originate from. Rumour has it that deep within the catacombs there resides an ur-dog, an enormous bitch with a hundred teats, constantly suckling one brood while she swells up with the next.

Connections: 05.07 is a prime hunting spot for the Dogtar people and young Dogtar warriors are initiated by trekking through the Mocking Hills (04.07).

Hooks:

- The people of Dogtur are welcoming you with open arms! This is a rare occasion...What could they possibly want?

- What otherworldly treasures are to be found in the chasm?

- Who placed the curse on the plains originally? Did it target the Dogtur, or are they just unfortunate bystanders?

- What other types of dog-monsters dwell here?

- Has anyone tried to settle these plains and been swallowed up by the pit?

Hex 04.31

The Nothing

Connects to hex: 03.30, 13.08 and 29.14.

Deep below the plains lies a large cavern (approximately 180' in diameter) with perfectly smooth walls. The cavern can be accessed by a small well shaft on an abandoned farmstead. Inside the cavern is a sphere, 30' in diameter that is as black as the darkest night. In fact, this is a sentient Sphere of Annihilation.

The Sphere awakened at the dawn of time as a mere spec in the fabric of reality. Slowly, over the countless millenia The Sphere has grown in size as it carved out this small chamber. The Sphere has limited mobility, moving less than one inch a year and seems to drift aimlessly around its chamber (in as much as anyone can actually observe its movements).

The chamber was first discovered by Dormond of the Crooked Oak, an apprentice to the wizard Severard of the Seven Circles (13.08) (Dormand is also the author of the Treatise on Magics Related to Matter and Spirit). The wizard spent the next three decades observing and analyzing this strange entity. During this time he was able to make contact with this entity; and was able to conclude that it was, in fact, sentient. The entity was able to communicate a limited number of words in the language of the earth (rock, water, mineral, etc.).

Dormond was last heard from a little over a decade ago when he surfaced to publish his treatise.

Connections: Dormond was the apprentice of Severard, a mage who once lived at 13.08. Local farmers (03.30) dump unwanted treasure in the Nothing. The High Priest of the Creche of a Million Young (29.14) claims to be Dormond but never removes his robe or veil.

Hooks:

What happened to Dormond? Note: nobody knows for sure but the High Priest of the Creche of a Million Young (29.14) claims to be Dormond but never removes his robe or veil.

What clues about the entity did Dormond write into his treatise?

Who else may be aware of the existence of The Sphere?

Hex 05.04

The Glass River Winery

Connects to hex: 05.05, 07.04 and 13.03.

Abutting the flat stone plains that the Glass River runs through is an unusual winery whose proprietor, Abdul Zassiz, is well-known locally for being a rather shady character. Although Abdul masquerades as a normal human vintner, he is actually a tiefling in disguise.

Abdul treats his customers fairly, but they always feel as though they have been swindled or tricked somehow. The few individuals who have visited the winery after dark always report that the place is full to the brim with scurrilous characters, yet nobody ever sees those same characters during the day or elsewhere. Despite all of this, his customers tend to come back for more, as his wine seems to be of exceptional quality.

Abdul does indeed treat his customers fairly, from his own point of view. Humans require two things from their food and drink: pleasure and nutrition and Abdul provides both of them. It just so happens that the pleasure comes from subtle illusion magic and the nutrition comes from a wide range of food sources that, for reasons Abdul fails to understand, humans have some reservations about. The larvae of many insects are incredibly high in protein and long term storage of meat in vats of yogurt is an excellent way to preserve it. As for what the "wine" is actually made of, it is best not to know.

Despite Abdul's honest intentions, some of his customers sense that something is amiss, but lack the means of piercing his enchantments in order to discern what it is. Some of Abdul's night-time regulars are able to tell what the other customers are actually eating, which is a great source of humor among them.

Although there are no vineyards in the area, Abdul is able to purchase supplies from a nearby source, the Castle of the Poor Brothers (07.04). This castle was built by an order of monks on a rocky tor that towers over the surrounding countryside but it has since fallen into the hands of the Delasar family. Travelers who pass by the castle note its extensive and fertile gardens, which produce far more large coarse vegetables than are needed to feed Lord Delasar's small retinue of servants and men-at-arms, even when his sales to Abdul are taken into account.

Connections: the winery draws its water from the Glass Rapids (05.05). It could be possible to make a profit by selling wine from the Glass River Winery to the elves of the Timberlode (13.03). Abdul buys his supplies from Lord Delasar of the Castle of the Poor Brothers (07.04).

Hooks:

-Who are Abdul's after-dark customers? Where do they come from and where do they go?

-Why does Abdul maintain the fiction that he is human rather than tiefling?

Hex 05.05

The Glass Rapids

Connects to hexes: 04.02 04.05, 04.06, 05.04, 05.07, 07.06 and 15.07

A rushing river breaks the silence of the otherwise smooth stone landscape, the rocks just beneath its surface strangely crystalline in appearance, and sharp enough to be deadly for one caught in the fast flow of the current. From its source in the mountains, the river flows

several miles to the south-east before pouring abruptly into a gaping hole in the ground. At night, strange, almost festive sounds come from the caves in the hole, and the riverbed glows with a soft green light.

The caverns that run under the Glass Rapids extend an enormous distance and have never been thoroughly mapped. In the upper caverns fungus grows abundantly in the strange green glow of the riverbanks, nearly covering what appear to be shattered walls of ancient buildings, perhaps carried here by some long-forgotten flood.

On the nights that the singing from the caverns can be heard the most clearly, travelers have also heard the baying of hounds and reports of massive woolly-coated black dogs have been made.

According to those who have consulted the wisdom of The Weeper, the few words that could be made out clearly among the singing translate to "the last child," "the flute of black fire" and "beware!" in a decadent dialect of demonic.

Connections: The Pool of the Firebirds (04.05) is the ultimate source of this short river, the crystalline stones are, strangely enough, a secret ingredient used in the preparation of fried entrails (15.07) and the river itself provides water for the Glass River Winery (05.04). The source of the singing may be the sister of a young Dogtar warrior named Naik who might have sold her to the black dog. He often hunts at (05.07). On those nights that the black dog roams, smoke issues from the old volcano known as the Drinker's Mouth (04.02). A ley line runs between here and Cragsend (04.06). The caverns run southeast from here towards the caves of the Destorying Angel (07.06).

Hooks:

-Why does the landscape seem so unnaturally smooth around the river?

-Aside from helping make delicious fried tripe, what properties do the rocks have? How can they be gathered safely?

-What can be found in the deeper caverns?

-What's up with the black dog?

-Who is the singer and what is the song? Note: it might be the sister of Naik, a young Dogtar warrior (see 05.07).

Hex 05.06

The Trench and the Battle Hills

Connects to hex: 03.07 and 04.06.

This series of rocky ridges extends north by northeast from the Mocking Hills. However, this area is much better mapped and easier to traverse, having been worked by dwarven engineers several centuries ago. However, those dwarves eventually fell victim to internecine conflicts and just as the engineers completed their roads and bridges they began to destroy them. Eventually the conflict consumed the majority of the dwarves in the area, leaving the few surviving clans depleted in numbers past the point of long-term viability. Now only a very few aged individuals yet remain, bitter at their own kind more than they are at traditional dwarven foes such as orcs.

While most of the earthworks were destroyed over the course of the war, the grandest still remains, albeit as a shadow of its former self: a great trench stretching for about three miles, backed by a berm of loose

scree. In most places, the trench has been largely filled by the gradual tumbling of the scree and rocks into it, but in some places its original depth of nearly 40’ is still apparent.

Worse yet, some dwarven tricks and traps yet remain here and there in the Trench: deadfalls, cleverly-concealed spike traps, missile launchers and the like. Within the Trench, supposedly, lie a number of secret entrances into dwarf-built tunnels, some of which are death traps and some of which once functioned as sally points for one side of the dwarven civil war and which might still lead to underground dwarf-halls replete with treasure, or even to small, degenerate groups of derro descended from the original dwarves that lived here, surviving by a mixture of cannibalism and occasional forays into the surrounding areas to capture other creatures for use as slaves, food and breeding stock.

Some speculate that Father Dorek, the vagrant dwarf usually found in the areas around 03.07, is a descendant of the dwarves that once dwelt here, and point to a few ruined shrines to the Drinker of Iron as the scant evidence backing this theory.

Connections: the outcast Father Dorek (03.07) might be connected to these ruins. Some dwarves may have been smuggled from here into Cragsend (04.06).

Hooks:

-How far do the dwarf-tunnels stretch?

-How many derro are there?

-Is Father Dorek really connected to the dwarf ruins? If so, are the derro his kinfolk? Do the others at the monastery know about this?

-What hidden treasures might remain in the ruins?

Hex 05.07

The Watering Hole

Connects to hexes: 04.07, 04.08 and 05.05

This is a favorite hunting ground of the Dogtar people and none of them hunts here more often than a young warrior named Naik. The plains below the mountains are dry, so the wild aurochs often gather at the watering hole that can be found here.

Although it has only been a scant few years since Naik passed his initiation in the Mocking Hills (he has a sharp memory and paid no heed to the screams of women in distress that he seemed to hear, for what did he care for the plight of outsiders?) he has already become well known for his hunting prowess as well as for darker things. It is rumored that on one dark night he went to the glass rapids and struck a bargain with the black dogs that roams the dead rocks that surround those fell waters. What the truth is nobody knows, but soon after the disappearance of his sister, Naik’s favorite dog died giving birth to a litter of fierce black pups with bright red eyes that grow even now with astounding speed.

Connections: the watering hole is a favorite hunting ground for the Dogtar (04.08), the Mocking Hills (04.07) are where Naik was tested and the black dog that Naik struck a bargain with seems to lurk around the Glass Rapids (05.05).

Hooks:

-What is Naik plotting now?

-Is the source of the singing at the Glass Rapids (05.05) Naik’s lost sister? What has happened to her?

Hex 06.05

Badlands Where the Beetles Dwell

Connects to hexes: 04.05, 05.04, 06.06, 07.04 and 08.03.

Rocky fractured terrain emerges from the alluvial silt to the southwest, and extends to the rocky tor where the Castle of the Poor Brothers lies. These badlands have no road, no proper name, and few visitors. The elves call them “where the beetles dwell.” Most of the species encountered here are giant stag beetles which grow up to 4 feet long; these Abdul, proprietor of the Glass River Winery, includes on his menu as a delicacy when the opportunity arises. Properly spiced they taste vaguely of pheasant. However, the stag beetle population is threatened by a species of parasitical fire beetle which eat the stag beetle’s young. During a recent outing one of Abdul’s men – Dag the Scarred – fell into the fire beetle tunnels; though severely burned he claims to have seen a massive cache of buried gold before being rescued. Most dismiss it as the ravings of a man with fire beetle poison in his veins.

Besides Abdul’s men and the occasional elven scout, the only one to visit the badlands is Lady Lativa Delasar. Though she claims to visit the place her first husband died, it is no secret that when she travels to the badlands thunder shakes the earth and lightning storms wrack the tor. She always enters the badlands with only a mute bodyguard and a drunkard carriage driver; inquisitive PCs might learn from the carriage driver that she brings a chest of spell components out to the badlands when she goes. No one knows what goes on there, and few want to.

There are occasional sightings of firebirds dancing over the badlands on springs nights. Sages conjecture that it is some kind of mating ritual, and the firebirds feed on the beetles to sustain their energy during the aerial courtship dances.

Connections: Abdul’s men (05.04) harvest the beetles and Lady Delasar has been seen entering these badlands (07.04). The firebirds (04.05) perform a mating ritual here. The fire beetles were purposely introduced by Dagmar (06.06). Ogwyn Egglurs (08.03) has bred the homonculi from the beetles of the badlands and has even taken one has his wife.

Hooks:

-What is Lady Delasar up to? Is she waking the dead? Are the thunderstorms in fact linked to her magic-working?

-Is there really gold buried in the fire beetle tunnels, or is it something organic that just resembles gold from a distance?

-What draws firebirds from their verdant pool to the badlands 20 miles north?

Hex 06.06

The Dwarven Cairn

Connects to hex: 06.05

Rising out of the plain of the Westmarches is a small stone cairn that was raised by the dwarf Dagmar for his brother. Although Dagmar made sure that his brother’s body was stripped bare after his death, the bones still remain. Dagmar, although hardly the sentimental type, occasionally returns here to brood over his brother’s bones, get raging drunk and scream curses at them.

This Dagmar does a good job of playing the role of a dour and serious dwarven smith, but is nothing of the sort. Pretending to be a smith helps him sell his second-hand weapons and armor and acting like the stuffy honorable dwarves he tries to keep as far away from as possible, make it that much harder for people to tell that he’s robbing them blind. He has dabbled in everything from petty theft, to peddling, to fencing and pawning, to iron mongering to loan sharking, but is seldom able to focus his attention on one thing long enough to make much money. One of his favorite marks are fighting men strong enough to get their hands on valuable loot but ignorant enough to not know its full value.

Dagmar’s greatest weakness (aside from his love for exotic beer) is that while he loves gold, he loves proving just how much smarter he is than everyone else he meets far more. This means that he loves dramatic plots, big hauls and anything that would make a good story rather than quiet steady profits. For example, when trying to sell several crates of surplus chainmail he faced stiff competition in the form of giant stag beetle plate armor and somehow managed to get his hands on fire beetle eggs and buried them around the edges of the badlands (06.05) in order to kill off his competitor’s supply of stag beetles, when simply lowering his prices would’ve been far easier.

Despite all of this Dagmar is still a dwarf and refuses to sleep above ground (digging trenches at night if necessary) and perhaps there is some honor in him buried down under the greed.

Connections: Dagmar planted fire beetle eggs in the Badlands (06.05).

Hooks:

-Who’s making the stag beetle shell armor that Dagmar is trying to sabotage?

-What other mad schemes are worming their way through Dagmar’s head?

-What was the cause of the death of Dagmar’s brother?

Hex 06.10

The Ziggurat

Connects to hex: 03.08 and 09.06.

Within this hex lies a squat ziggurat made of blocks carved from greenschist. It has been overgrown with exotic vines bearing violet flowers not native to the region.

The vegetation transforms into grasping pythons when climbed upon, pulling the unwary inside and feeding them to the snake-demon imprisoned within.

The violet flowers that blossom on the vines can be brewed into a narcotic tea that offers a sense of euphoria. Knowledgeable characters can brew a tea that offers resistance to poison.

Shep the goblin from Uncle Bertie’s Trading Post (03.08) gathers the tea for sale in Uncle Bertie’s Trading Post at Maris’ behest. He is jealous

of his treasure and will lead others to their doom.

Connection: Shep the goblin lives at Uncle Bertie’s Trading Post (03.08). One of the idols of the temple had its ruby eyes pried out by Giles Chosard (09.06) and they now are set in the earrings of a young Elector named Ilace who is currently staying at Uncle Bertie’s Trading Post (03.08).

Hooks:

- How is the snake-demon imprisoned? Who imprisoned it?

- How does Shep gather the tea without being killed?

Hex 07.01

The Giant’s Lake

Connects to hex: 03.08, 05.04 and 15.07.

A nameless storm giant often wanders down from the mountains and into the lowlands below, accosting all he meets with a wager. For 10 gold, he will give a listener three chances to guess his riddle - about an item that he has crafted (and is carrying with him in a chest). Those who win the wager win the item. The giant changes his riddle for each new item he crafts, which is easily 20-100 times the wager fee. It generally takes him between a week and a month to craft a new item.

An example riddle:

“Seabound stone of ivory

In silver chains of three and three

The proud prize of Neptune

Taken, not given, by the hand of man

To adorn the heart of lady’s vanity.”

Answer (and prize), a pearl necklace.

Although the nameless storm giant spends much of his days wandering the lowlands to the east, he makes his home in a small isle within the Giant’s Lake.

Very little rain falls in the secluded mountain valley that houses this lake, so when the weather is dry and the sun hot a thick layer of salt forms over the brine of this ancient lake, which is thick enough to walk on and reflects the sky like a great mirror.

The storm giant claims that the surrounding mountains are actually giants that have been turned to stone and that the salt of the lake is the dried residue of their tears. He does not harass the migratory birds that flock the lake when the rains come but he drives off any sentient creature he sees approaching the lake.

The location of the lake is not well known by the humans of the east, but Old Willie often came down from the mountains with bags of salt, which sold well at Uncle Bertie’s Trading Post. Since his disappearance, the trading post has been running low on salt, much to the consternation of the locals that rely on it to preserve their meat.

Connections: The storm giant makes regular visits to Uncle Bertie’s Trading Post (03.08) and KFE (15.07), where he gets most of his

wagers. He knows of, and refuses to deal with Abdul and his winery (05.04).

Hooks:

-Why does the giant engage in a game of riddles for his items?

-What happened to Old Willie. Did the giant kill him for stealing salt?

-The story about the petrified giants isn't really true, is it?

Hex 07.04

The Castle of the Poor Brothers

Connects to hexes: 05.04 and 06.05.

Although there are no vineyards in the area, Abdul (05.04) is able to purchase supplies from a nearby source, the Castle of the Poor Brothers. This castle was built by an order of monks on a rocky tor that towers over the surrounding countryside but it has since fallen into the hands of the Delasar family. Travelers who pass by the castle note its extensive and fertile gardens, which produce far more large coarse vegetables than are needed to feed Lord Delasar's small retinue of servants and men-at-arms, even when his sales to Abdul are taken into account.

Connections: Lord Delasar sells some of the produce of his gardens to the Glass River Winery (05.04). Lady Delasar has been seen entering the badlands (06.04), presumably to conduct some sort of strange ritual. The Delars once lived in a more humble mansion (07.04) and some of their in-laws remain there still.

Hooks:

-Where is the rest of the produce of Lord Delasar's gardens going? Is he feeding some thing(s) hidden away in his castle? Note: at least some of it is sent to the Old Delarsar Mansion (07.04).

-What happened to the monks who built the castle (the Poor Brothers)?

-How many of the horrible rumors about Lady Delasar are actually true?

Hex 07.06

The Destroying Angel

Connects to hex: 05.05

The plains here are patchy and dry. Only a few hardy souls live in this expanse, farming the bitter and grotesque creeper-fruits that crawl across the ground.

One landmark of note is a narrow cleft in the surface of the plain, which leads down a shaft into a series of lightless caverns. These are in fact a continuation of the caves that run from the Glass Rapids (05.05) and beneath the Dwarven Cairn at (06.06). The river is not hard to find, and indeed it may be the only orienting landmark in this dark maze.

There are no rats, rust monsters, orcs or other subterranean monstrosities in these caverns. They have all been driven out long ago. There is only one creature - if creature it be - that stalks the tunnels

now: the Destroying Angel. The ill-fated Uther Molvard, last man to escape the caverns alive, describes it as being something like an enormous bat, slithering across walls or floor before rising up suddenly to smother. He saw it engulf one of his men and swallow him whole, while two others seemed transfixed by its soft keening voice. On the other hand, Molvard also claims to have encountered the monster a second time before he escaped, and this time he survived by employing a screen of fire (this latter piece of information he will not give over without due compensation).

Rumour has it that the glassy waters of the river become perfected in this underground environment, and eventually turn to clear diamond-like jewels of great value. None such have yet been retrieved, however.

Connection: this area is a continuation of the caverns that the Glass Rapids (05.05) run into.

Hooks:

- Why are the fruits of this land considered grotesque?

- Where is Uther Molvard now?

- What is the Destroying Angel and where did it come from?

- Does the river carry on any further under the ground?

- Is it possible to travel from these caverns up to the entrance at the Glass Rapids?

Hex 08.03

The Old Delasar Mansion

Connects to hexes: 06.05, 07.04 and 29.14.

Several decades ago, the Delasar family (07.04) still dwelt in their ancestral abode, a sprawling and decaying mansion in the midst of an overgrown parkland. However, they grew envious of the larger and more imposing castle nearby, inhabited by the monks known as the Poor Brothers. One night, all the Poor Brothers vanished together, leaving a rather suspicious deed which signed over all their lands to the Delasars. The rotting old mansion was abandoned, and the Lord and Lady Delasar moved into their current apartments.

Since that time, the woods around the mansion have grown even more wild, and the mansion itself more decayed. It is not entirely uninhabited, though. The Lady Delasar's demented brother, Ogwyn Egglurs, refused to quit the home where he had lived most of his adult life, and he dwells there still. To keep him company, his sister has conjured up a tribe of homonculi, half-man and half-beetle, created in the beetle badlands (06.05). Each homonculus is roughly three feet tall, vaguely insectoid, and vicious when provoked. Ogwyn has even taken a she-beetle to be his wife. Part of the Delasar's sumptous vegetable crop goes to feeding this population.

The mansion is large and old and some branches of it have not been properly explored since long before the Delasars left. Rumour has it that the Lady uses the place to store her more esoteric treasures and spellbooks. However, the beetle-men will fight to defend the mansion and their master.

Connections: the Delasars now live in the Castle of the Poor Brothers (08.03) and Ogwyn Egglurs has bred the homonculi from the beetles of the badlands (06.05). Some say that the High Priest of the Creche

of a Million Young (29.14) is in fact Ogwyn Egglurs.

Hooks:

- How did the Delasars get rid of the Poor Brothers, and where are they now?

- From where does the Egglurs family hail?

- What other secrets lurk in the Delasar family history? Does dark sorcery come from this side of the family, or from the Egglurs'?

Hex 09.06

The Treasure Stash of Giles Chosard

Connects to hexes: 03.08, 06.10 and 29.14.

In an otherwise-uninteresting stretch of plains a young bravo named Giles Chosard has stashed a collection of treasure and equipment under a large rock.

After committing crimes that the Priests of the Temple Invisible will take a man's tongue out for speaking of, the father of Giles Chosard barely escaped the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) with his life for lands far to the south. There the man, who had once been a wealthy Elector, filled his young son's ears with tales of his lost home, the greatest and most beautiful city on the face of the world: the high towers ringed with walkways that seem to stretch to touch the bright balloons that sail through the sky, the ladies clad in bright feathers, the great beasts howling their death cries within the Wedding Band (30.15) and all the rest.

When he came of age, Giles Chosard took passage to the Shrouded Lands, but found the gates of Shuttered barred to him. Since then he has wandered the Westmarches seeking enough glory and wealth to blot out the misdeeds of his father and allow him to set foot in the glorious City.

He has pried out the gems of an idol in the ziggurat (06.10) and gave them freely to a lady of the city (Ilace, currently located at 03.08 after a ballooning mishap) among several other adventures. Giles has quick hands and a quicker tongue, but he is not nearly as good of a swordsman as he believes himself to be and much of his success has come from more luck than skill. To citizens of the City, Giles Chosard cuts a somewhat ridiculous figure, his clothing and manner slavishly follows the fashions in the City during his father's day and in all ways he tries to act how he believes a gentleman of the City should act, taking such things far more seriously than any of the actual inhabitants of the city do.

Connects to hexes: Giles' father was exiled from Shuttered (29.14). He has taken the gems of the eyes of an idol in the zuggurat (06.10) and has given them to Ilace (03.08).

Hooks:

-What crime did Giles' father commit?

-Just what kind of things does Giles do because that's what he thinks is the proper way for a gentleman of Shuttered to act?

-What adventures has Giles gone on?

-What treasure lies in his stash?

Hex 10.09

The Haunted Statue

Connects to hex: 10.10

This is a pleasant hex of low rolling hills dotted with wildflowers and small clumps of trees offering quiet green shade. Or at least it would be quiet green shade if not for the giant bees (10.10) that often fly through this area.

The most notable feature of this hex is a life size alabaster statue of an impossibly beautiful maiden. During one night a year in the high summer a strange haunting lament in an unknown tongue comes of the statue, as if the statue was singing it. The locals dismiss the statue as "haunted" and steer clear of it, which would be wise to do in any case as the wild growth of wildflowers that can be found around the pedestal draws the giant bees.

However, behind the wildflowers are strange runes written into the pedestal of the statue and is it not strange that the statue has not been worn down in the slightest by wind and rain?

Connection: the bees that fly through this area come from 10.10.

Hook:

-What is the statue singing about? Why does it sing?

Hex 10.10

Bees! Giant Bees!

Connects to hex: 10.10 and 13.08.

Although Severard now lies dead (see 13.08), his creations yet multiply. Away from his tower, his experimental giant bee colony fills a large copse of trees with its dreadful buzzing. The bees that live here range out miles from their hive, seeking the sweet nectar of the purple kingscrown flowers. The locals, while they wisely fear to approach the hive, do go in the dead of winter (when the bees lie mostly dormant) to gather honey. The locals are willing to kill any intruders who attempt to poach their honey, for the purple mead that can be made from is their only valuable trade good.

Connection: Severard of the Seven Circles, a wizard who once lived in 13.08 is responsible for the unnatural growth of the bees in this hex. 10.10 is a feeding ground of the bees.

Hooks:

-Who are the locals who harvest the honey?

-What makes the purple giant bee honey so valuable?

Hex 11.01

The Goblins of the Mountain Woods

Connects to hexes: 03.08, 14.00, 16.04 and 38.05.

Wherever there is an oak tree there is sure to be a goblin, but the most well-known of the goblin tribes of these lands is the Zoar Rajak of the Grey Mountains. They live in a wooded valley high in the mountains and seldom venture into the lands below, except of course to plant acorns in the surrounding areas, but instead live in hollows among the roots of their beloved oak trees. The goblins greatly pity those among them who become separated from their valley, such as poor Shep the goblin who lives at Uncle Bertie’s Trading Post.

Although goblins are thin and stunted and do not seem to be dangerous opponents, enemies who venture into their home valley will find the forest itself ranged against them, branches will whip at their faces, roots will trip them and their feet will always find unexpected holes.

The Zoar Rajak do not allow outsiders within their valley, but have been known to deal fairly with humans beyond it, rumors of maidens having their throats slit so that their blood may nourish growing oak trees notwithstanding.

The goblins are not used to taking orders from anyone but all of them will listen to a powerful (or mad or mad and powerful) shaman whose mistletoe-shrouded oak grows far above the rest and has somehow survived multiple lightning strikes. But these days the goblins, even their shaman, are at their wits end. A great oak blight has entered the valley, causing great suffering among the goblins and they are willing to do anything to rid their trees of it. Many goblins blame the great bear, Thorek Ironhide (14.00) himself, for this affliction and are currently plotting against him.

Connection: this is where Shep the goblin comes from (see 03.08). These goblins are somehow related to the cave-dwelling hobgoblins (16.04). A goblin wizard whose spirit now possess a great deal tree (38.05) in the Kingswood was exiled by his people. The goblins blame Thorek Ironhide (14.00) for the blight that has come over their beloved oaks.

Hooks:

-Was the blight really caused by Thorek Ironhide? How can it be cured?

-What exactly is the nature of the connection between goblins and oak trees?

-What kind of magic can the goblins call down while dancing and howling about their trees on moonless nights?

-Tell me more about the shaman!

Hex 11.08

The Bolger Freehold

Connects to hexes: 10.10, 13.06, 29.14, 30.15

The Bolger Freehold is home to the (very) extended family of Bolger halflings. In their lands they raise thoroughbred racing ostriches, vegetables, wheat and large families as well as maintaining their famous giant bee honey meadery (with honey from 10.10).

They are a close-knit bunch with most Bolgers marrying distant cousins. This has its benefits, but it also makes Bolger politics incredibly nasty as most local issues soon become overshadowed by what the other party’s aunt did. It eventually got so bad that after the death of Honorius Bolger in the wake of the Great Noodle Scandal,

that the halflings began to hire mayors from among the tall folk in order to have neutral arbiters. They are called Plenipotentiaries for the Maintenance of Comity and the Promotion of Weal and have almost unlimited power during their tenure, but they can be impeached and in one case the impeachment proceedings began during the dessert course of the inauguration feast. These Plenipotentiaries can be nearly anyone but are often the younger sons of the nobility of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14), with which the Bolgers maintain warm relations.

Some of the Bolger family has even settled in and around Shuttered most famously Bogarus Bolger, a gladiatorial manager at the Wedding Band (30.15). It seems like there is one child like Bogarus in every Bolger family, a child who is not content with the quiet life at the freehold who cause their parents great stress as they end up doing anything from trying to apprentice themselves to wizards to taking up painting.

Currently many of the Bolgers want to hire on a new Plenipotentiary as there is much work to be done. Mead supplies are running low as the ettins (13.06) demand much of it and seldom pay and the giant bees themselves have been dying for some reason that eludes the halflings. In addition, there is much planning to be done before the next Purple Smoke Derby, which is traditionally held before planting so that the dung of the champion ostrich can fertilize the fields.

Connections: the Bolgers get the honey for their mead from the giant bees (10.10), they are being bullied by the ettins (13.06) but have warm relations with Shuttered (29.14) and Bogarus Bolger (30.15) is one of their clan, albeit a black sheep.

Hooks:

-Who is the current Plenipotentiary for the Maintenance of Comity and the Promotion of Weal and how close are they to resigning in frustration or being impeached?

-Aside from Bogarus, who are some of the other black sheep of the Bolger family?

-Why is the Purple Smoke Derby called that?

-Does giant bee mead have any special properties?

Hex 13.01

The Skullcrusher Orcs

Connects to hexes 14.00 and 43.08

Long ago the Weeper’s daughter (43.08) was part of a raid that wiped out the warriors of an orcish encampment west of the Titan’s Skull (33.00). In the battle’s aftermath the orcish children remained and she faced down a fanatic who sought to put them to the sword and a cutthroat who sought to sell them to the dwarven mines.

After some travails, she arranged for them to be cared for in a secluded mountain valley of what is now the Winterjarl’s marche (14.00). The generations of orcs, and some humans, who have lived there have now become the Skullcrusher Orcs. Although their benefactor has now disappeared, they still remember her and what she has taught them. These orcs do not attack intelligent creatures, although they will defend themselves if attacked. But even then they attempt to smash the

limbs of their attackers with the hammers that they customarily carry rather than kill and do not kill children. But orcs (or at least half-orcs) they remain and those who are unable to calm to heat of their blood and commit murder are exiled forever.

Some of these orcs view their orcish ancestry as a curse and bear no children but instead adopt orphaned and abandoned orcs (and in some cases other children as well) in order to honor the memory of their people’s original savior. Others among the Skullcrushers are of a more pragmatic bent, including the new chieftain a great muscular half-orc by the name of Goram, who left the previous chief in the mountains with a pair of broken kneecaps after a disagreement over who had killed the deer they were both hunting.

These orcs have no gift for farming and are mediocre hunters, but the Weeper’s daughter taught their ancestors something of woodwork and they are skillful carpenters and their furniture, although it has none of the artistry of elven work, is sturdily-made and has a certain simple elegance.

Connections: the orcs pay tribute to the Winterjarl and were created due to the actions of the daughter of the Weeper (43.08).

Hooks:

-If the Skullcrusher Orcs are pacifists (at least by orcish standards) why are they called “Skullcrusher?”

-Is the old clan chief still alive? What is Goram planning next?

-Have any of the orcs adopted any interesting non-orc orphans?

-Who would pay the Skullcrusher orcs for their carpentry?

-What happened to the Weeper’s daughter anyway? Who was she? See 46.10 as well for a story that might be about her.

-The orc tribes to the west of the Titan’s Skull have been mentioned a few times, what are they like?

Hex 13.03

The Timberlode

Connects to hexes: 03.08, 05.0 and 13.03 (and points east).

Set in a rocky plain and reached via a meandering footpath rises the fifteen-foot walls of a stout timber fortress which are manned by a group of war-like, xenophobic elves (and their families). Oddly enough, the wood of the fortress is made of cut logs, and the whole structure appears to be fairly new, and very crude-looking.

Though the elves seem in desperate need of supplies, they are unwilling to leave their fort and unwilling to trust outsiders. If they can are befriended, they would be willing to trade for a laundry list of supplies from the trading post (03.08), and willing to pay much coin for wine from Abdul (05.04).

Connections: it could be profitable to sell these elves supplies bought at 03.08 and 05.04. The elves of the Timberlode were exiled from the Kingswood (13.03 and points east).

Hooks

-How did the elves come to be in this fortress, and who built it?

-Why are the elves so xenophobic about others?

Hex 13.06

Ettin Castle

Connects to hexes: 13.08, 29.14, 33.16 and 40.06

Alvise Ettienne was once a wealthy and respected silk merchant and a noble of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14). All of that began to change when the old Doge died and an election was announced. He gathered with the other electors in the Old Council Tower and during the lengthy proceedings of the ducal election, he felt greatly honored when he was chosen as one of the Forty.

A message was duly sent to the Brothers of the Grove (33.16) so that the augurs could determine which Twelve of the Forty would proceed to the next stage of the election. Due to a cow-related mishap, Alvise was declared the twelfth Elector to proceed to the next stage of the elections, but so were two others, which necessitated legal and bodily combination so that the election could proceed as the God of the City had obviously decreed.

At first the priests of the Temple Indivisible were somewhat perplexed as to how this feat could be accomplished. Happily, Severard of the Seven Circles (13.08) had arrived at the election festivities as an uninvited guest with the Lady (40.06) herself on his arm. And so, while the priests of the Temple staved off the effects of blood loss, the Lady removed the heads of Georj Casteneu and Irabelle Vantissee and grafted them to Alvise’s shoulders. In order to compensate for the increased blood flow that the additional heads required, Severard increased the size of Alvise’s body, while keeping his head at its old size.

Alvise Ettienne, Georj Casteneu and Irabella Vantissee were declared one person indivisible and the election was allowed to proceed, much to the relief of the assembled electors who had been stuck in the Old Council Tower the whole time, and despite some unfortunate screaming the new being cast its vote and the election proceeded. At this time the households of the three were merged, which resulted in some complicated domestic arrangements, especially after Dovan Vantissee was presented with the headless body of his wife and took some extreme measures in response.

Several years later, after a sharp discussion with an incompetent gardener, Alvise Ettienne was surprised to discover that a residue of the Lady’s magic remained and that if a freshly severed head was pressed to his body it would graft itself to his flesh and survive. Thereafter Alvise expanded his collection of heads, which caused something of a scandal in Shuttered. He exercised his prerogatives as a noble of the City but was eventually forced out.

He took his family with him, which now included nine sons named Alvise who soon grew to match the size of their father, and settled on the western edge of the Freeholds, where he built a wooden keep as tall as it is ugly that is now known as Ettin Castle. He raises goats and extracts tolls from travellers and is always on the lookout for a promising new head, but is careful not to so antagonize his neighbors that they would ally against him, for he was a noble of the City and is a politician still. In any case, whenever he kills someone Irabella natters on about it in his ear for days and Georj’s rambling monologues get stranger and louder.

At Ettin Castle, the Alvises have learned several things about the enchantment that affects them. Heads that are added retain their original memories and skills, which the other heads can access. However, being introduced suddenly to an ettin's body is not pleasant and drives many heads to madness. The primary head is able to keep the others in line most of the time if it has a strong will, but if it is weak-willed or not careful in the choosing of its heads then the new heads can do anything from screaming warnings to those the ettin is trying to ambush, to begging for death during combat, to even wrestling with the primary head for control of the body.

The elder Alwise had already commissioned a crown and plans to proclaim himself King of the Giants when the time is ripe. There are just a few more preparations left...

Connections: Severard (13.08) and the Lady (40.06) created the ettins with the help of the priests of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) due to the augury of the Brothers of the Grove (33.16).

Hooks:

-What “extreme measures” did Dovan Vantisse take?

-How much power do Irabella and Georj have over the body that they share with Alwise (and various new heads).

-What about the nine younger Alvises? What heads have they collected? What are their relationships like with their new heads? Do any of them have children of their own? Did any of them try to graft a chicken head to their elbow? What happened?

-Except for the ettins, who else lives at Ettin Castle? Are any of the family members of the three heads still about?

-Who did Alwise commission a crown from? That sounds like a hard job.

-What preparations is Alwise making before he crowns himself king and tries to carve out a kingdom?

Hex 13.08

The Tangled Web

Connect to hex: 01.02, 02.08, 10.10, 13.06, 13.08, 15.07 and 18.10.

Within this hex lies a pleasant farming village, overgrown with web that glisten in the daylight. The webs are as strong as steel and their glistening patterns (in daylight only) enchant the mind, drawing beings into a maze of tunnels, which close behind them.

This is the den of a spider of foul intelligence and her brood. From her creche, which she never leaves, she can manipulate the web. She will open and close paths to lead victims towards her, but she relies on vibrations from the web to locate her prey. Once they reach her, she will trap them and store them to feed her hungry children. She is fond of conversation and will spare those who converse with her - until the other, more boring food runs out, that is.

Characters who move carefully through the webs will find that they provide a safe place to rest.

Exploring the well-made houses reveals the skeletons of large families, many livestock, good tools, and some luxury goods.

Captain Keith (see 15.07) once found himself trapped within the spider’s lair, but was able to convince her to let him go after spinning wondrous tales. Now he has a deal with the spider: in exchange for more tales, which he collects from visitors to his eatery, he gathers the entrails and riches of her victims. He has been known to lead adventurers to their doom here - especially wealthy ones.

At the heart of the web-shrouded village lies an abandoned wizard tower. It was once the home of Severard of the Seven Circles and his apprentices. The village that grew up around his tower was ruled and protected by him and he set about improving the lives of the villagers through the rational application of magic. Some of the locals chafed at his demands that they do all things “rationally” but most considered it a small price to pay for his aid and protection.

As the village, then known as Severard’s Town, grew the wizard became annoyed by constant talk about food production and set about solving the problem. He developed magic that could greatly increase the growth of animals and tested it on centipedes and bees. He set up colonies of these creatures both west in the Tashtan Plains and as well as to the east (hexes 2.08 and 10.10) in order to study them, caring little about their effects on others.

He was wrapping up his experiments on spider growth and preparing to move on to chickens and other delicious animals when, in a moment of carelessness, he was poisoned and killed by his prize spider specimen. He villagers became concerned when Severard failed to come out of his tower and cats and other small animals began to disappear from the village. But by the time that they had gathered up enough courage to venture into Severard’s tower it was too late. The spider had grown too large and too cunning and drove the villagers from their homes and cast her webs across the villager. Perhaps a means to reverse the magical growth of animals lies within Severard of the Seven Circle’s tower, but none have been able to retrieve it.

A chest full of Scorshia birch charcoal (01.02), most of which has been doused in dragon blood and marked with runes in powdered lead, lies within Severard of the Seven Circle’s tower. Opening the chest’s lock successfully triggers a darkness spell, which is a good thing as if the albino snake that hibernates within the chest is disturbed by any light at all (even that of torches) it will awake from its enchanted slumber and attack.

Connection: Captain Keith’s (see 15.07) arrangement with the spider. Severard of the Seven Circles (whose abandoned tower is in this hex) is responsible for the giant centipedes (02.08) and giant bees (10.10). Severard’s tower contains a treasure chest full of charcoal derived from the valuable Scorshia birches (01.02), made even more valuable by being doused in dragon blood. One of Seveard’s apprentices was Barnabus Bludenose (18.10). The new High Priest of the Creche of a Million Young (29.14) claims to be carrying on Severard’s legacy. Severard is partially to blame for the creation of the ettins (13.06).

Hooks

- Who is the spider keeping alive in her den?

- Where have the inhabitants of this place gone? What would they do to get their homes back? What happened to Severard’s apprentices?

-Why was he called Severard “of the Seven Circles?” What circles?

-What is the means of reversing animal growth that lies within Severard’s tower?

-A wizard’s tower must have some other interesting things in it. Right?

- Where can one find the cure for ghouлизм?

Hex 14.00

The Cave of the Winterjarl

Connects to hexes: the surrounding area, specifically 13.01 and 15.01, and 11.01

This heavily forested and mountainous area is home to a power sapient bear, one of the mighty nordanbjorn. This bjornajarl, Thorek Ironhide, dwells in a cave halfway up the mountain with his sleuth of lesser bears. The nordanbjorn have few material possessions and no knowledge of technology; however, they have a rich oral culture and their epic sagas recount events that may have occurred many centuries ago. One of Thorek Ironhide’s subordinates is an old bear-bard named One-Eyed Kevanjr, who is said to be able to recite in their entirety seven sagas of seven days’ duration each.

The bjornajarl does not spend much time in his cave, for he is usually roaming the lands of his marche, an area deemed to be under his protection. This marche extends to the following hexes: 12.01, 13.00, 13.01, 14.00, 14.01, 15.01, 14.02. Within these hexes, monsters are much less prevalent, but instead it is possible to meet the Winterjarl or some other bears. Any attempt to disrupt the peace of the marche is dealt with harshly. The people who live in the marche have no choice in the matter, but most of them greatly respect Ironhide for bringing peace to their lands.

The Zoar Rajak of 11.01 feel differently. They believe that Ironhide is responsible for the blight upon their oak trees, that he is dabbling with foul sorceries from an accursed cave high up on his mountain. Meticulous explorers will discover that there is indeed a cave from which eerie lights issue on cloudy nights; but this cave is higher than the one where the nordanbjorn traditionally dwell. Thorek Ironhide scoffs at the goblins’ accusations and denies even the existence of the upper cave.

Connections: some nearby goblins (11.01) blame the nordabjorn for the blight that has come over their oak trees. The small village that was founded by the troll Prophet of Grahakzahak (15.01) is part of the marche of the bjornajarl as are the Skullcrusher Orcs (13.01) who are more peaceful than their name suggests. The acolytes of the Farthest Hermitage (15.00) pay tribute to the winterjarl in the form of manual labor.

Hooks:

- Who lives in the marche, and what is their relationship to the bjornajarl? Partial answer the troll Prophet (15.01).

- What is the truth behind the dispute between the goblins and the bears?

- What’s in the accursed cave, and is Thorek responsible for it?

- Where else have the nordanbjorn established themselves in this world?

Hex 15.00

The Farthest Hermitage

Connects to hexes: 14.00 and 29.14.

In a mountain that lies above the cave of the winterjarl (14.00) lies that cave that houses the Farthest Hermitage, the most distant outpost of the God of the City of Shuttered Windows. Some priests of the Temple Indivisible use this to claim that all land between here and the Keening Sea is the rightful territory of the City but the hermits care little about such matters.

For a hermitage, the cave is strangely bustling and at its heart lies a radiant ball of light that stands immobile in the air. The hermits gather around it in meditation and as all worries flow from their minds their bodily functions slow and gradually stop until they die in ecstasy.

When one of the hermits die, their body is dragged out and one of the acolytes take their place. Some older priests of Alberon come here, some weary of the politics of the City and some exiled here due to those politics, along with others who come seeking peace.

Being so close to the wave of the winterjarl, the Farthest Hermitage is relatively secure, which is a good thing as few of the acolytes are warriors. In return, the acolytes various various unpleasant tasks for the bears such as mucking out their sleeping quarters.

Connections: the Hermitage is under the protection of the winterjarl (14.00) and its brothers are mostly drawn from Shuttered (29.14).

Hooks:

-Who has been exiled here?

-What is the glowing ball anyway? What do people think it is?

Hex 15.01

The Monolith of Grahakzahak

Connects to hex:: 14.00

The troll known as the Prophet of Grahakzahak (a troll god whose name means “he of 99 heads” or, more figuratively, “he who has grown a 99th head after the first 98 were chopped off”) is a strange troll indeed. He wanders these lands carrying a bastard sword in one hand like a scalpel (the pommel of which resembles a mouth opened in a never-ending scream). He asks all travelers who he encounters to join him in prayer to Grahakzahak and consume a slice of his flesh, which he helpfully removes with his sword, so that the glory of all of the heads of his god may enter. Those who eat of a troll’s flesh find themselves changed by this experience...

Those who refuse to worship Grahakzahak enrage his prophet, but combat can be avoided if one is clever and polite. Any rudeness will result in sudden violence in which the Prophet attacks with the sword in one hand while biting and grabbing at his enemy. He will focus his attacks on whoever he judges to have been least respectful for Grahakzahak.

The Prophet maintains his home around a great monolith that he has raised and inscribed with rough troll runes at the foot of the Grey Mountains. The monolith is surrounded by a rude village in which worshipers of various races live under the protection of the Prophet. The Prophet pays tribute to Thorek Ironhide (14.00), as he believes that this is necessary to keep his village safe while he is away proselytizing, but resents doing so.

Connection: the Prophet grudgingly pays tribute to Thorek Ironhide (14.00).

Hooks:

-Where did the troll get his sword from? Is it magical?

-What happens if you eat troll flesh? What change has come over the villagers from having done so repeatedly?

-What is the Prophet planning to do to get out of having to pay tribute to Thorek Ironhide?

Hex 15.04

The Breen Holding

Connects to hex: 16.04 and 17.03.

Thad Breen is just the sort of man who would think that keeping a “tame” ankheg was a good idea. He has buried four wives and has recently married a fifth and he is not used to being contradicted by anyone on his holding, for the whole place is populated by nothing but his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and some cowed in-laws.

The tunnels that the ankheg has dug beneath his fields seem to have improved their fertility and he buys cartloads of dung from his neighbors in order to help keep the thing fed. His own brood know its habits well enough to avoid it but as it has grown it has increased its range and it has recently torn a field hand at a neighboring holding to pieces. Thad blamed the nearby hobgoblins (16.04) for this death, but he is wondering what to do with the creature, perhaps if he fed it more...

Connections: Thad Breen blames the nearby hobgoblins (16.04) for a death that was caused by his “tame” ankheg. Thad claims to know how to break the curse of the Last Scirmish (17.03).

Hooks:

-How did Thad Breen get an ankheg?

Hex 15.07

KFE!

Connects to hexes: 05.05, 07.01 and 13.08.

KFE or “Keith’s southern Fried Entrails” is a local eatery that is popular among those who would enjoy tripe. Captain Keith uses he secret spice recipe and his patented “southern” style frying technique to cook some tasty entrails. What people don’t know is that “southern” style frying uses the power of the mystical river rocks from the Glass Rapids!

Connection: the mystical river rocks come from the Glass Rapids (05.05) and many of the entrails come from the Tangled Web (13.08). A riddling giant (07.01) sometimes frequents KFE.

Hooks:

How did Keith get the rank of Captain? Is there an army nearby? Was there a war?

Are there any other eateries that would rival KFE?

Who invented the idea of frying entrails? Note: stir-fried trip is eaten in Korea. It is chewy.

Hex 16.04

The Hobgoblin Caves

Connects to hex: 11.01 and 15.04.

The caves that can be found in these rocky hills are inhabited by hobgoblins. Hobs lack whatever it is that binds goblins to oak trees and their affinity for magic along with it, and tend be to lanky and misshapen when compared to their cousins, but are fearsomely strong.

The hobgoblins mostly keep the peace with the humans that live south of here and even attend an annual market in which they trade their shroomwine and shoes, but during lean times they have been known to sneak down towards the lowland farms to rustle ostriches. They avoid killing humans, but it would only take one bloodthirsty band of adventurers to change that...

Connection: the hobgoblins are somehow related to their oak tree-living cousins (11.01). Thad Breen (15.04) has falsely claimed that the hobgoblins have killed a local human.

Hooks:

-Aside from hobgoblins, what can be found in these caves?

-Who are the humans who trade with the hobgoblins?

-Ostriches? Really?

-Why would humans want to buy shroomwine?

Hex 17.03

The Last Skirmish

Connects to hexes: 15.04 and 18.07.

When the Verlimes still styled themselves Dukes (see 18.07), Duke Oster Verlime lead an army (if such a mob, with each man who had brought anyone else along willing shout his name calling himself a general, could be a called an army) against the orc tribes to the west of the Titan’s Skull. After many bloody skirmishes and more inclusive blundering about, the army disbanded and staggered back home.

On the long march southwards, a company of archers somehow mistook a troop of halfling ostrich cavalry for a warg pack and opened fire. Before the two units could get disentangled, the ostriches had run amuck and several men lay crippled or dying.

Even now, the ghosts of the men and halflings scream insults at each other nightly and are accompanied, some say, by the ethereal shrieks of maddened ostriches. For obvious reasons, this land is now unsuitable for agriculture and the locals keep their herds well away from it.

Thad Breen, (15.04) who sometimes claims to have been alive during the Last Skirmish, claims that the ghosts can only be laid to rest if a plow made from a magical sword is drawn through the field of the fight

by a proper red cow.

Connections: Thad Breen (15.04) claims to know how to break the curse and the soldiers whose ghosts are here served under the old Verlime dukes

Hooks:

-Just how old is Thad Breen anyway? There hasn’t been a Verlime duke since the elves sacked their citadel 150 years ago! How does he know about how to break curses? Is he not quite human or just a consummate liar?

-What are the nearby halfling communities like? Do they have an ostrich derby? They really should have an ostrich derby.

-Are there really undead ostriches there? What are they like?

Hex 17.05

Furfoot Freehold

Connects to hex: 37.01.

Several years ago, an expedition was mounted into the Temple by a group of adventurers, led by the brash young Devin Furhoof, heir to the Furhoof Freehold. Alas, disaster struck, and the group was trapped inside when the Long Night ended and the stone door closed. Among the Furhoofs there was much lamenting, and the younger son Petros was marked as the future patriarch of the family. Yet, astonishingly, when the year turned and the Long Night came again, none but Devin Furhoof stumbled out of the Temple alive.

None of Devin’s companions made it out, nor will he speak on what became of them. The poor boy has been driven mad by his experiences, and has so far been unable to coherently explain what happened to him, or how he survived a whole year inside the temple walls. At night, the smallfolk of the Furhoof keep can sometimes hear him muttering from the tower where he is held; most commonly he repeats a few phrases, such as “green fire” and “the pitcher was pulled down.”

Most worryingly, Devin Furhoof is still heir to the family and his father is well into the twilight years of his life. Some whisper that Devin must be put out of his misery before his madness can send the Furhoofs into ruin. Meanwhile, Devin himself has evinced a desire to return to the Temple when the Long Night draws in again.

Connection: the heir to the Freehold seems to have been driven mad by this expedition to the Temple of Seven Shadows which lies near Mirror Lake (37.01).

Hooks:

- What’s inside the Temple of Seven Shadows?

- How did Devin survive for a whole year?

- Why does the Temple only open on the Long Night?

- Are the Furhoofs really going to assassinate one of their own kin?

- Could anyone be foolish enough to sign up, if Devin begins organizing a second expedition?

Hex 17.07

Newhill

Connects to hexes: 18.07 and 25.04.

Newhill is so named because at the time of settlement it was, indeed, a new hill -- kicked up out of the earth from the attack that razed the Citadel of the Verlimes (18.07). Newhill overlooks that damned place and the surroundings. Residents of the freehold claim the air atop their hill is a bit sweeter, the spring waters clearer. Sadly, visitors are probably too creeped out by the scenic view of elementals marching about the old Citadel ruins to notice.

It takes a special brand of crazy or desperate to live within spitting distance of a haunted ruin. The forefathers of Newhill’s current residents were indeed mostly bandits and refugees with no place else they would be welcome. Over the centuries, the peoples of Newhill have become more or less domesticated, but the freehold still has a reputation for being a haven for the rough, the tough, and the mildly insane.

The freehold itself is surrounded by a wooden pallisade, and contains ought much but the family homes of three merchant families that share dominion over the place:

“Maud” Verlime is a bent over crone, who will talk the ear off of anyone willing to listen. She is the overly proud matriarch of the Verlime Who Remained. She is mother to Regulus Verlime of the Sundail Inn (25.04), her least favorite son. She is mother to six others, grandmother to thrice as many, and lives with a pair of sisters who never married or had children. Etched into a stone laying at the center of their impressive sized home are the names of all the firstborn given up to the elves.

One of Maud’s favorite stories, one that she tells over and over to anyone who’s ear she can corner, is personally chasing the famed, masked raider Huu Vo Malkus off of her grazing lands some thirty odd years ago. Of course, the detail she often fails to mention is Malkus absconding with the family’s herd of ostriches. In the decades since, the Verlime herd has been replenished, and currently grazes in the fields surrounding Newhill.

While the name Verlime is practically a curse word throughout most of the freeholds, in Newhill they retain some of their old role as protectors of the region.

The second powerful family are the Pignoses, who claim some orcish blood-- proudly in fact. They are a physically brutish collection of men and women, but in heart usually fairly gentle folk. Big Sal Pignose is the most accomplished of the lot. She’s a successful trader, enough so that she purchased a citizen’s charter from the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14). Her kids are spoiled brats and often get into brawls with the younger of the Verlime.

The third family within the palisades are the Stannev, a family of orchid-tenders and honey-harvesters who share a generational devotion to The King in Splendor, Sword that Slays the Night (25.04). Their temple, The Everwatching Eye, is the only stone structure in Newhill. Currently Loris Stannev serves as the her priest tending to this shrine, but as she ages (nearly 70 now), three of her nephews currently vie to become the new shrine-tender. The competition between the three isn’t entirely friendly, as by tenant the The King in Splendor values open displays of strength.

The Stannev hold a long tradition of alliance with both the Verlime

and Pignoses, often being the family that stands in the middle and mediates any conflict between the two clans.

The Lion’s Day

Six months from the Long Night (28.04) comes the Lion’s Day - the time of the summer solstice when the sun is at its most ascendant. During this day, all clouds are banished from the sky and the temperature climbs high. It is a holiday for the people of the City of Shuttered Windows, who draw closed their shutters and retreat into cool basements to wait out the heat. In the Welt Road, the normally stuffy air becomes practically unbreathable. In the Kingswood, the elves become irascible and often clash with one another.

The occasion is named for the King in Splendor, often depicted as a lion, who is associated with the sun. His worshippers hold it as the most holy day of the year, and perform an intricate rite based around their noonday sundials. It is said that if the ritual does not reach completion at the moment when the sun strikes the dial, then the house will be cursed with ill luck for the rest of the year. Many years ago, the Stannev household botched their ritual; the following year saw three sons of the house murder each other over the position of High Priest, after which their younger sister Loris was forced to take up the position.

Traditions of the King in Splendor’s cult hold that this day is opposed to the unholy time of the Long Night, and it is said that one day the King will return to slay the Night once and for all, bathing the world in eternal summer. Many outside the cult are somewhat disturbed by this prophecy. The night men in particular have a long-standing feud with the Stannevs and other such houses. As a result, the Stannevs tend to speak little about this particular aspect of their faith.

Connections: the Verlimes once ruled their Citadel before the elves marched on it (18.07) and now own the Sundial Inn (25.04).

Hex 18.01

The Lair of the Ostrlich

Connects to hex: 17.03 and 17.05.

The site of the Last Skirmish (17.03) is known by all to be accursed and haunted by the ghosts of men, halflings and ostriches. Yet fewer men are aware of the most terrible undead ostrich of all - the immortal ostrlich who dwells to the north of there.

Certain records indicate that when the halfling cavalry arrived at that fateful place, they were carrying with them a prisoner - the records are damaged and do not state who the prisoner was. It is known that this prisoner carried with them a powerful spell intended to resurrect them after death. However, in the wild melee that ensued, the prisoner was slain and their spell instead passed to the ostrich who had been carrying them. Thus did the strange case of the ostrlich come to be.

The ostrlich does not have the ageless cunning of a true lich. It is still an ostrich, after all. Mostly it is just frightened by everything, which explains why it fled from the skirmish site to the empty barrow in 18.01. However, over the years this fear has turned to madness and the ostrlich, in its pea-brained way, has begun devising traps and summoning undead defenders to protect its lair. It currently resides behind a trapped door in the depths of the barrow, and spends most of its time burying its head in the grey sand (actually the corpse dust of forgotten ancestors).

Six years ago, Devin Furhoof (17.05) and his adventuring companions raided the barrow, acquired some of its loot, and slew the ostrlich. However, being ignorant of the ways of the lich, they failed to destroy its phylactery. Seven days later it rose again at the site of the Last Skirmish, and immediately fled back to its barrow again.

Connections: the Ostrlich was created at the Last Skirmish (17.03) and Devin Furhoof (17.05) raided its lair some time ago.

Hooks:

- Who was the prisoner with the lich-spell, and where did they come from?

- Who built the barrow, and who rested in it before the ostrlich arrived?

- What is the ostrlich’s phylactery?

- Are there any survivors of Furhoof’s companions, or did they all die in the Temple of Seven Shadows?

Hex 18.07

The Shattered Citadel of the Verlimes

Connects to hexes: 04.06, 17.03, 17.07, 20.08, 21.06, 25.04, 29.07 and 29.14.

Not far west from the Sundial Inn (25.04) are the ruined walls of the Shattered Citadel, destroyed by elven siege more than a hundred and fifty years ago. The Verlime were a noble-blooded clan who acted as the protectors of thriving community, eventually claiming for their leader the title of Duke, and willfully provoked the Count of Kingswood with hunting and timbering expeditions into the forest. The elves were slow to respond, but when the inevitable attack came it was overwhelming. The wards the Verlime had arranged were torn like paper, and the stone walls of the Citadel dismantled soon thereafter by a horde of summoned elementals.

The Citadel was razed and the Verlimes punished harshly, hunted down to near extinction. It is said that the last few grandmothers of the Verlime purchased life for their family by agreeing to a generational geas -- the family must ever more give up their firstborn infants to the Court at Kingswood.

The Citadel itself is haunted by the bitter phantoms of the old Verlime generals, and a few elementals left behind to guard the ruins and ensure that no one ever rebuilds. Stories say the cold-iron enchanted elfslayer swords of the old Verlime were not all captured by the Court, and treasure seekers occasionally visit the ruins in hope of gathering some hint from the phantom generals as to the resting places of the Verlime’s lost treasure.

Regulus Verlime of the Sundail is long since tired of treasure-seekers trying pummel him for information about the treasure, and so easily suggests any inquirer visit the Citadel, where he expects the elementals and angry wraiths will deal with the curious.

The wizard who set up the wards that she promised would keep the elves at bay fled when the elven host arrived rather than stand and fight them with the Verlimes. She and her followers kept on running west away from the forest until they ran into the westward mountains, where she established the village of Cragsend and ruled as the Witch Queen.

The Freeholds

The lands surrounding the Citadel of the Verlime were known far and wide for their mild climate and fertile soil, and the House of Verlime built its doomed fortress on the proceeds of the taxes on the farmers who worked those lands. The wine, pipe-weed, and distinctive purple honey produced there were famous as far away as the Bitter Coast, and the region provided much of the grain, pork and ostrich meat necessary to feed the south. When the Citadel of Verlime fell to the elves, many fled for fear that the elves would soon turn their attentions beyond the ruined fortress, but the sack never came.

The next five years were hard on the farmers, and though the elves left them be, bandits and orc raiders were not so kind. Food shortages lead to widespread hunger and some venerable vintages vanished forever. Soon, however, the lean times drove humans and halflings from far and wide to working the fallow fields of the Verlimes, either out of greed or out of a simple desire to have enough to eat. The farms no longer were under the protection of any noble house, but the farmers would pay small bands of mercenaries to protect them from the orcs. To this day, many young adventurers get their start defending the Freehold for the customary wage of 15 sp a day, and many old adventurers retire there after a big score.

Today, though, some of the richest families are beginning to consider themselves aristocracy, and are no longer satisfied with mere wealth. Some, like the noble families they ape, have simply decided to call themselves a House, while others, like the Furhoofs, have bought titles from the Duke, and all five of the Blackwort brothers have purchased citizens’ charters from the City. Worse, wealthy Freeholders are starting to hire their own men at arms, and have started raising their eldest sons and daughters to be warriors instead of farmers, and those would-be knights threaten to tear the community apart with drunken brawls that escalate into violent family feuds.

Connections: Cragsend (04.06) was founded by refugees of the Citadel, the owner of the Sundial Inn (25.04) is a descendant of the rulers of the Citadel and it was destroyed by the Bloodied King (29.07). After destroyed the Citadel, the elves burned the town of Treebrush (20.08). The Verlimes built a beacon tower at the edge of the Kingswood (21.06), it is now abandoned. Some Verline soldiers know haunt the site of the Last Scirmish (17.03). The old Verlime Dukes were were citizens of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14). The remnant of the Verlime clan lives at Newhill (17.07).

Hooks:

-Elves of Kingswood still want human infants. Why?

-Is the treasure of Verlime, including the elfslayer swords, a real thing? Where is it?

-A visiting group of adventurers could easily get drawn into one of the growing feuds.

-Though the elves have let the Freehold be for well over a century, the reason for their restraint is a mystery. Is it one of the terms of their treaty with the Prince of Men?

-Why in blazes is the honey purple? Does this have anything to do with the giant bees?

Hex 18.10

The Weremen of Brindlebrook Swamp

Connects to hexes: 13.08 and 31.04.

This is a strange story that begins with a wizard named Barnabus Bludenoss. Like Dormond of the Crooked Oak, he was a student of the famed wizard Severard, and studied in his tower (13.08) before the unfortunate spider-related incident. Barnabus was, like many wizards, obsessed with the idea of attaining immortal life. He considered becoming a lich, but did not want to be mad, undead, or hated by mortal society. So his researches continued. After ten years of study, Barnabus finally completed his new and bizarre spell: he turned himself into the world’s first were-man.

When Barnabus bites someone, they become infected with a form of lycanthropy. On the full moon, they will transform into clones of Barnabus Bludenoss, with his powers, his desires, and his memories up until the time that the infection was passed on. They even have his clothes - a dark robe and a broad-brimmed hat. In this way, Barnabus plans to live forever as a viral organism.

Some way south of the old Verlime citadel (18.07), there is a dank and wretched swamp. Deep in this foetid place one may come across a small community of wooden huts built in the treetops. Those who dwell there are all weremen of Barnabus Bloodnose. Their close proximity to each other sets up a magical resonance which enhances the power of the disease, strengthening the Barnabus persona and subduing the unfortunate host body. Because of this, the weremen spend most of their time as Barnabus, but transform back into their original bodies at the full moon. During the period of their transformation, they hang themselves upside down from the tops of trees so that they cannot escape. The varied host bodies wail and cry for help, but none hear them, and in the morning they turn back into Barnabi. Someone who lives nearby has been contracted by the Barnabi to cut them down each month after their transformation.

There is at least one other wereman who does not dwell with his brethren. This is Zeem Olmsted, head of House Olmsted (31.04), who was bitten several years ago. Of course, the family keeps this infection secret; each month, they tie up Zeem Olmsted before he can transform into Barnabas Olmsted, though his vile imprecations can sometimes be heard echoing over the keep. He desires above all to escape the keep and join his fellows, whom he can sense far away in the swamp. For his part, Zeem regards this infection as a relatively minor inconvenience, and tries to manage the problem while continuing to rule over the Olmsted family just as he always has done.

Connections: Bernabus studied under Severard of the Seven Circles (13.08). Zeem Olmstead (31.04) is one of the weremen.

Hooks:

- Where is the original Barnabus now?

- Who lives near the Barnabi who is willing to aid them by cutting their ropes each month?

- Is there a way to cure Zeem Olmsted? What about the other weremen?

- Who are the other weremen when they’re not Barnabus? Anyone interesting or important among them?

Hex 20.04

The Keepers of the Sainted Foot

Connects to hex: 01.09.

Among the foothills of the northern Grey Mountains lies the monastery of the Keepers of the Sainted Foot, a mummified relic that the brothers consider holy. Their monastery is a rude timber affair that has suffered badly over the years at the hands of orc raiders coming down from the north. However, despite these depredations it still produces a well spiced gruit with a distinctive tang, which is not only an excellent beer (although a bit of an acquired taste) but functions as potent holy water.

After the most recent such raid the Abbot’s favorite brother was struck down in the barley fields. After weeks of unrelenting grief, the Abbot decided to go on a pilgrimage to the fields of Fernsbank (01.09) to seek peace and wisdom. Little does he know that something has corrupted those once-peaceful fields and that all that pilgrims find there now is feelings of bloodlust.

Strangely enough, shortly after the departure of the Abbot the orcs began to fiv e the monastery a wide birth. None of the brothers know why, all that has happened since then is that a new novice has joined them, a quiet man who now works in the kitchen gardens...

Connection: the Abbot is currently away at a pilgrimage to Fernsbank (01.09).

Hooks:

-What’s up with the new novice? He can’t be scaring away the orcs, can he?

-What’s the back story of the Sainted Foot? Whose foot is it?

-Why is the beer tangy?

-What’s happening to the Abbot over at Fernsbank?

Hex 20.08

The Village of Treebrush

Connects to hex: : 18.07, 25.07 and 29.07.

The farmers who inhabit the surrounding area avoid the village of Treebrush, but travelers who approach it for the first time see a peaceful and prosperous community with a large inn at the heart of the town.

If they choose to stay at the inn, guests will have the opportunity to listen to a fair youth play a sad lament on the lute in the common room. The song tells the story of a local girl named Lisbet whose lover was a man-at-arms at the Verlime Citadel on the day that the elves came out of their forest. When she saw the citadel burning, she took her father’s bow and set out after the elves. But despite the tears blurring her vision, her aim was true, and she killed the very elf who slew her lover. But she was only one against an army and she was taken by the elves and tied to a post in front of the inn of Treebrush so that she could watch as the elves set the entire village ablaze in purple flame.

As the fair youth finishes the song of Lisbet’s Lament he takes a bow and doffs his hat, revealing pointed elven ears, and then disappears along with everything else around the travelers leaving them standing alone in an roofless ruin of the inn surrounded by the weathered remains of a village burnt over a century ago.

And the wind that blows through the branches of the trees that now claim the village seems to cry out the tune of Lisbet’s Lament.

Connections: the elves were marching through the area to sack the Citadel of the Verlimes (18.07). The elves live at the Holt of the Bloodied King (29.07). The mockingbird of the Kingswood (25.07) also seems to speak of Lisbet.

Hooks:

-What happened to Lisbet? The elves didn’t kill her nor did they make any special effort to kill the inhabitants of Treebrush (aside from, of course, burning all of their homes down).

-What are the words of her song?

Hex 20.24

The Lair of Tharaxes, the Blue Death

Connects to hex: 23.23.

Perhaps something still lurks in the abandoned city (22.25), but that is not what keeps travelers away from those lands, it is the great dragon Tharaxes the Blue Death a great blue dragon of enormous power. It appears without warning out of the blue sky with claws that slash through rock and lightning breath that can split a tree in a moment. Only would-be dragon slayers, fools and very rare and very heavily guarded caravans enter these lands, which is just how the local desert gnome (23.23) population wants it. The Dust Walkers know the evil that outsiders do, deep unforgivable evils, and do not want too many of them intruding in their lands so they created the Blue Death out of smoke and glamour, chiseled its claw marks into canyon walls and artfully burn and split many of the few scrub trees that grow in these lands.

This serves to keep most intruders out of the lands of the desert gnomes, but those pesky would-be dragon slayers remain. If possible the gnomes try to capture them and subject them to the trial of the fountain but for those who seem to powerful the gnomes, who do not want to stain themselves indelibly with sin, merely lead on a wild goose chase. But those outsiders who are especially evil (as the gnomes define it) are lead to the “lair” of Tharaxes: a tall and lonely plug of rock that rises suddenly out of the plains. There is no dragon and no treasure to be found there, but danger enough...

Connections: Tharaxes is merely an illusion of the Dust Walkers (23.23).

Hooks:

-What sort of danger can be found in the “lair” of Tharaxes if there is no dragon there?

-Has anyone managed to see through the gnomes’ illusions?

-What sort of interesting tricks have the gnomes played on outsiders by using “Tharaxes”?

-What sorts of things do the desert gnomes consider unforgivably evil?

Hex 21.06

The Abandoned Beacon

Connects to hex: 18.07.

Before the elves sacked their hall, the Verlimes (18.07) had a tall watchtower built here at the edge of the Kingswood. High atop it, a beacon fight was set so as to warn the Duke of the approach of any elven army. On the day that the elves came, that did precious little good for the beacon was never lit and the watchtower was thereafter abandoned to continue its watch over the trees alone.

Connection: the Verlimes (18.07) built this beacon tower many years ago.

Hooks:

-Does anything live in the watchtower these days?

-How did the elves get past the watchtower?

Hex 22.06

The Western Edge of the Kingswood

Connects to hex: 13.03

The elves of the Timberlode have had the worst possible punishment of the Seelie Court meted out against them: exile from the Kingswood.

Ancient beyond the reckoning of any of the lesser-lived peoples, the court of the Bloodied King claims domain over Kingswood, living just as they have for a thousand-thousand years. The Court at Kingswood refuses all diplomatic ties and even the curtest of communication.

The elves of Kingswood kill anyone found within or near their lands during the daylight hours. They cannot be swayed into allowing human traffic through their forest, citing the terms of an ancient covenant with a long forgotten Prince of Men.

Connection: the elves of the Timberlode (13.03) were exiled from the Kingswood.

Hooks:

-Who is the Prince of Men, and why is he forgotten?

-What did the elves of the Timberlode do to anger the Bloodied King?

Hex 23.10

Sir Alard’s Bower

Connects to hex: to be added.

One day Sir Alard of Oldstones set out into the Kingswood to prove his bravery by hunting the gilded butterflies, hoping that brave deeds would win the heart of his beloved when his handsome face alone had failed. While riding through the woods, he caught the eye of one elven lady who had crept out of the Holt to walk in starlight. After aiding in his hunt while remaining unseen in the shadows, she came to him in all her beauty and he lay with her. Several hours later, Sir Alard rose and told the elf that he must hurry out of the woods if he was to leave the forest before dawn.

The elven lady was angered at his sudden departure but promised Sir Alard that he would leave the forest that very night. Sir Alard was very pleased with himself and did not notice glint in the elf’s eyes as he left with his squire and men-at-arms. Since then, Sir Alard has ridden through the Kingswood for uncounted hours, never finding its borders and never seeing the sun rise. His fine armor is tarnished, most of his horses have died, grey has crept into his beard and his face has grown pale.

If he meets other travellers he will beg for news of the outside world and help in leaving the forest. He has a great deal of knowledge about many of the locations and dangers of the Kingswood, but he is no help when it comes to directions. He will not become violent unless mocked or disrespected, in which case his pride and frustration will lead him to try to teach any offenders a lesson.

Sir Alard, the cursed knight, wanders widely across the Kingswood, but he often finds himself back where he incurred the curse of the elf lady: a secluded leafy bower in the southwestern reaches of the Kingswood (i.e. this hex).

Connections: to be added.

Hooks:

-How does the curse work exactly? If the PCs meet Alard is the night that he set out into the forest the present day or many years ago (from the PCs’ point of view)?

-What’s up with the gilded butterflies? Why would hunting them prove your bravery?

-Tell me more about the elf lady and the human woman that Alard hoped to marry!

Hex 23.23.

The Caves of the Dust Walkers

Connects to hex: 20.24 and 22.25.

Not far from the mysterious ruined city in 22.25, there lies a rocky hillock where the earth is ochre brown and nothing grows save pampas grass and poppies. This hill is riddled with caves, where dwell a tribe of stunted, dark-skinned gnomes. Scholars may refer to them as ‘desert gnomes’, but the name they give to themselves is Dust Walkers.

The society of the Dust Walkers is secretive and complex, but it is known that they value moral turpitude and blamelessness above all else. To signify this they adorn themselves with white paint, representing purity. Repentance is unknown to the Dust Walkers; the stain of a sin committed can never truly be washed away.

The Dust Walkers know the secret of preparing a strong hallucinogenic brew from the poppies that grow near their home. Its effect is to make any imagined or visualised event have a real somatic effect upon the imbiber. Thus, a person under the influence of this drug can be slain by an illusionary sword or trampled by an imaginary horse. The drug is of course much prized by illusionists, but the Dust Walkers jealously guard the secrets of its manufacture.

The purpose to which they create this brew is to use it in a rite of passage ritual; all Dust Walkers must undergo this when they come of age, and again if they are challenging for the position of chieftain.

After drinking the preparation, the gnome who is to be tested will take a pilgrimage to the ruins in 22.25, there to drink from the bone-white fountain. The combined effect of the two drugs is to make the subject suffer an incredibly harrowing experience for each of their great guilts. Those who have anything less than a spotless conscience are unlikely to survive the ordeal.

The Dust Walkers are suspicious of outsiders and will most likely seek to capture them and subject them to the trial of the fountain. Those who pass the test are considered worthy of respect, and can expect aid and friendship from the desert gnomes in future.

Connection: The Dust Walkers make pilgrimages to the Forgotten City State and use the fountain there to test the purity of themselves and others (22.25). The gnomes have created a legend of a great blue dragon in order to scare away outsiders and its “lair” can be found at (20.24).

Hooks:

- Who’s willing to pay money for the recipe of that brew? And how would you get your hands on it?

- Are there any outsiders who have passed the test and established good relations with the gnomes?

- Are all the chieftains of the tribe pure and righteous? Or is there a way to circumvent the trial?

- Do the Dust Walkers know anything about the ruined city and its people?

Hex 22.25.

The Forgotten City-State

Connects to hex: 00.06, 10.09 and 23.23.

Nestled in the walls of a crevasse in a wide valley surrounded by the steep mountains known as the Devil’s Fingers, there abides a lost pueblo-like city that seems to stretch for miles deep into the bedrock.

The buildings are incredibly ancient, but seem mostly untouched by time. Runic script, like that adorning the haunted statue (10.09) can be found scrawled across doorways of many of the buildings. The remains of alabaster statues can be found throughout the city, and the wind through the deserted streets seem to sometimes sound like the mournful dirge of a lady singer singing in an unknown tongue.

In some of the more elaborate pueblos, murals depict distorted images of long-limbed humanoids performing various magical rituals over everyday activities. Of note, in what seems to be some sort of throne room a mural shows the odd humanoids sculpting human figures from clay. Likewise, spread throughout the city are perfect piles of clay that seem to indicate that a clay golem once stood at the spot. At the very least, the piles radiate a faint magical signature.

However, those who linger long in the city-state sometimes catch a glimpse of something moving in the shadows, or the glimmer of yellow eyes in the dark alleys of the city. While crumbling structures have taken a few lives of those who have stumbled on the city, something intelligent has surely taken the lives of other visitors in an attempt to keep the city-state’s existence secret.

In the Forgotten City-State statues are not the only thing made out

of white alabaster. At the very heart of the city is a great bone-white fountain from which, amazingly enough, still pours four descending cascades of water. Those who have drunk of it say that it is salty and brings forth memories of their greatest guilts and failings, much like the great western ocean. But the ocean lies far to the west, it couldn’t possibly be the same water, could it?

Connection: the architecture seems to match the haunted statue (10.09). The salt water of the fountain seems to be similar to the Ocean of Bitter Regrets (00.06 and points west). The nearby desert gnomes (22.23) make pilgrimages to the fountain here.

The Land of Mortar

The reason that the ancient buildings of the Forgotten City-State are so strangely untouched by the passing of centuries is the strength of the mortar that was used to fortify the clay of its pueblos: the bodies of the elemental creatures known as sandlings. No known substance makes stronger mortar, but not even it can last forever and as the buildings begin to crumble the sandlings are being released one by one.

When the winds blow through the city, drifts of sand claw at the buildings and the tens of thousands of sandlings still trapped in its mortar wake and struggle to be free.

The old masters who collected and imprisoned the sandlings are gone now but they once gathered them from lands far to the south where they lay in a desert that had once been a city old beyond even the imaginings of elves. It was built long ago when the aboleths whose fossilized bones can be found in the Grey Mountains yet swam. It was the capital of a vast empire and its glass tower of living iridescent glass soared higher than any balloon of the Shuttered City.

For reasons that no longer matter, this ancient empire fell and the towers fell with it, lying across the desert like the spears of a vanquished army. Slowly, slowly, in the days in which the first dragons broke the world like an egg with their birth, the towers eroded away into swirling sand. But some of the sand still remembered what it had once been and some of the power of its creators yet remained, so the builders of the Forgotten City-State gathered it to reinforce the clay of their homes. Only the sandlings remember what they had once been and they lash out in rage that for every memory of the shining towers they retain, ten thousand has by robbed from them by the hand of time.

Hooks

-Who built the city and where did they go?

-Are the piles of clay the remains of golems or perhaps the “remains” of the first humans? And what happened to them?

-What is the significance of the “haunted” alabaster statues and what relation do they have to the statue at 10.09?

-What is salt water doing in a city that lies far from the coast?

-What will the sandlings do are more of them are freed?

-Is there any way to learn of the memories of the sandlings? They are not intelligent as human reckon such things, but could they yet retain knowledge of the lost empire of the south?

Hex 25.04

The Sundial Inn

Connects to hex: 17.07, 18.07, 28.04, 29.01, 29.13, 29.14, 41.02 and 46.10.

There are not many pleasant places to stop along the Welt Road, but among them the Sundial Inn must be one of the most popular. It is situated near the border of the night men’s domain, in a fairly well-ventilated section of the road. The Inn itself is excavated into the earth to one side, with only its ‘attic’ rising above ground. The Inn is owned by one Regulus Verlime, a bent-over scrooge of a man, but it is run by his wife Svetlana, whose generosity is as enormous as her bosom.

Most any day of the year, the common room of the Sundial Inn is brimming with joviality, stocked with travellers who prefer the deprecations of the Welt Road to the mortal dangers of the country above. Some of the regular faces include: Bardock Flint, a mercenary who turned from guarding caravans to serving as the tavern’s bouncer; Jayla Mullard, a fierce young woman rumored to be the disowned daughter of Crossbow Henry; (see 41.02) and Elfard Gollens, a layabout who is rumoured to be infatuated with the expansive Mrs. Verlime.

The name of the Sundial is something of a joke. The only natural light in the place comes from a shaft that runs down through the attic and onto a slab of stone (the ‘Sundial’). The shaft is precisely vertical, so the light will only shine through it at noon; and where the light falls, some wag has engraved ‘NOON’, completing the jape. However, if pressed the Verlimes will admit that the sundial and the shaft were present before they began building the inn, and only the inscribed word is a new addition.

The King in Splendor

The King in Splendor, the Sword that Slays the Night, is a sun god. He is usually portrayed as a muscular man with an eyeless lion head, a whip grasped in one hand and a manacle chained to the other. However, in his most ancient temples he is sometimes portrayed as a snake with a lion’s head and gems in the place of eyes. He promises his faithful a day that never ends, when all things that creep in darkness will be rooted out and when the fields will never be fallow.

While popular across the waters, the King in Splendor has few followers in these lands. But those few followers are uncommonly devout. In his temples and in the homes of the faithful, an opening is always left in the ceiling for the light of noon to pour down through, in order to be a reminder of the blessings of the King and of the need to perform the Threefold Rite. The hole that lets in the light of noon into the Sundial Inn was surely built by a devotee of the King in Splendor, no doubt Pork Pie Stannev, the previous owner of the Inn who was abducted by the Whispering Sisters (29.14) some years past.

The Lost Lighthouse was once maintained by the “lion priests” of the King in Splendor but due to the actions of Nikos Farver, this is no longer the case (see 46.10).

Connections: Many travelers to the Market Pits (28.04) top by at the Sundial Inn. Jayla Mullard might be Crossbow Henry’s (41.02) disowned daughter. Regulus Verlime is a descendant of the Verlimes who once ruled as Duke to the west and southwest of the Kingswood (18.07). Some of the stories that can be heard at the Sundial concern the famous rustler Drogo (29.01). The previous owner of the Sundial Inn was abducted by the Whispering Sisters (29.14). The previous owner, Pork Pie Stannev holds to the faith of the lion priests who once maintained the Lost Lighthouse (46.10). Much of the rest of the Stannev and Verlime clans live at New Hill (17.07). Armand of the Axe is a current priest of the King in Splendor but he is somewhat inconvenienced with spider monkey lycanthropism at the moment

(29.13).

Hooks:

-Why did Bardock Flint quit his job as a caravan guard?

-Is young Miss Mullard really the inheritor of Crossbow Henry’s legacy?

- Is trouble brewing between Elfard Gollens and Regulus Verlime? If so, why does Verlime allow Gollens to hang about the inn so much?

-What is the Threefold Rite?

-Anything of interest about the cult of the King in Splendor?

-How did Regulus Verlime secure ownership of the Sundial Inn after the abduction of Stannev?

Hex 25.07

The Nest of the Mockingbird

Connects to hex: 20.08.

There is a mockingbird that lives in the Kingswood that repeats the last words of those who have died within. Such lines as “what are the horses doing!” and “for Lisbet, everything for Lisbet!” have been attributed to it.

Although its strange cries can be heard throughout the Kingswood the mockingbird nests here (at 25.07).

Connections: is this the Lisbet of the Village of Treebrush (20.08)?

Hooks:

-What else does the mockingbird say?

-What do those lines mean?

Hex 25.15

The Temple Indivisible and the Temple Invisible

Connects to hex: 29.14.

The cult of Alberon, God of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14), is known to the public as the Temple Indivisible. This name refers to a period of schisms within Alberon’s cult, when the city was torn apart by religious war. One sect was noted for their steadfast adherence to unified dogma while other groups were splitting off into yet smaller sub-heresies; unsurprisingly, this indivisible sect was the victor of the civil war and went on to become the Temple Indivisible that exists today.

The Temple Indivisible handles all the official religious services of the Shuttered City. They are involved in the election of the Doge, the protection of the city, the geasing of foreign intruders, and so on. However, it is commonly known (yet rarely spoken of) that there is another cult of Alberon active within the City’s walls - and this is the Temple Invisible, secret assassin-priests of an ancient order.

During the Time of Schisms, the Temple Indivisible sought to utterly wipe out all other branches of the church. However, they were hard pressed to defeat the militant monks known as the Brothers of the Spear. Though fierce fighters and masterful assassins, the Brothers of the Spear were not strongly political, so the Temple Indivisible eventually struck a bargain with them. The Brothers became the Temple Invisible, never again to be acknowledged openly in the Shuttered City; yet they would be the dark hand of Alberon, carrying out all the missions of subterfuge and violence that the mainstream Temple could not.

Somewhere in the City of Shuttered Windows tonight, there is a guildhall where the agents of the Temple Invisible meet and discuss plans. Tonight in the City there is a secret war taking place between the Invisibles and the Whispering Sisters. Elsewhere another agent may be carrying out a different mission, destroying the City's enemies or guiding the City along a path to righteousness.

Meanwhile, in the snowy mountains west of the Shuttered City, there is a hidden fortress at the far end of a treacherous trail. This is a school for assassins, where the next generation of Invisibles are trained and indoctrinated. At the full moon one may see them drilling in the courtyard, or climbing the sheer walls of the castle for practice. The leader of the Temple Invisible also resides here - an ancient and battle-scarred monk known only as the Unseen Hierophant. The fortress is out of the way enough that any unauthorized visitors will probably be treated as invaders.

Connection: the Brothers of the Temple Invisible serve as the assassins and enforcers of the established Temple Indivisible of the God of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14).

Hooks:

- Since the City is sinking, are there any underground remnants of the Time of Schisms?

- Did any other cults survive the Time of Schisms, perhaps by fleeing the Shuttered City?

- What are the Invisibles doing to catch the Whispering Sisters? So far they don't seem to have done a great job of it.

- How does the Temple Invisible 'guide' the City along the correct path?

Hexes 27.04, 29.03, 30.03 and 30.04.

The Lands of the Night Cattle

Connects to hexes: 28.04, 29.01, 29.14 and 33.16.

Around the market pits there are no farmhouses or villages, but only a series of dark and ancient keeps. These keeps are boarded up tightly during the day and admit no visitors. At night (and only at night) the night men come out and graze their albino cattle in the surrounding fields. The unblemished white skin of these cows makes them highly prized as sacrificial victims by the priests of several cults.

All of these keeps are well away from the woods, except the one inhabited by Lord Olmsted and his daughters.

The Welt Road.

From the western plains, into the western edge of the Kingswood and up into the northern mountains lies the Welt Road. It was built by the men who herd the night cattle, who dig deep trenches at night, raise support beams and then cover the road with dirt and sod. These men, who cringe at the sight of the sun, can then scuttle between their keeps during the day, which also makes it easier for caravans to travel east into their lands. Grass does not grow well above the Welt Road and the support beams are often left exposed by the elements, giving it the appearance of an angry welt cut across the skin of the suffering land.

The Welt Road is not an easy one to travel. Ventilation in the long tunnel is poor and the smell is nearly unbearable and along some stretches of the road, two carts cannot pass each other. Worse yet, some portions of the road have not yet been completed or have fallen into disrepair and in others cave-ins are common and elves of Court of the Kingswood wait above to ambush any man who feels the sun upon his face. Some less scrupulous elves can be bought off with human infants, if any are willing to pay that price. In some parts of the Welt Road, heavy logs cover the floor and strange sounds can be heard coming from below.

Although great riches can be won by those who know it well and travel it often, many people fear to tread the Welt Road. Whole caravans have vanished into the earth, but the man who is now known as Crossbow Henry led caravans along the road for years and never lost a man, amassing great wealth.

Connections: the night men hold markets at the market pits (28.04) and their cows are sometimes stolen by the Rustler's Guild (29.01) along the Welt Road. The cattle are used by the Brothers of the Grove (33.16) to help guide the process by which the Doge of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) is selected. The (fraternal) twin wives of the Doge of the City of Shuttered windows are the daughters of Lord Tristifer Bartley of Blackhorn Keep (30.03), which is one of the principal fortresses of these lands.

Hooks:

-What cults value these albino cows for sacrifices?

-Who are the individual lords who rule the various keeps of the night men?

-What are the sounds that come from below?

-Who are some of the characters who frequent the Welt Road?

-What happened to the caravans that disappeared? Why was Henry so successful? What happened to all of his money?

-Why do some elves want human infants?

Hex 27.03

The Market Pits

Connects to 25.04 and 27.04 et. al.

Here, within the Kingswood, rise a small range of chalk hills on which trees grow poorly. This allows humans to cling to a precarious existence in the elven kingdom.

Dug into the hills are a series of pits roofed in leather (venturing outside of which in day is a sure way of getting an elven arrow lodged

in your chest) in which the local men of the Lands of the Night Cattle hold monthly markets in which they trade with caravans that come up the Welt Road.

Each market pit is lit by a single large candle made out of human finger bones dipped in the wax of giant bees and by this flickering light the night men sell their famed albino cows, silverware from the Titan's Skull and elven woodcraft for all of the products of the outside world. Good coin can be made here for those who are willing to risk the journey.

Although these markets are held monthly, the pits truly come alive during the Long Night, a midwinter festival in which the night men emerge from their windowless keeps and gather at the pits for a week-long riot of feasting, revelry and running naked through snowdrifts.

Connections: the people who hold these markets are the night men of the Land of the Night Cattle (27.04 et. al.). The nearest inn is the Sundial Inn (25.04).

Hooks:

-What is the point of the candles? Why only giant bee wax? Where do the human finger bones come from?

Hex 27.18

The Fanged Cliffs

Connects to hex: 29.15

Here, at the edge of the Keening Sea, there is a narrow inlet where the water flows between two great red spires of stone. Some travellers believe that these spires are the fangs that give the location its name - they believe so to their great peril. In fact, the name comes from the thousands of winged vipers that nest in the cliffs of the inlet. Venomous, aggressive and mobile, it lucky that the flying vipers rarely choose to leave their forsaken abode. Only once a year do they travel, as part of their mating migration. They fly east toward the Gardens of the Sea (29.15), where they descend upon the crops of the Shuttered City. During this time, the farmers retreat behind the city walls and pray for intervention.

The snakes mate in midair, whereafter the female tears off the male's head at the moment of climax. At the same time, the air fills with ibis from the malodorous mangrove swamps. The ibis devour the snakes live if they can, and later feast on the dead males after the female snakes have flown home. Ironically, the ibis are considered the worse pest because their excrement pollutes the Gardens with acid and damages the health of the crops. Meanwhile, the viper mothers return to the Fanged Cliffs, where they give birth and die - for the viper children burrow out of the mother's womb and eat her flesh as their first meal. Thereafter, there is a one-month period when the vipers are too young to fly and the mysteries of the inlet can be explored.

Generally speaking, the farmers pray to Alberon for deliverance during the viper storm. However, rumour has it that some farmers have begun to view the ibis flocks as their saviours, and consequently have devoted their offerings to a new, ibis-headed god.

Connection: the snakes are a source of great annoyance to the farmers of the Gardens of the Sea (29.15).

Hooks:

- What are the mysteries of the inlet?

- Where are the malodorous mangrove swamps and what's in them?

- Who is the ibis-headed god?

Hex 29.01

The Rustler's Guild

Connects to hexes: 25.04, 27.04 et al, 29.14, 31.04, 33.00 and 41.02.

If you learn one thing sitting by the fire of the Sundial (25.04) late into the night, it's that there is no surer path into legend than thievery. Some of the tales are hard to argue with--the first Pirate Kings were indeed both pirates and kings--and others are impossible to believe--even if the Prince of Men was a thief, how could he steal knowledge of Law and Chaos from the Goddess of the Labyrinth? One legendary thief, however, is not only undoubtedly real, but is still out there robbing his way to fortune and dubious glory.

Real though Drogo the Baldfaced may be, some key details of his life are in dispute. Is he really a dwarf who cannot grow a beard due to an elven curse? Or is he truly the world's stoutest, strongest halfling? Since people can't even agree on his race, it's little wonder that his past is even murkier. Whether he was a beggar on the streets of the Gnomish Quarter, an excommunicated priest of the God of the City, an Assassin who was struck from the Order's rolls because his rates were too low, or a Freeholder who fled ruinous gambling debts, one thing is certain: he's stolen an astonishing number of Night Cattle.

Given the tendency of caravans to disappear the Welt Road, many thieves think that it should be fairly easy to steal some Night Cattle (27.04, et al) and get rich selling them to cultists, as religious fanatics are willing to pay high prices without asking questions. However, the elven patrols show even less mercy to thieves than they do to caravaners, most caravans are ferociously well-guarded (Crossbow Harry (41.02) earned his sobriquet in the obvious manner), and whatever hunts below the log roads is happy to prey on anything that walks on two legs or four. Nonetheless, Drogo has stolen well over two hundred head of Night Cattle by his own hand. Zeem Olmsted (31.04) has placed a substantial bounty on Drogo's head, and an Elf-Hunt has been searching for him for at least three years. The Priests of the City, fearing that Drogo's continued activity might make the Night Cattle trade untenable, have gone so far as to pledge that they will deliver anyone who tries to sell them stolen cattle to Olmsted (despite his elvish blood), but other cults may not nearly so scrupulous.

That wasn't enough for Drogo, so in the manner of successful thieves everywhere, he decided to start his own Guild. Somehow, he always finds out when someone new sells rustled Night Cattle near the City, something neither the Priests, the Olmsteds nor the Elf-Hunt have managed. Drogo always visits the thieves in person before the month is out. When he does, he tells them that he will let them continue rustling as long as they give him one gold piece in seven as tribute. There are many rumors about what rustlers who accept Drogo's terms receive in return for their membership, but strangely there isn't even the faintest whisper of what happens to those who refuse. Indeed, so far as anyone can tell, no one has ever refused to join the Rustlers Guild.

The Guildhall itself is on the northernmost border of the Lands of the Night Cattle, in a ruined keep abandoned by the Night Men some decades ago. The surrounding meadows have long ago given way to scrub, brambles and encroaching forest. Since moving in, Drogo and his

Rustlers have replaced much of the rotted woodwork, and have covered gaps in the stone and drafty windows with curtains tanned night cattle hide. This extravagance impresses new guild members more than the beautiful elven tapestries and halfling-carved furniture that decorates the main hall. It is rumored that one benefit of membership is that guild members may claim a right of hospitality for three days and three nights each time they come to pay their guild dues, but then Drogo will turn them out to keep from being eaten out of house and home.

Despite the proximity of the Guildhall to the meadows where the Night Cattle graze, no Rustler is permitted to take cattle from anywhere but the Welt Road. Whether this is simply to direct attention away from Drogo's sanctuary, or if there is a deeper reason, is a matter of speculation for guild members, but no one has ever had any interest in discovering what will happen if they disobey Drogo's instructions in this. It's as inconceivable as not paying your full dues, or staying to dine at Drogo's expense for a fourth night.

Connections:

Hooks: Rumors of Drogo are told at the Sundial Inn (25.04), the guild is famous for rustling the Night Cattle (27.04 et al), Lord Zeem Olmsted (31.04) has a price on his head and Crossbow Henry (41.02) provided security against such as the Rustler's Guild in his younger days. It is rumored that Drogo once raided the Great Vault of the Hoard (33.00) but if that is true, why is he still alive? It seems that Drogo supplies the Whispering Sisters (29.14) with their sacrificial night cattle.

Hooks:

Is Guild membership worth it? Surely it's more than a bed in a drafty old castle and some venison. Why doesn't anyone turn Drogo down? The best way to find out is to get to pilfering cows!

Why are the Guild members so obedient to Drogo? They are thieves after all, often the worst scum and murderers. Is it fear, some sort of compulsion, or genuine loyalty.

What's Drogo's background? How does he steal so many cattle? Does he just have contacts with the most unsavory religious groups, or has he figured out a way to remove brands and even arcane marks?

Hex 28.07

The Library without a Floor

Connects to hex: 29.07.

All know that the court of the Bloodied King (29.07) has lived in the Kingswood for a thousand-thousand years.

After such a long stay, the elves have hundreds of thousands of books, scrolls, tapestries and tablets. These they store in the Pit, a sinkhole that opened beneath the last king's throne. The Pit plunges an immeasurable distance into the earth.

Most of the shelves of the Library are bolted to the sides of the Pit. A few thousand documents - those most often referenced - are stored in suspended shelves that can be winched up when needed. But those that line the Pit must be reached by climbing the web of ladders, ropes and thinly-cut stairs.

The grip of the librarians is legendary - even in death, it is impossible

to wrestle something from their grasp without cutting off their fingers. The Chief Librarian is an unseelie elf without legs, but he climbs as well as any of the others when he is not winched about in a silver box.

Recently, a librarian who fell into the Pit decades ago crawled out. He died soon after and was laid to rest in the crypts, with something still clutched in his fist.

It is said that the contract between the Prince of Men and the elf king was dropped into the Pit.

The Rojarshans

There was once a handsome lad named Roger who was taken into the Kingswood by an elfish lordling. This elf was feeling somewhat bored one day so he sent Roger, along with several of his other playthings, down into the library without a floor to fetch his dear grandmother's mushroom cookbook and to tidy things up a bit while they are there.

Roger himself died long ago but his sadly rather inbred descendants, a tribe now known as the Rojarshans, live deep down in the dark stacks forgotten by even the librarians. There they have constructed crude huts made out of discarded shelves and live on the bloated white worms that gnaw on the leather covers of books while the sunlit world recedes ever farther into myth and legend.

One day the Rojarshans will uncover the holy writ itself, the book spoken about only in whispers, The Delights of Edible Fungus and ascend up into paradise as was promised. But until that blessed day the Rojarshans continue to "tidy up" the library and now large swaths of the it have had their books organized according to an impenetrable system that only the Rojarshans understand.

Connection: his library serves the elven Holt (28.07).

Hooks:

-Who was the climber and what is in his fist?

-Why does the Chief Librarian serve the court?

-What is at the bottom of the Pit?

-How have the negative effects of inbreeding (due to a very small founder population) manifested themselves among the Rojarshans?

-What are the myths that the Rojarshans tell each other about the outside world?

-How do they react to strangers that come among their selves?

-What strange and interesting books that even the elves have forgotten have the Rojarshans found and read? What effect has living among so many strange books had on them?

-Will they ever find The Delights of Edible Fungus?

Hex 29.07

The Holt of the Bloodied King

Connects to hex: 13.03, 18.07, 28.07, 31.04 and 31.07.

At the heart of the Kingswood lies the Holt of the Bloodied King. At night and during the very darkest depths of winter, the Seelie Court

retreats into their central Holt. Tiny motes of purplish light arise from the trees during this time -- the last remnants of the Unseelie Court that once shared ruler-ship in Kingswood, before being chased out hundreds upon hundreds of years ago.

Near the Holt where the Bloodied King of the Elves of the Kingswood reigns, a great geyser bursts from the earth. It is the source of the Witchwater, a river that flows through and out of the Kingswood.

The heat of the water spewed from the geyser keeps the Witchwater remarkably ice-free in winter and for much of its length it is shrouded in a great serpent of mist. In many places it is warm enough to bathe in comfortably year-round, although any human doing so would surely be a fool...

The Factions of the Elves

The elves of the Court (Vo Tume in their own language) are all bound by the same fey contracts, and all ultimately answer to the same Bloodied King. The King is named Tuma Yedaard plus a hundred other titles and names dependent upon the situation. Tuma Yedaard is also their name for the forest itself.

Elves are flighty creatures, and their whims change with seasons and sometimes day by day, and sometimes those whims put one elf at odds with another. However, on any given sunny day, an elf will fall into one of four factions.

1) The Simple are akin to the Heirophant, (36.04) and may cite themselves as following her path, if they do so for an appreciable amount of time. These are the elves that simply exist, enjoying the sun and the forest -- performing simple tasks to keep themselves fed and entertained. Some tend to wander, some tend to stay close to home. Those recognized to be on the path of the Heirophant's example, and keep to it for century or more, will often drop their given and family names, referring to themselves by profession or attitude instead. The Weeper, (43.08) for example, would be considered one of the Simple.

2) The Loyal specifically follow Tuma Yedaard and his edicts. While all elves are in theory bounded by his contracts, the Loyal make a special effort at it. These are elves that would prosecute a war or an Elf-Hunt, and guard the forest from greedy men, savage beasts from the Edge or elsewhere, or maliciously mischievous fey. They enforce contracts, and to an outsider can generally come off as cold and unyielding. The Loyal are the army of Kingswood, and are the only faction to have official titles and licenses handed down from the King. Though, it's not unheard of or considered particularly strange or bad for a titled elf to switch to a different faction -- indeed most of the long-lived elves have spent at least some time working directly for the Court, and have a title prove it.

3) The Bound Bargainers largely inhabit the secret flipside of the forest, the paths that lead through the Fey-Realm. Their concerns are pleasing faeries with gifts, and often they have and hold contracts to deliver certain items in exchange for services to their family. Even the King himself has contracts with the fey that must be upheld (such as the delivery of a quantity of human infants per season), though it often falls to the Loyal to complete these contracts.

The Bargainers work through the Drow of Olmsted Keep to procure trades with the outside world, but also procure material via hunts and trades within the Forest and elsewhere. The paths through the Fey-Realm allow them to travel far and wide -- though of course there is a price to pay to each resident fairy for using these roads.

A sizable number of Bargainers are paying off debts incurred whilst

raiding, and might well continue to pay off these debts with yet more raiding and theft. Those that are caught doing so by the Loyal tend to incur yet more debt and other punishments.

4) Known as Raiders to the outside world and Disloyal to the Court, the final faction are the elves most likely to be waiting above the Welt Road and other avenues of travel to prey on outsiders (and occasionally even elves). Technically, they are bound by the King's law and forest's contracts, and some even take the contracts seriously. Being a thief is not an evil occupation to an elf. Elves appreciate a rebel, even the King himself and the highest members of his Court enjoy a good story about a daring raid or theft.

However, being caught red-handed -- without the excuse of an excellent cover story -- is a crime of incompetence. The worst offenders are bounded over to the Fey's service. Other punishments include sitting and staring at a particular patch of ground for a decade -- moving only to take in sustenance (and shelter during the night), or taking quick look into the Mirror Lake (37.01).

So the raiders will take some care in disguising their identities, with enchanted masks and false names. The most successful raiders will have prearranged passage through the Fey-Realm to avoid the patrols of the Loyal. The absolute top-tier raiders also maintain positions within the Court. Rumors persist that Tuma Yedaard himself is the legendary Huu Vo Malkus, a mysterious raider who single-handily makes a big score once every decade or so, donating the entirety of his catch to the Weeper for distribution among the Simple.

Connections: the elves of the Timberlode (13.03) were exiled from the Kingswood. The Bloodied King destroyed the Citadel of the Verlimes (18.07) 150 years ago. The half-elves of Olmsted Keep (31.04) are the only point of contact between the elves and the outside world. Near the Holt is the grave of a fallen storm giantess who was enchanted and killed by the elves (31.07). The Holt includes the Library Without a Floor (28.07), an extensive library indeed. One of the most able of the Loyal is Tehaar the Huntress (29.10).

Hooks:

-Where did the Unseelie Court go?

-Why's there such a massive geyser in the middle of the forest?

-Why would it be foolish for a human (or other species as well?) to bathe in the Witchwater?

Hex 29.10

Tehaar's Hunting Grounds

Connects to hex: 29.07

One of the most able, or at least the most active, of the servants of the Bloodied King is Tehaar the Huntress. She leads a band of elves that relentlessly patrols the Kingswood, more out of love for the hunt than for any duty to the king, other elves say. She can be easily recognized by the unseelie runes inscribed on the leather mask that she wears whenever on the hunt and the stag that she rides.

Tehaar's tactics are based on bleeding intruders without risking elven lives and generally begin by harassing the quarry without alerting them to elven presence. This is done by driving beasts into the paths of the intruders, setting up snares, obscuring trails and casting spells out of

earshot (summoned monsters are a favorite) to slowly wear down the intruders. If the quarry resists these attempts, then the elves approach and shoot arrows at them from cover (often magical), especially focusing on interrupting any attempts at casting healing magic. A favorite tactic is firing down at the quarry from tall trees and then bounding away across branches too thin for bulkier races to climb across. Throughout the hunt, Tehaar’s second in command shadows that intruders and reports their activities (via mimicked animal sounds).

If the enemy attempts to chase the elves, then they are lead deep into the forest and usually become hopelessly lost. If they panic and make a break for the edge of the forest, then Tehaar’s companions begin sounding hunting horns and toy with them with cat-like glee.

However, Tehaar is not entirely without mercy. In one case, a band of Stannev men were in pursuit of a gang of cattle rustlers who had become desperate enough to run into the Kingswood in the daytime. The Stannev (27.07) men-at-arms bravely gave chase and, as they were finishing gutting the rustlers, Tehaar’s band arrived, bristling with arrows, but allowed the humans to retreat out of the Kingswood with only a few desultory arrows fired past their ears. In general, Tehaar will allow intruders to retreat out of the Kingswood after killing their leader, in some cases even providing an escort. However, enemies who attempt to cover their escape by doing such things as setting fire to the forest will be hunted to extinction.

The best ways to survive an encounter with Tehaar is to use an elf as a hostage, hide in an enclosed area where elven bows are of little use or run into her when she is not hunting, such as during one of her frequent swims in the Witchwater.

Although Tehaar ranges widely across the Kingswood in search of intruders, where she can be found most often is at the far southern border of the Kingswood where the forest approaches the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14). Here is where humanity swarms the thickest and where is must be watched the most closely.

Connection: Tehaar serves the Bloodied King (29.07).

Hooks:

-What properties does the Witchwater have?

-Who else has run into Tehaar? Did they live?

Hex 29.13

The White Road

Connects to hex: 29.14

In accordance with ancient decree, the Temple Indivisible has wisely forbade that any bodies be buried within the walls of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14). Instead the White Road that worms northwards from the North Gate of the city through mire that quickly gives way to farmland is lined with thousands of tombs. They cluster close to the road, each one covered in carvings that beg travelers to stay a while and read about the citizen entombed there so that they might not be forgotten. As all of the more visible plots were built on centuries ago, newer tombs go to greater and greater lengths to attract attention, some rising high among their fellows, some marked with a riot of color and some imbued with strange glours.

For those too poor to afford a tomb along the White Road, the Temple

Indivisible has thoughtfully provided a place for them as well. Their bones are ground down and used to pave the road itself and layer upon layer of bone grit keeps the White Road remarkably mud-free.

Armand of the Axe

Armand of the Axe was a warrior priest of the King in Splendor (25.04) and came from the south to the City of Shuttered Windows to win glory for himself and his god at the Wedding Band (30.15). He soon rose to fame and earned the enmity of Bogarus Bolger for running down and hacking one of his prized blink dogs to pieces even after it had fled across the Wedding Band and had thus forfeited the match.

In the next match, Bogarus released a great pack of spider monkeys drugged with the juice of the heart fruit against Armand and they clung to his body biting and worrying him as he cleaved them off one by one. Finally Armand emerged victorious but at great cost, one of the monkeys had been infected with a strange affliction and had passed it on to Armand.

That night Armand had a terrible dream in which his powerful limbs wasted away to gaunt sticks upon which he swung barking across the rooftops of Shuttered. The next day he learned that it had been no dream and that he was now a were-spider monkey. In shame and horror he fled to the White Road where he lives with his axe and his few other possessions in an old tomb.

Each night Armand fights off the coming of sleep, chanting prayers to the god who neither listens nor grants him spells, for he knows that when sleep comes his other self will wake. When in spider monkey form, Armand coats himself in bone dust and climbs amidst the forest of tombs that line the White Road barking madly and harassing any people he finds. His mad bark functions causes supernatural terror to come over the weak minded and he enjoys pretending to be a ghost and causing mayhem and attempting to terrorize people into giving him offerings.

The next day, Armand awakens later remembering all that he did in the night and until night comes again either tries to make reparations for what he did or lies sobbing in the tomb where he now lives. His attempts to return to Shuttered have met in failure for the priests turn him away at the gate.

Connections: the dead of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) are buried here. Armand once fought as a gladiator within the Wedding Band (30.15) and is a priest of the King in Splendor (25.04).

Hooks:

-Why is it “wise” to not bury bodies within the City?

-Why do the citizens of Shuttered care about having people stop at and read the carvings on their tombs?

-Any interesting undead about?

-What is heart fruit?

-How did Bogarus Bolger get the infected monkey?

-Will Armand ever be able to cast clerical spells again?

-Why does he crave offerings in spider monkey form? What does he do with them? What else is the spider monkey up to?

-Is there any way to cure Armand?

Hex 29.14

The City of Shuttered Windows

Connects to hex: 03.08, 04.00, 04.31, 08.03, 08.07, 09.06, 13.08, 15.00, 13.06, 25.04, 25.15, 27.04 et al, 29.01, 29.13, 29.15, 30.15, 32.22, 33.00, 33.16, 40.06, 46.15, 47.00, 48.13 and 51.29.

South of the Kingswood and the Freeholds there lies the City of Shuttered Windows, thick with the dust of ages and the grime of hidden violence. Traders from across the land pass through this city, which is often known by its shortened name of simply ‘the Shuttered City’.

The Shuttered City is home to the Temple Indivisible, who worship Alberon, patron deity of the City. The very structure of the city, its stones, walls and peoples, are sacred to their faith. Conversely, the City is a work of blasphemy to the cultists of Dead Tiamat. Legend tells of how the Broken Spear (40.06) was used by Alberon to strike down Tiamat before he tore off each of her five heads. Understandably, the Tiamat cultists of the modern era would give anything to see the City of Shuttered Windows razed to the ground.

It is well known among scholars that the Shuttered City is built on sinking ground. Every year, the foundations of the city slide a few inches deeper into the soft soil. Whether this is a natural phenomenon or a curse that drags it into the jaws of the underworld is a matter of some contention. However, the plain fact is that in order to continue existence, the people of the City must continue to build upwards. At a very rough estimate, it takes around 100 years for a single storey of a building to become completely submerged beneath the ground. Thus, the oldest building still above ground today is the Old Council Tower, but only the top floor of the Tower remains visible.

In the City, height is an indicator of social status. The towers and other tall buildings are reserved for citizens, and the highest of them are the domain of the Electors, the Great Families and the Doge. Between these towers are built bridges and causeways, always built in the anticipation that they will one day become roads, and later, tunnels. The lower classes must live in the shadow of the high towers, in the byzantine labyrinth of streets and passages which make up the majority of the City’s space. For, despite the long history of sinking, there is no ordered plan for the new construction. People build higher when their lower structures are no longer usable. Roads are built according to a system of petitions and bribes, whose haphazardness is exacerbated by the frequent changes in administration. The upshot of this is that there is no ‘ground level’ in the City, only a vague continuum from the airiest towers down to the labyrinthine tunnels of the Undercity.

The Undercity is inhabited by the lowliest commoners, the most wretched of whom may spend months or years without seeing sunlight. It is also home to a branch of the Hoard Bank of the dwarves, and - perhaps - to the dreaded cult of the Whispering Sisters. The further down one goes, the older the buildings, and the fewer the inhabitants. Many of the very deep streets and buildings have caved in, but others remain. It is said that a pompous beggar named the Squatter King has set himself up in the remains of an ancient iteration of the Doge’s Palace. And of course, rumours abound regarding monsters that inhabit the deepest caverns; but certainly none of these monsters have ever been seen up inhabited parts of the Undercity.

The Walls of the City of Shuttered Windows

The City of Shuttered Windows is girded by walls of stone built by the dwarves in an age past. The walls are made of stone so skillfully fitted that only a dwarf can see the seams between the great blocks without the aid of a hand lens. A lone Deep Dwarf makes the trek from Titan’s Skull (33.00) each year to inspect the walls, and for as long as anyone can remember, none of these visitors have said or done anything after their surveys. Some believe that the inspections are carried out by a the same dwarf each year, and because the Deep Dwarves never venture aboveground without their heavy blue cloaks and veils, none can say for sure that this is false. It’s a matter of speculation whether even the Deep Dwarves still recall the art used to craft the wall, but the other dwarves of Titan’s Skull certainly do not. Neither the Priests of the Temple Indivisible nor the skalds of Titan’s Skull have any recollection of why, precisely, the dwarves built the walls of a human city, but the City’s gratitude is commemorated by an ancient tradition of beard-right, which grants dwarves all the rights and privileges of citizenship while they are within the City’s walls.

The walls, unlike the City inside them, are not sinking. It is one of the Hundred Heresies to suggest that the walls’ stability is a result of anything but the fervent prayers of the Priesthood, but most scholars outside of the City insist this is either a simple quirk of geology or proof of the dwarves’ ancient cunning. Scholars within the City, of course, are reluctant to make arguments that might end with them having their tongues cut out before they are exiled and geased never to return.

The City can be entered through the North or South Gates, which are massive stone doors which swing open and closed noiselessly with shocking ease. When closed, they are bolted with bars of iron as thick as a man’s arm. The North Gate is opened only during the day, and is where the vast majority of traffic enters the City. The City Watch are responsible for maintaining order and collecting any tariffs on trade goods, but there is always at least one Priest Militant present to determine who may enter the City and who must remain outside the walls. The Priest can bar anyone from entry without stating any justification, but all citizens (including dwarves) are entitled to an appeal to the Doge should the Priest block their entrance, and the last time a Doge denied a citizen entrance was when Baron Gavriel Verlime sought refuge from the Elven Hunt over a century ago (see 18.07), and most citizens believe that Gavriel voided his citizenship when he purchased his title from the Duke of Thring. It is rare for any human or halfling to be turned away, and even gnomes are usually waved through after answering a few questions about the nature of their business. Even the kobolds or goblins may be admitted under a geas.

The South Gate is only closed during the Long Night, the Lion’s Day, or times of war. It is solely the domain of the Priesthood, and it is the only way to get into the City after curfew. All Night Cattle that enter the City must be brought through this Gate, and all are inspected to insure that the brands and arcane marks are correct, and to insure that they aren’t just ordinary cattle that have been painted white or subjected to some glamour. Cattle counterfeiting is anathema, as bad as conjuring demons, worshipping She Who Waits, or assassinating the Matriarch, but a surprising number of ranchers are stupid or desperate enough to risk impalement trying it. Priests of foreign gods also must enter through the South Gate, and worshippers of Alberon who are visiting on pilgrimage prefer to enter through the lighter traffic of the South Gate. Finally, any elf who wishes to enter the City must use this Gate, so that they may pay the ear-geld and utter the ritual apology for the dishonor the Green Lady brought upon the God of the City during their Great Divorce.

The Balloons of the City

In the City of Shuttered Windows the rich and powerful live high

above other men. Not only do their towers strain towards the sky but many of elite never set foot on the fetid muck that the city is sinking into. When they visit the towers of their peers they cross the high bridges and causeways or well they sail through the air above the city in hot air balloons. While the Electors sit haughtily in their gondolas looking down at the people scuttling below, their tow cables are pulled by carts or winched across a network of ropes that crisscross the sky.

The richest of the Great Families and the Doge himself can afford magical means of propulsion for their balloons and their great painted blimps are wonders to behold. The Doge himself owns a number of aarakocra slaves (no doubt acquired from 04.00) that serve as bodyguards, servants and dancers. They can often be seen wheeling above the city’s spires.

The Black Balloon

Of all the balloon-artisans in the City of Shuttered Windows, the most respected was Yilbar the Illustrious. Owning an entire studio of builders, designers and painters, he was the creator of the Doge’s current air-barge, as well as many other fine balloons.

His greatest work yet was to be the Black Balloon. Painted primarily black, with white frescoes depicting grand moments in the history of the City, it was filled with a new type of gas (also black). Yilbar had acquired the gas from some distant place, but the specifics of where and how he would not divulge.

In any case, the black gas when heated was extremely buoyant, allowing the Black Balloon to rise higher than any other before it. The Doge didn’t like this, but Yilbar assured him that the balloon represented the glory of the entire City, and besides it was only being taken up for a test flight.

The whole City turned out to watch the Black Balloon rise. Yilbar was on it, along with his twin daughters Ysmara and Ynae. The Balloon rose until it was merely a black spot in the sky. It didn’t come down again. In fact, it floats there still, and can be seen from the ground on a clear day.

Nobody knows why the Balloon is not returning. However, a few hours after its ascent, a flaming body was seen to fall from it before bursting into ashes on the pavement. A distinctive silver ring identified the body as Yilbar the Illustrious.

The Menagerie of Pandelar

Somewhere deep in the vaults of the Undercity, rumour has it that an ancient zoo lies hidden - bricked up now and deserted, yet still inhabited by a variety of strange animals who are preserved in eternal life by an enchantment placed upon the building. The Menagerie was created long ago by an elf named Pandelar who, unusually for and elf, travelled far from the Kingswood. Pandelar built the menagerie to repay the Doge of the city for a great service rendered unto him. Today, Pandelar dwells once again in the Kingswood, but is known only as The Weeper (43.08).

There are collectors in the upper city who would pay handsome prices for the rare beasts that dwell in the menagerie. Creatures from all over the Shrouded Lands may be found there, some of which are no longer extant anywhere else in the world. It is said that the terrible goatscorpion is there, who was one of the seven firstborn sons of Chimalia, goddess of chimerical creatures. Another rumoured creature is the xortoise, an enormous creature from beyond the World’s Edge that was subdued by Pandelar in a hunt lasting three days.

The Creche of a Million Young

Huddled against the south wall of the City of Shuttered Windows, on land that has been technically part of the grounds of the Grumluda embassy since the unfortunate incident of Doge Montisse and the twenty-six shaven cave bears, one can find the Creche of a Million Young. Almost completely obscured from sight by criss-crossing walkways, the only entrance is what was once an upper window that leads down into the halls of this temple.

Inside the Creche of a Million Young, the buzzing of flies almost drowns out the droning of the priests who surround a deep pit, the Creche itself. Within the pit is a vast swarm of insects and other things that creep and crawl. The priests draw these out of the pit and give one to each worshiper who approaches. Some release their gift, others consume it, while others take it home to burn it while composing a prayer or do stranger things. Some worshipers, in a display of devotion, leap down into the pit and sink into the Young.

Until recently the Creche was a marginal temple with a small knot of regular worshipers and a few aging priests. Soon it seemed that there would not be enough funerals to keep the creatures of the pit fed. All of that changed when a strange man, veiled and robed in black, stormed into the temple. When he was challenged by the surprised priests, he cast their leader into the pit and took his place.

The new High Priest claims to be Dormond of the Crooked Oak (04.31) but, as he never removes his veil or cloak, who can say? A supporter of the old High Priest once claimed, before being found in bed with his blood drained dry and the marks of ten thousand mosquitoes on his skin, that he is in fact Ogwyn Egglurs (08.03).

Whoever the High Priest is, he has certainly been active. The Creche now throngs with worshippers, so many that the press of their numbers occassionally knocks one of them into the pit and, while the Creche of a Million Young looks as dingy as ever, its worshipers have established a strong presence in the Undercity. Many still mock the Creche of a Million Young as the “bug pit” but they now make sure to do so quietly or they could end up like Armond Sauvaughn a proud man who mocked the “bug eaters” but who now refuses to leave the well-netted gondola of his balloon for wherever he goes his very presence draws thousands upon thousands of insects that crawl over his skin with no regard for their own safety.

To his most dedicated followers, the High Priest speaks of the final researches of Severard of the Seven Circles (13.08) and how his final and greatest work was never completed...

The Election of the Doges

Whenever a Doge of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) dies, the Electors of the city meet deep in the bowels of the Old Council Tower and thirty of their number are chosen randomly. Then nine of these thirty are randomly selected. Then these nine elect forty Electors, of whom twelve are chosen randomly. These twelve elect twenty-five. Then nine of these twenty-five are selected randomly who then elect forty-five. These forty-five, in turn, are randomly reduced to eleven. These eleven then elect forty-one and these forty-one then finally vote to elect the new Doge, with twenty-five votes being needed rather than a simple majority. Some foreigners have tried to subvert the elections with bribery and blackmail but ended up giving up in befuddlement.

The Whispering Sisters

Of the many esoteric cults that inhabit the City of Shuttered Windows, the Whispering Sisterhood is one of the most feared. As the name

implies, all full members of the cult are women, though men may join as subservient acolytes. The Sisters worship the goddess known only as She Who Waits, though in the highest echelons of the cult it is said that her true name is sometimes spoken. According to the heretical mythology of the Sisters, the goddess She Who Waits was once the concubine of the great god Alberon, who today is patron of the City. The Sisters claim that after Alberon slew the vile Tiamat and brought plenty to the lands of the Long Night, he was consumed by pride and cast aside his faithful consort. Soon he sought to woo another spiritual being, the Green Lady who is said to be the mother of all elves. To ensure the Green Lady’s favour, Alberon caused She Who Waits to be imprisoned beneath the earth, and her image struck from the memories of men.

So it is said; but all this is blasphemy to the good people of the City of Shuttered Windows. What is known of the Whispering Sisterhood is that they act in secret, in dark alleyways and behind closed doors in the halls of power. Many of the Sisters take on the cover identity of a whore or madam, and rumor has it that men may be drugged and kidnapped in certain of the city’s shady brothels. When they awaken they may find themselves in caverns beneath the city, or on lonely hilltops in the countryside nearby - unwilling sacrifices in one of the Sisterhood’s foul rites.

As with many cults, night cattle (see 27.04 et. al.) also play a role in the rituals of the Whispering Sisterhood. Supposedly, they deal exclusively with Drogo the Baldfaced, (29.01) since no honest cattle-trader would knowingly sell to them. In the most holy and ecstatic ritual of the Sisterhood, the sacrifices must be a night bull (representing the upper world) and a man and woman newly wed (representing Alberon and the Green Lady). The unfortunate couple are stuffed inside the night bull’s stomach, and the whole is roasted before being cast into a bottomless pit as an offering to She Who Waits. By breathing of the smoke that floats up from the pit, the hierophants of the Sisterhood are sent into a trance. For seven days and nights they convulse, all the while whispering the words of their black goddess - words of prophecy, words of doom.

Due to the failure of the Sisterhood’s many enemies to root them out, some say that their sacrificial pit is located beneath the lower vaults of the local dwarven Hoard (33.00) and that its only entrance lies within the well-guarded premises of the Hoard. But if that is true, why would the dwarves risk so much to shelter such a cult?

The Wives of the Doge

When the twin daughters Lord Tristifer Bartley of Blackhorn Keep (30.03, one of the Keeps of the night men, see the entry for 27.04 et. al.) came of age they were such beauties that all men wondered if they had elven blood. Considering the history of the second Lady Bartley, it is easy to see how people could come to such a misapprehension, but the girls were human. But such humans they were! Seline was as pale as the moon and with hair as dark as the night sky, but nevertheless it shone brighter than a thousand stars. Her sister Eliana had such skin that, even though she led the sunless life of the night men, it remained golden but not near as golden as the bright and curling wreath of her hair.

For long years Lord Bartley refused all suitors, cleverly playing the other lords of the Lands of the Night Cattle off against each other until many, his brother chief among them, feared that he sought to name one of them his heir, for he had no sons. But then, during one Long Night some years past, the great Doge of the City of Shuttered Windows itself (29.14) paid a visit to the market pits and, blind though he was and is, he was enchanted by the sisters.

The thought of his house allied to Shuttered itself brought great joy to Lord Bartley but precious little to the Doge or his daughters. How could the Doge choose either one of the beauties and how could the twins be separated by the lonely miles between Blackhorn Keep and the Shuttered City? Finally a priest of the God of the City of Shuttered Windows who traveled in the Doge’s revenue arrived at a solution: by his interpretation of the laws of the Temple Invisible (25.15) the sisters had but one soul and thus the Doge was free to marry both of them, which he did in the greatest festivity that Blackhorn Keep had ever seen.

At first the Great Families seethed at the presence of the twin wives and some in the Temple Indivisible muttered darkly, but Eliana soon won them over with her bright smiles and ready charm. Soon the entire city was following the fashion of the feather dresses that she favored, though few could match her firebird dresses in which the feathers of the firebirds (04.05) were so freshly plucked that they yet glowed. Under even the pale sun that shines on the Shuttered City Eliana blossomed, her beauty seeming to grow greater by the day.

Celine fared differently. The face of the sun, which she had never before seen, filled her with terror and she had the windows of her apartments replaced with the solid walls of home. Yet that was not enough, for she thought that she could smell the sun on the people who surrounded here and soon took to stalking the lonely halls of the Doge’s palace by night. Her only comfort was her husband and, as he often worked through the night, Celine soon became his secretary. She had a quick mind and a sharper nose for lies, which pleased the Doge. But Celine, found that the reports of assassins, cults and mad wizards that she now read nightly bred with her mad fear of the sun and produced a brood of a thousand terrors. Chief among them is her fear of the Whispering Sisters, who she is convinced are dedicated to her destruction above all else.

Thus, while it is Eliana who speaks about organizing a company of female warriors to attack to citadel of the Whispering Sisters (32.22), she does it out of love for her sister as when they meet at every dawn and every dusk Celine never fails to speak of the peril of the Sisters.

The Waterworks of Shuttered

It’s not a far jog from the South Gate of the City proper to the shore of Keening Sea -- a massive freshwater body that serves a fishery, bread basket, water-source, and sewage outtake for the City of Shuttered Windows. The underground canals leading and out of the city have access points to allow the Priests of the Temple Invisible to bless and purify the waters, as well as allowing for crews to patrol the waterways for the relatively infrequent monster incursion.

Fish and turtles coming in from the Sea must also be blessed and purified before it can be brought into the city. The numerous warves lining the shores are dominated by fisher-priests, who are responsible for keeping order on the docks and inspecting the catch of the day for taint. Each cluster of docks is practically it’s own village, and most residents have rare reason to enter the city proper.

Dwarf-made pumps pull water from the canal up into the highest spires of the city, powered by the labors of heretics found guilty of worshiping forbidden gods (usually, the Green Lady of the elves). In practice, the heresy charges are brought against undesirables with the flimsiest of evidence, whenever a new crew of workers is needed. If a heretical prisoner should die while serving his penance, his flesh is stripped and his skeleton animated to complete his full sentence. This is one of the few examples of necromantic animation allowed by City law and temple. A sentence of a few hundred years has become not uncommon and there is speculation that the undead now outnumber

living workers.

Originally, the waterworks were powered by summoned elementals, and some sections of the complicated system still have their original water-spirit dutifully pumping water upward. However, even spirits eventually fade, and since the Green Lady's divorce, summoning replacements has become not only illegal but fairly dangerous (also, the arcane art of summoning is a much more guarded secret than as it was when the waterworks were first constructed).

From the heights of tallest buildings, the water falls in several open air streams, where it is diverted by sleeves to fall into homes and public cisterns. There are few more elaborate fountains throughout the various tiers of the city as well, particularly in shrines. They tend to be fed directly by water being pumped upward. The largest of the waterfalls powers a system of waterwheels, which have a variety of purposes.

The Guild of the Waterworks, the Plumbers, dutifully maintain and expand the system. They are also responsible for the grueling task of raising the canal's ever-sinking basin. The Guild traditionally employs dwarven citizens, but there are humans and halflings on the rolls as well. Those that make it past the apprenticeship of working on pipes in the occasionally dangerous lower levels enjoy very well-paid positions in the forges and upper tiers.

The Temple of Alberon

At the end of the Time of Schisms when the Brothers of the Spear made their bargain and joined the powers that be as the Temple Invisible nine Brothers refused to compromise and defied their Hierophant. They were among the most deadly of assassins and who had learned how not to be seen. The Hierophant smiled at them and explained to them mildly that not being seen was valuable and that they would learn its value but that there were limits that applied to such things, as they would do well to learn.

And as those words were spoken, the limbs of the nine Brothers grew long and thin and their faces twisted into hideous shapes and a powerful stench rose up from their skin. Forevermore the Brothers would have to hide their hideous faces but would never be able to pass unnoticed again.

In shame and anger the nine Brothers descended deep below the city and remain their still. They call themselves the Temple of Alberon (and confusing its name with the established Temple Indivisible has gotten more than one foreigner consigned to the Waterworks) but have few converts as any who join them share their curse. Although their smell always warns their victims, more than one man has died retching while stabbed by a Brother who he never saw.

The troglodyte Brothers of the Temple of Alberon believe that Alberon has abandoned his City (what else could explain the present condition of his one faithful Temple?) and that desperate means are required to return his attention to Shuttered. In order to do this, they seek to commit the greatest imaginable sacrilege against their own god, seeing it as the only means of focusing is divine and glorious gaze on the corrupt condition of his City.

The Embassies of the Southern Gate of Shuttered

The southern wall of the City of Shuttered Windows is host to the Twelve Embassies of the great nations. The embassies open outward from the city -- they have been built into the southern side of the southern wall. The ambassadors of each embassy are required to enter through the South Gate and provide for their own protection.

The City of Shuttered Windows is considered the last bastion of civilization, a threshold opening unto the so-called Shrouded Lands north of Keening Sea. Compared to the Twelve Nations, the lands from Shuttered to the Grey Mountains and beyond are savage and unruly.

Shuttered is also the largest and most important city that falls under the ruler-ship of none of the great nations. Yet, each of the Twelve have something of a interested in the City, and it's delicate politics playing one off of the other to maintain Shuttered's independence.

Three of the embassies are empty and bricked up, two because the associated nations have fallen to barbarism. Alacoda, Empire of High Elves, remains extant but distinctly unwelcome, as the Alacodi are the favored peoples of the Green Lady. It's a common game for Alacodi spies to try to infiltrate the City, and an even more common game to accuse political enemies within the City of having dealings with Alacoda.

The liveliest and most visited embassy by far is that of Grumluda, Domain of the Eternal-King-of-All-Orcs. The fighting schools (and gambling parlors) that have grown around that embassy are popular with travelers and citizens of the city alike. Ambassadors from Grumluda tend to be half-human, and given special dispensation to enter the city without taking on a geas. The Grumluda orcs are great patrons of the Wedding Band (30.15) and pay well for odd creatures to spice up the blood sport, and the Gumludi are always happy to purchase creatures brought in from beyond World's Edge -- the most exotic of which are exported back to the Orc lands after being bloodied in the Band.

The Sealed Embassy of Naros

Some fifteen years ago, the small but prosperous nation of Naros was placed under a devastating curse by the arch-lich Supendar. It was his last act of spite before falling beneath the blades of party of brave adventurers. The people of Naros vanished instantly, their animals were transformed into terrible beasts, and their lands became shrouded in perpetual twilight.

Since the embassy of Naros at the gates of the Shuttered City was also technically part of Naros, the curse took effect within its walls as well. The ambassadors disappeared, the rooms took on a grey pallor, and the house cats, rats and livestock in the adjoining stable were turned into monsters. However, since the monsters showed a reluctance to leave the borders of the embassy, the Doge's response was to have the entire building bricked up and ignored.

Today, the embassy remains dormant and forbidden. On dark nights, one can sometimes hear from within the hissing of the razor cats, the chittering of the plague mice, and the unearthly lowing of the vampire cattle. The other effects of the curse are relatively undocumented, but it is well-known that any region of Naros is an unhealthy place to be in. However, some adventurers have speculated about raiding the place. Rumour has it that just before the curse came down, the Narosi ambassadors had taken out a huge loan from the Hoard in order to finance the ongoing war against the lich Supendar (which at the time they thought would go on for much longer.) If this is true, then there is a serious amount of wealth to be found inside the accursed walls. However, two things have deterred prospective burglars thus far: breaking into the embassy would violate the Doge's decree; and if the gold were extracted, there is no guarantee that the Hoard might not begin demanding repayments from the gold's new owner.

There is one other reason to break into the embassy. Recently in the central district of the Shuttered City, a priest of an obscure cult has

come forth, claiming that he will pay good money for sacrificial cattle afflicted with vampirism...

The Shuttered Windows

You can see them all over the under-city, if you know where to look. Some of them are small, only big enough for a child to crawl through. Many are the size of doorways; a few are enormous, like the one that hangs in front of the old marketplace square which is now a dozen yards below the ground. Regardless of their size, what all the windows have in common is that they are closed. The great stone shutters have been drawn closed and sealed, so that one may mistake them for a wall until one notices the arcane runes inscribed around the edges.

Long ago, this city was known as the City of Many Windows. The founders of the City built it on a place of confluence, where the strange roads came together, and thus it was that the windows were first opened. Through these portals one could enter the strange roads. These roads cannot be found on any map; those who tread them will meet no other travellers, and see no landmarks beyond the eerie fog that surrounds them. But if they know the way, they will come in time quite unexpectedly to their destination, having travelled hundreds or thousands of miles in the space of a few hours. Such was the power of the City in its glory days, when traders arrived daily from the Twelve Nations and beyond.

All that came to an end during the Chimerical Siege. After Alberon slew Tiamat, the dragon-goddess's daughter Chimalia was enraged and swore vengeance. She sent her chimerical creatures - owlbears, minotaurs, griffons and others - through the strange roads to invade the city. Driven to the brink, the priests of the city chose to seal up the windows forever. The Chimerical Siege was broken soon after.

Nobody has ever been able to open the Shuttered Windows since that day. However, it is said that the magic of the confluence still lingers within the city walls. One night you may find yourself walking down a dark alley, only to glimpse at the far end an open field, a dirt road, and a skyline obscured by fog. Follow that trail, and you may emerge anywhere in the Shrouded Lands or beyond. Or you may never emerge at all...

The Temple of the Labyrinth

In the seediest corner of the Gnomish Quarter of the City, far from the shops of the reputable apothecaries and tinkers and illusionists, beyond the cozy taverns and smoke shops, and past even the stalls and tents of the most disreputable naga-oil salesmen, pawn shop owners, lie the slums, which have sunk to the point of being half-underground and will be claimed entirely by the Undercity in a man's age or two. Once, when an ancient Doge allowed the construction of the Gnomish Quarter over the heated objections of an ancient Matriarch, these were the row houses build by the first, wealthiest influx of gnomish artisans and traders, and now the low ceilings and narrow halls mean that their occupants are limited to destitute gnomes and halflings. Kobolds and goblins who attempt to defy their geases and remain in the City indefinitely often find their way into these warrens. Occasionally their wasted corpses are found among the trash strewn about the alleys, but rumors persist that there is some way to break the geas, and it can be found in this slum.

Even if this rumor is true, it would by no means by the most remarkable feature of the slum. For among the half-buried tenements, there is an ancient storefront, which might once have been prosperous but has now fallen into wrack and ruin like everything around it. Its glass windows were long ago replaced with oilskins, and its intricately carved wooden sign has faded and rotted to the point of near-illegibility. It proclaims

that this is the Temple of Labyrinth, and it is, indeed, a temple, one which is known as far as the Pirate Kingdoms and Grumluda. When questions arise to why an alien temple is allowed beyond the sanctuary of the Twelve Embassies, the Priests of the City will usually answer that the Temple of the Labyrinth is so piteous that it makes the glory of Alberon all the more evident by contrast. This is a lie, and it is one of the three lies that Priests of the City are allowed to tell.

On the highest floor of the Steeple of Alberon, above the Tabernacle, the Church's coffers and the personal chambers of the Matriarch, there is the Sealed Library. Here, the Church keeps the books that are too dangerous or blasphemous to allow any but the Matriarch to read, but to valuable to destroy. The library contains one of three known copies of the Testament of Weneslas Stannev (17.07), the spell book of the Arch-Lich of Naros, and the only un-redacted version of the Scroll of Seven Shadows (37.01). It also contains a contract between the first Matriarch of the City and the High Priestess of the Labyrinth, written with dwarven cuneiform stamped into a strange sheet of unsmeltable metal, promising that the Temple of Labyrinth will always have a place in the City of Shuttered Windows.

Inside the Temple of the Labyrinth, there is a, single cluttered room, with a low altar, rickety pews, stacks of rotting hymnals and at least a dozen half-empty wrought-iron candelabra. If the pews were full, a wizard could slaughter every congregant with a single fireball, but the pews are always empty. The room is suffused by the odor of filth and decay that is barely concealed by cloying incense.

Behind the altar sits High Priestess, a gnome so bent with age that she is as twisted as any Deep Dwarf (33.00). It is unknown whether she ever moves from her spot, but no visitor has seen her anywhere else. Her robes are elven silk, embroidered with a maze-like pattern of dizzying intricacy. Once her robes would have been worth more than the herds of the Olmsteds (31.04), but now they are ragged and threadbare: apparently not even elven silk lasts forever. This is the highest representative of Chimalia, She Who is Fate, She Who Dwells in the Labyrinth of Law and Chaos, mother and sister of Tiamat. Despite living at the fringe of the Undercity, she is an Elector, making her the equal of the Matriarch or the head of any Great Family, but she has never cast a vote.

Suplicants may sit in the pews and wait for her to address them, and those she notices are allowed approach her to ask one whispered question, and receive one whispered answer. It is said that those who get up before she acknowledges them will never be answered. Most give up after a few hours, but some are desperate enough to wait days before they have to leave out of thirst or hunger (this would explain the stench). A few die sitting in the pews waiting for an answer that will never come, including the last Doge. Zeem Olmsted endured the humiliation of the ear-geld and then waited two days for an answer. The last time Drogo the Baldfaced (29.01) was bold enough to show himself in the City, he visited the Temple, and needed to wait only a few minutes for his answer. It is said that when he left the City, he was pale as a Night Cow, and weeping openly.

Connections: the Broken Spear (40.06) is said to have been wielded by the God of the City of Shuttered Windows when he did battle with Tiamat. The Verlimes of old (18.07) were citizens of the City. The dwarven-made walls of the City are inspected yearly by one of the Deep Dwarves who live far below the mountain known as the Titan's Skull (33.00) while the decadent dwarves of the upper halls of the Titan's Skull have established a branch of their bank known as the Hoard here, which some say is in league with the Whispering Sisters who have their stronghold in the Drowning Place (32.22). The Doge keeps aarakocra slaves that were presumably procured from among the Kagu (04.00). Recently, a pair of young rich young citizens of the city

have had their balloon blow far off course and are now staying at Uncle Bertie's (03.08). The famed Managerie of Palendar was built by the elven wizard now known as the Weeper (43.08). The poisons of the Cloud Forests (47.00) are sought by the Smiling Men of Shuttered. Giles Chosard (09.06) is the son of an exile of the city and desires to have his family's ban lifted. The Wedding Band (30.15) serves as the gladiatorial arena of Shuttered. The People of the Claw (48.13) are descents of a lost colony of Shuttered. Perhaps the Doge of the city of Shuttered Windows (29.14) is the father of one of the Heger's (46.15) sons. The identify of the new High Priest of the Creche of a Million Young is a mystery but it could be Dormond of the Crooked Oak (04.31) or Ogwyn Egglurs (08.03), whoever it is seems to have an affinity for Severard of the Seven Cirlces (13.08). The Whispering Sisters of the City abducted the previous owner of the Sundial Inn (25.04). The Gardens of the Sea (29.15) feed the City. The Brothers of the Grove (33.16) help guide the process by which the Doge of the City is selected. The (fraternal) twin wives of the Doge hail from Blackhorn Keep (30.03, one of the Keeps of the night men, see the entry for 27.04 et. al.). The Temple Invisible (25.15) serves as assassins and enforces of the established Temple Indivisible. The City of Shuttered Windows enjoys an uneasy peace with the gnolls who live across the Keening Sea (51.29). The White Road (29.13) leads north of the city and the tombs of citizens stretch for miles on either side of it. Far north of the city is the Farthest Hermitage (15.00) where priests of the City sometimes retire. The priests of the city are partially to blame for the creation of the etins (13.06).

Hooks:

- What are the rites and traditions of the Temple Indivisible?

- Where do the cultists of Dead Tiamat dwell? How do you worship a deity who's dead, anyway?

- What's causing the sinking of the city?

- What old buildings are to be found in the Undercity? Any lost treasures, perhaps?

- What kind of influence does the Squatter King have?

- Who lives in the upper towers?

- What lands send their traders to the Shuttered City?

- What are some specific locations within the city?

- Why aren't the walls sinking? Do the visiting Deep Dwarves have something to do with it?

- What happens if regular cows are used in a ritual that requires Night Cattle?

- What precipitated the Great Divorce?

-Who is in the market for aarakocra slaves or eggs? There must be someone in the City who wants to match the Doge.

-How do you keep slaves that can fly from running away?

-Tell me about some of the niftier airships and the famous artists who paint them!

- Where did the black gas come from?

- What happened to Yilbar, and why hasn't the balloon come down?

- Yilbar's son is offering a handsome reward to anyone who can get up to the balloon and rescue his sisters, if they still live. But how would anyone get up that high?

- What other weird creatures dwell in the menagerie?

- What and where are the other seven firstborn of Chimalia?

- What was the favour that the Doge did for Pandelar?

- Why did Pandelar eventually abandon the zoo? Was it something to do with the death of his daughter?

- What other weird creatures dwell in the menagerie?

- What and where are the other seven firstborn of Chimalia?

- What was the favour that the Doge did for Pandelar?

- Why did Pandelar eventually abandon the zoo? Was it something to do with the death of his daughter?

-Just what were Severard's final researches? What is the High Priest of the Creche of a Million Young planning to do?

-Who is the High Priest anyway? Dormond? Ogwyn? Severard's lich? Someone else?

-What other practices does this strange bug cult have?

-What interesting things lie in the Old Council Tower?

- What brothels are actually fronts for the Whispering Sisters? What other places do they control?

- Who in the halls of power answers to the Sisterhood, and why?

- What's in the caverns beneath the city, and does anyone go down there?

- Where is the bottomless pit where the sacrifice takes place? Is it really under the Hoard's Vault? Why would the dwarves protect them?

- What prophecies have been handed down by She Who Waits?

- Where are Alberon and the Green Lady now? Are they a tangible presence in the setting, or merely figures of myth?

-Why would the history of the second Lady Bartley make people suspect that she has elven blood? What happened to the first Lady Bartley?

-Do the Whispering Sisters truly seek to destroy Celine?

-What other fashions has Eliana popularized?

-What is life like within the keeps of the Land of the Night Cattle?

-What other paranoid whisperings is Celine engaged in?

-Have either of the twins had children by the blind Doge?

-Was the priest's ruling that the twins share one soul true? What temple law is he basing that interpretation on?

-What sort of great sacrilege do the Brothers (of the troglodyte sect known as the Temple of Alberon) have in mind?

-Is there any way to break the troglodyte curse?

-What role does this small and stinky sect play in City politics?

- What happened to these adventurers who slew Supendar? Are they still around?

- What became of the people of Naros? Did they simply die, or was their fate more subtle?

- Who on earth would want vampire cows for their sacred rituals? I mean, that's just silly, right?

- Where is Chimalia now? Is she still extant as a goddess?

- How was the Siege of Shuttered broken?

- The strange roads can lead you places if you know the way. What happens if you don't know the way, or you get lost?

- Is there a reliable way to access the strange roads anymore? Are there any other places besides the Shuttered City where you can get onto the roads?

Are the rumors of broken geases true? What could be breaking them?

What did the last Doge want to know? How about Zeem and Drogo?

Why was the Church willing to tolerate the presence of the Temple?

Why is the Temple of the Labyrinth so impoverished? Are there any other priests of Chimalia out there?

Hex 29.15

The Gardens of the Sea

Connects to hex: 27.18 and 29.14

The Doge claims that he rules the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14), but it is truly ruled by its belly. If the city does not eat, how long can even the mightiest live before the mobs haul their palaces down? Therefore the Electors of the city do all they can to keep the mob well fed and, while the cattle and ostrich drives down from the Freeholds (18.07) are certainly important the true bread basket of the City are the Gardens of the Sea.

Most farmers bring water to their fields either by praying for rain or digging ditches, but the practical people of the City bring their fields to the water. In the shallow waters of the coast of the freshwater Keening Sea they mound cartloads of dirt to make artificial islands (surrounded by posts driven into the mud to slow erosion) in which corn and other crops grow in well-watered abundance. These artificial islands are connected by a thousand wooden bridges, as it would not be wide to wade in these waters and risk losing a foot to the giant snapping turtles.

The great fear that grips the gardeners of the sea is that a storm will come and wash away their crops. Thankfully, a great breakwater rises from the sea (roughly from where 28.16, 29.15 and 29.16 meet and extending to the northeast past the Wedding Band (30.15)). The gardeners say that the breakwater was there even before the City and it certainly looks old enough. It is a massive belt of statues that the waves of centuries have washed smoothed but strangely entwined inhuman forms can still be made out.

Other gardens exist up and down the coast but they are at the mercy of the storms that blow in off the Keening Sea so they are few fewer than those behind the breakwater.

Connection: the gardens feed the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14). During their mating season, the winds carry storms of flying snakes (27.18) from the west.

Hooks:

-Where else does the City get its food?

-Why so many snapping turtles?

-Who built the great breakwater and what do the ancient worn-down statues depict?

Hex 30.15

The Wedding Band

Connects to hexes: 04.07, 29.13, 29.14 and 46.06.

Just off the coast of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) a series of low-lying islands rise out of the Keening Sea. They are little more than mounds of mud, but a century ago a band of smugglers discovered an enormous ring of silvery metal buried deep the muck of one of these islands.

After being excavated, the sages of the city discovered that this silver ring had powerful anti-magical properties and that it could very well be the wedding band of the Green Lady herself, the elven goddess who was once the consort of the God of the City of Shuttered Windows (Alberon). Some said that it should be chopped up and sold, but cooler heads prevailed and the wedding band was left intact.

These days the band serves to mark the boundary of a gladiatorial arena, its anti-magic keeping outside wizards from cheating or any magic from the beasts and gladiators within from hurting the gathered spectators. The causeway that links the island of the band with the City itself and the Doge is only too glad to have such dangerous sport located far away from his palace.

The neighborhood surrounding the band is a deeply unpleasant mix of bars of the worst sort, brothels and the holding pens of various strange beasts. The Doge's law means little around the band and the island is dominated by an aristocracy of bosses. A rising member of this group is a halfling by the name of Bogarus Bolger. Once famous for capturing and supplying a number of strange beasts for the games, he has now settled down to run his blink dog kennel and other business interests.

Bolger's manner can be disarming, for he acts much like a gentleman halfling farmer from the Freeholds and is always unfailingly polite. He often apologizes to his victims before feeding them to his henchman, a uncommonly cunning troll of great and varied hungers (Bolger generally pays him in the bodies of exotic creatures and gladiators killed in the games and he is steadfastly loyal to his employer and always hungry...). Currently Bolger is in the market for captured leucrotta (04.07) and is willing to pay handsomely for them.

Divinio Ambersmyth

There is a special warrant for the capture - not the killing - of the grey worm (46.06), issued by one Divinio Ambersmyth of the Shuttered City. Divinio is a would-be boss in the Wedding Band, and a rival of

the ruthless Bogarus Bolger. Divinio does not have much money or reputation, but he does have one thing: a live specimen of the burning eagle, a monster that is related to the firebirds (04.05) but is much more vicious. A legend, popularized by the exiled poet Trimueil, claims that the burning eagle and the grey worm represent the opposing elements of fire and water, and that the two creatures have been mortal enemies since the dawn times.

A battle in the Wedding Band between the burning eagle and the grey worm would draw unprecedented crowds. Divinio is under pressure to display his eagle in combat, but he insists on waiting until he has the grey worm as well. However, to capture the worm and carry it all the way back to the Shuttered City would be a difficult task indeed.

Connections: This area serves as the gladiatorial arena of Shuttered (29.14). A local boss named Bogarus Bolger is seeking to buy captured leucrotta (04.07) from the Mocking Hills while Divinio Ambersmyth seeks a grey worm from beyond the World’s Edge (46.06). One of the victims of Bogarus Bolger (Armand of the Axe) currently lives in one of the tombs along the White Road (29.13).

Hooks:

-Who are the most famous gladiators and trainers of the band?

-How did Bolger acquire a troll henchman? What were some of his adventures in his younger days?

-Who are some of the other bosses of the band?

-Has anyone brought a beast to the band that might break loose?

Hex 31.04

Olmsted Keep

Connects to hexes: 04.06, 18.10, 29.01, 29.07, 36.04 and 37.01

All of the keeps of the land of the night cattle are well away from the woods, except the one inhabited by Lord Olmsted and his daughters. Any trade or communication with the elves of the Kingswood must go through the half-elven Lord Olmsted, who is said to be a great-great-grandson of the Bloodied King himself -- though almost all requests are denied without any recourse.

The destination of many of the caravans traveling the Welt Road, Olmsted Keep is a somber, squat fortification sitting at the very edge of Kingswood. It is divided into three parts -- the outer walls, the market yard, and the Olmsted manor.

The outer walls are sparsely defended by (confirmed) half-elven archers, as well as strong wards against magical attack that are renewed daily by the resident wizard Sala Olmsted.

The market yard is covered with layers of leather tarps, to blotch out sunlight, and managed by an metal-masked unseelie elf who refers to herself as “Faceless.” Others more commonly refer to her as “the Drow.” The Drow manages not just the yard, but trade between the lands of men and the elves of the Kingswood Court. It’s hard to miss the iron shackles binding her feet, but it’s a certainty that anyone who mentions them or stares too long are denied the right to trade.

The elven Court, through the Drow, barter for cows, leathers, finished

metal goods, well crafted jewelry (dwarven make is a favorite), as well as any unique treasures. In exchange they offer fae-wines, rare herbs with potent medicinal/arcane qualities, the mostly finely crafted bows and arrows, and charms. Most of the charms are simple contracts protecting the bearer from faerie mischief for a year’s time, but a few have more potent effects. Or at least they are touted as having more potent effects. Buyers beware when dealing with elf-goods.

Olmsted Manor is the fairly posh living quarters of the current Lord of the Keep, a half-elf who has seen three generations of men -- Lord Zeem Olmsted. To become an member of Olmsted’s clan or retainers, a half-elf must journey under elf-sold license and protection to the Mirror Lake, and stare into it’s waters. If the petitioner is truly in equal parts both elf and man, the still waters of the Mirror Lake will bear no reflection. In this rare case, the Court declares the petitioner an Olmsted, and brands him or her with a moonsilver tattoo. He is now Olmsted and a resident of the manor.

Those who are less than pure are killed on the spot or taken away for mysterious purposes. It’s therefore rare for a half-elf outside of sons and daughters of the Keep to even make the attempt.

Connections: the Olmsteds are the middlemen between the elves of the Holt (29.07) and the outside world. Nara Olmsted (see 04.06) is one of this clan. Jerome Olmsted, the only son of Lord Olmsted lies dead within the nearby garden of Amelar (36.04). The half-elfs are initiated by visiting Mirror Lake (31.03). Lord Zeem Olmsted has placed a sizable bounty on Drogo the Barefaced (29.01). It is a little-known fact that Lord Zeem Olmsted is a wereman and transforms into Barnabus Bludenose when the moon is full (18.10).

Hooks:

-Why does Nara Olmsted live so far from her family’s domain (she’s the lieutenant of a small mercenary crew commanded by the bastard son of the lord of Cragsend)?

-What’s the deal with the Faceless?

31.07

The Rockery

Connects to hex: 00.06 and 29.07

If you ride just far enough from the Holt (29.07) that milady feels restless – but not yet bored – you will find the Rockery. For miles there lie stones of all sizes and shapes, and not a trace of verdure.

Here you can sit in the sun, hold a pleasant conversation or slip under the Hanging Rock for a more intimate engagement.

According to legend, a storm giant once became enchanted by the music of the elves and sat each night by the gate of the Holt to listen to their merry-making. She forgot about her husband weeping by the Ocean of Bitter Regrets, though it had another name in those days. The elves rode around the giant when they issued from the Holt, laughing and joking with her in a tongue she could not understand.

But when the moon shone full in the night, the Wild Hunt gripped them and the elves pursued the giant through the woods, stinging her with arrow and spear. When she fell, the hounds chewed out her eyes.

Her husband searched across the land for her, and finally found her bones in the grove. He gathered rocks from across the world to make

her cairn, and swore that each year he would lay another stone above her eyes. So when the King of Salt and Brine (00.06) shakes off his leathery skin, he coughs up the most precious jewel he swallowed that year and walks to his lover’s rest.

But he never makes it before the sun reaches the midpoint of the sky and he must turn back. Each time he strikes a bargain with a mortal, to take the stone the rest of the way.

The night the storm giantess fell was the last ride of the Wild Hunt. In the centuries that followed the Unseelie Court was not heard from again, neither their haunting music or the sounds of their hunting horns. All that remains of them are motes of purplish light that emerge from the trees after the sun falls away to the west.

Since then, humans have begun to encroach upon the Kingswood at night, knowing that the Bloodied King remains bound by the treaty signed with the Prince of Men (see 29.07) and would not bring forth the hosts of the Seelie Court from their Holt except for when the sun is in the sky. Some men grew too bold, like the Verlimes, and were struck down but other men encroach nightly into the forest of the elves.

Connections: the giantess was enchanted by the elves of the Holt (29.07) and she is the lost wife of the storm giant were-shark now known as the King of Salt and Brine (00.06).

Hooks:

What is the deal that the King strikes?

Was the King’s lover buried with her jewelry?

Which married elf prince might you spy sporting with a handsome young hunter?

What happened to the Unseelie Court?

Hex 32.22

The Drowning Place

Connects to hex: 32.33

On southern shore of the Keening Sea, where the Burning Lands meet the water, there is an island just out to sea, connected to the land by a stone bridge. For centuries it has been known by no other name than Drowning Place. This island is the stronghold of the Whispering Sisters (though some argue that there are more members of that cult in the City of Shuttered Windows than anywhere else). The nunnery where they dwell is hidden by steep cliffs and sub-tropical undergrowth. Rumour has it that it is also accessible by a secret path on the seaward side of the island.

The location’s name comes from the strange properties of the stone bridge. When men (not women) pass exactly halfway across the bridge, they are suddenly struck by a suicidal mania and immediately hurl themselves into the water below. Those who survive the fall will swim to the shore, climb up to the bridge and leap off again.

Because of this, the armies of the Shuttered City (32.22) have never been able to destroy the well-defended nunnery, much as they would like to. However, in recent years Lady Eliana, the Doge’s wife, has been attempting to organise a company of all-female soldiers to march on the Whispering Sisters.

Connection: this is the stronghold of the Whispering Sisters who have a strong presence in the City of Shuttered Windows (32.33).

Hooks:

- What strange rituals to the Sisters of Drowning-Place get up to?

- Is the bridge’s power a spell cast by the Sisters, or something older?

- Will the Doge’s wife succeed in her plan? What else is of interest about her?

Hex 33.00

The Dwarves of the Titan’s Skull

Connects to hex: 03.04, 29.01 and 29.14.

Travelers wonder if the dwarves know how to work the metal that The Broken Spear (40.06) is composed of. The answer is no, at least in the case of the Dwarves of the Titan’s Skull. Their silver mines have made them rich and wealth has changed them, there are few now that would even be able to recognize the substance. These days, the dwarves do not swing their hammers in the mines; there are slaves, servants and prisoners enough for that and many of the dwarves have left their ancestral mines and settled in the lands of men, building great stone compounds that seems plain and blocky from the outside but are well enough adorned within to inflame the greed of any man. Within the homes of the dwarves and in their vaults, scamper tongueless goblins, that were bought in their youth by the dwarves, bound to silence and taught obedience.

Within these stone halls some dwarves grow fat enough to be unable to walk unaided, others shut themselves away to work for years on intricate objects of no certain use, while others attend to the trades that bring the dwarves wealth in these days. The gem trade is firmly in their grasp and their jewelry is exquisite, but their chief source of wealth is the The Hoard. It is a network of banks that few dare to rob, (rumors say that Drogo (29.01) has raided The Hoard’s Great Vault, but if that is true, then why is he still alive?) fewer dare to not repay and where a man can get his hand on ready gold with nothing but a dwarfish scrawl. The Hoard has a presence in may cities and holdings including the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14), and it is said that the dwarves beat their hammers into the rock beneath their banks’ vaults, telling tales of hidden silver and interest due that travel from vault to vault.

But even in these days there are things of old that the dwarves remember. Things that they hold true to:

1. The Hoard will have its due.
2. Do not flaunt evidence of one’s gender before the eyes of outsiders.
3. He who slays a dwarf will be repaid sevenfold.
4. He who saves the life of a dwarf will be repaid sevenfold.
5. When away from one’s home, a dwarf must carry a sharp axe and wear a stout helm.
6. Do not destroy what could be of use.
7. Do not sleep without one’s back to the ground.
8. Do not disagree with another dwarf before the eyes of outsiders.

9. Do not break one’s sworn word.

10. Relieve silver from those fools who cannot keep it.

At least most of the time. When it’s convenient.

Few dwarves still remember much of the old ways, the Deep Dwarves who tunnel below the Titan’s Skull say that they (and they alone) still do, but they have grown lean, twisted and strange in their sunless caverns.

Although all dwarves appear much alike to outsiders, bitter conflict often break out within their halls. How could it not, with all of the silver of The Hoard at stake? These days, many young dwarves leave the halls of their parents, some to try to find some of what was lost when The Hoard was won, some to pile up silver of their own, others retreat from the world into lives of contemplation (03.04) and others to mingle with the outsiders that their parents shun.

Connections: a large branch of the Hoard is located at the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) and a Deep Dwarf inspects the City’s walls yearly. Some dwarves leave these halls to seek lives of contemplation at the dwarven monastery (03.04). It is rumored that Drogo (29.01) once raided the Hoard’s vaults.

Hooks:

-Why is the great mountain beyond the Kingswood called the Titan’s Skull?

-Who is especially deep in debt to the Hoard?

-Are the minds of the Deep Dwarves as twisted as their bones?

-The dwarves claim that all of the silver that made them rich came from their mines under the Titan’s Skull. Is this actually true?

Hex 33.16

The Isle of Dolyeades, the Sacred Grove

Connects to hex: 27.04 et al and 29.14.

In the midst of the Keening Sea, some way distant from the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14), lies a small forested island named Dolyeades. Here there is a small monastery inhabited by an ascetic order of the Temple Indivisible. This order, the Brothers of the Grove, spend most of their time praying quietly and fishing in the nearby Alphic Current. They are also charged with the sacred duty of interpreting the will of their God Alberon, specifically with regard to the election of the Doge.

When the new Doge is chosen, at one point forty Electors must randomly be reduced to twelve. When this happens, the Electors send out a message to the Isle of Dolyeades and begin fasting as they await the reply. At the monastery, the names of the forty Electors are inscribed upon holy parchments, which are tied around the necks of forty albino cattle (from the Lands of the Night Cattle, 27.04 et al). The cattle are set loose to wander the isle and graze. Meanwhile the most senior monks travel to the Sacred Grove and wait. The first twelve cattle to arrive in the Grove represent the nine Electors who will progress to the next stage of voting, back in the Shuttered City.

This method generally works well, save for the unfortunate case several years ago when three cattle entered the Grove simultaneously, tying

for twelfth place. The resulting events, which involved the legal and bodily recombination of three Electors into a single person, are still controversial to this day.

Connects: the cattle are produced from the Lands of the Night Cattle (27.04 et al) and used to help guide in the election of the Doge of the City of Shuttered Windows.

Hooks:

- What’s the Alphic Current?

- Is it possible to fiddle this part of the selection process? Hell, is somebody fiddling it already?

- What happened to the three Electors combined as one, and where are they/he now?

Hex: 36.04

The Garden of Amelar

Connects to hexes: 31.04, 38.05 and 40.06

Although it is difficult for the kobolds that live in the upper floors of The Broken Spear (40.06) to procure food, the creatures are cunning. They climb down their tower and creep west into a part of the Kingswood where the elves do not go. This is the rose garden of Amelar the Immaculate.

When they approach the garden, the kobolds wrap their faces in cloths soaked in foul-smelling paste. If they do not, the smell of the roses will enchant them and draw them ever deeper into the briars, their minds filled with visions of ever more beautiful roses deeper in, until they become entangled. Creatures that become entangled in the roses draw the attention of the falcons that nest within the garden, their feathers as blood-red as the roses, who are immune to the fragrance of the garden and feed upon its victims.

Those who approach the rose garden closely will notice that it is actually a hedge maze composed of rose bushes and that there is an entrance on the northern side and that several rose walls have been burned to ash in the east. They will also be able to see the skeletons of various creatures embedded in the briars. Those that are easily accessible have been stripped clean by the kobolds, who take anything of value as well as certain bones. The kobolds also harvest the roses, which they cast into fires lit atop The Broken Spear, which draws migratory birds (and other things) into the kobolds’ nets.

Deeper within the rose maze are more perils and strange plants growing up among the roses. They include trees with fruit that resembles twining limbs, night-black berries that weep purple juice and trees with exposed roots that touch the earth in a thousand places. More bodies can be found here, including that of Jerome Olmsted, the only son of Lord Zeem Olmsted, still clad in plate mail with the silver key of his house etched upon the breastplate. Lord Zeem would give a great reward to any who would bring home his son’s bones and possessions and would give as great a punishment to any thieves who would dare to wear or sell his son’s armor.

At the heart of the garden is a building of some sort, but it is obscured by a great mass of roses.

The Ancient Gardener

An elf older than any other within the Court (29.07), who uncharacteristically for elves shows her age, wanders freely through Kingswood, occasionally making unexpected stops in nearby lands. She dressed in layer upon layer of wispy, colorful, ragged silks, with her mottly dreaded mass of grey hair entwined with vines. Her face isn’t wrinkled, but is undeniably ancient -- nearly skeletal, with the most pallid of skin. She only refers to herself as the the Hierophant, having long since forsaken her given name and title of Amelar the Immaculate. In fact, the Hierophant will speak of Amelar as if the two were separate people entirely. Although she is an elf of the Bloodied King’s Court, she is in many ways above the King and above elven (and round-eared) politics.

While she is unquestionably the most powerful druid in the Shrouded Lands, unlike the more militant druids more directly aligned with the Court, the Hierophant takes a strict hand-off policy when dealing with the world. She only observes people, often unseen, even if they are directly harming one of her many gardens, only repairing the damage once the interlopers have left.

Those that show respect for her gardens, in particular her favorite rose garden, can (on rare occasion) achieve her attentions. She speaks casually about horticulture and druidic philosophy, seemingly ignoring questions about more pertinent subjects with an aura of airy indifference or via claiming flighty memory. However, those that listen carefully may notice that her words are veiled riddles. A discussion on tending to rot on the ancient tree of the Mirror Lake (37.01) may be an allegory for the Prince of Men, for example.

If attacked she steps into the ground, and is never seen again by the aggressors. The Hierophant doesn’t hold grudges, but if an elf of the Court should happen to spy a someone attempting to bully her, her attackers would be on the wrong end of an elf-Hunt that never ends. The Weeper, (13.08) in particular, takes a personal interest in stories of those attacking the Hierophant -- one of the few times that he leaves his tower behind is to join a Hunt called against one who attacks her. No elf will speak of it with an outsider, but it is common knowledge within the Court that Amelar is the Weeper’s grandmother.

Those of any race that display particular wisdom and connection to growing things are sometimes mentored by the Hierophant, though her apprentices cannot expect her to appear to impart lessons with any regularity.

Connections: the body belongs to Jerome Olmsted of Olmsted Keep (31.04), the kobolds of the Broken Spear (40.06) harvest the roses of the garden and often stay at their bolt hole (38.05) during their trip over.

Hooks:

-What other dangers lie within the garden?

-Do the plants of the garden have any useful properties? Who wants them?

-What was Jerome doing in the garden? Is his armor magical?

-What lies at the center of the garden?

-What (who?) burned part of the garden?

-Aside from migratory birds, what else have the kobolds caught in the nets that they’ve set up atop The Broken Spear.

-Now that Jerome is dead, who is the heir of House Olmsted?

Hex 37.01

Mirror Lake

Connects to hexes: 17.05, 29.07, 37.01 and 41.02

In the foothills northeast of the Kingswood lies the Mirror Lake within the caldera of a dormant volcano. It is said that in ancient days, the Prince of Men was cast into the lake and lies there dreaming still. When beings with souls cast their gaze upon the lake’s surface, which is never ruffled by wind, they find their features reflected clearly, but at the proper times they see what was and what may be rather than what is and strange half-seen images flutter about their reflected heads.

Around the Mirror Lake, within the valley of the old volcano, wild flowers bloom gloriously in the spring and, on all sides but one, luxuriant vegetation grows to the water’s edge. On that remaining side lie several crumbling temples, each built in a different style, and a great tree. Around the tree stalks a priest, bloodied iron in hand. As was the case for every Priest of the Lake before him, he claimed his position by killing his predecessor.

Of all the temples built near the shores of Mirror Lake, that of the Seven Shadows is one of the most mysterious. An enormous squat pyramid hewn from rough black stone, its architecture is not seen anywhere else in the lands surrounding the Kingswood - though some scholars have drawn a connection with the antediluvian ruins near Bergolast, in the southern marches. At the top of the pyramid is a statue of a forgotten god, who resembles a creature with the body of a human and the wings of an enormous bat.

For most of the year, the Temple of Seven Shadows is impregnable, for the front and only entrance is sealed by a great stone slab. However, in the depths of winter, during the period of the Long Night, this stone door rolls aside, allowing the brave and foolhardy to enter the lightless structure. Men whisper of strange treasures to be found inside the Temple, relics of a lost race or jewels of unknown manufacture. Few if any of these purported treasures have ever seen the light of day.

Connections: the Prince of Men once signed a treaty with the elves of the Kingswood (29.07 is their capital). Crossbow Henry (who lives at 41.02) once looked into the waters of Mirror lake with unfortunate results. The elves of Olmsted Keep (37.01) are initiated by visiting this lake. Devin Furfoot (17.05) has been in the Temple of Seven Shadows and seeks to mount a second expedition.

Hooks:

-Why was the Prince of Men cast into the water? Who was he? Why was he forgotten? Does he have any good treasure on him? When will he wake up?

-Whose life was changed by visions from the Mirror Lake?

-What’s the deal with the Priests of the Lake?

-Who built the temples? What’s in them now?

-Is there anything special about the great tree? What kind of tree is it?

-What’s in Bergolast? What about the ruins nearby?

-What’s inside the Temple of Seven Shadows?

-Why does the Temple only open on the Long Night?

Hex 37.07

Zor’s Home

Connects to hex: 40.06

One of the Lady’s (40.06) creations was a creature named Zor. At first she was quite pleased with it, especially as all of its organs were located within its skin, but a flaw in its brain caused her great annoyance and she drove it from the Broken Spear. These days Zor lives along the banks of the Witchwater in the eastern reaches of the Kingswood, strangely unmolested by the elves even though it often mutilates songbirds, shreds wildflowers, etc. It appears to be a fantastically attractive young human male of uncommon strength and grace dressed in skins. However, to Zor everything in the world appears hideously ugly. Especially “ugly” creatures (especially human females) drive Zor into rages of disgust and the slightest provocation lead it to attacking in order to remove such horrible ugliness from the world. However anyone who could engage Zor in a conversation without getting on the wrong end of its crude spear would be able to learn a great deal about the Lady and her activities.

Connection: Zor was created by the Lady of the Broken Spear (40.06).

Hooks:

-What other creatures did the Lady create? Why?

-What does Zor know?

Hex: 38.05

The Kobold Bolt Hole

Connects to hexes: 11.01, 36.04 and 40.06.

On their way to the Garden of Amelar (36.04) to harvest its roses, the kobolds of the Broken Spear (40.06) often stop by an great dead oak tree possessed by the spirit of an ancient goblin named Boraz. Boraz was exiled by his tribe from their mountain valley (11.01) for practicing forbidden magic and now his spirit inhabits a dead tree far from his mountain home. Those who do not bring offerings of acorns when they approach are attacked by Boraz (direct possession, having tree branches fall on their heads, etc.).

The kobolds have taken advantage of this and have turned Boraz’s tree into a bolt hole where they can hide from elven patrols, store treasure away from their home in the Broken Spear and ambush enemies. The area surrounding the tree has a number of traps and tunnels, which allow the kobolds to pop up behind enemies who have walked past the entrances to their tunnels. However, most of the kobold bunks are inside the hollow trunk of Boraz’s tree, where they consider themselves safe due to the mounds of acorns that they have paid in tribute.

One of the pieces of treasure that the kobolds have stashed here is a jeweled silver figurine of a naked woman who is kissing the severed head of a handsome youth that she is holding to her lips with one hand while a dagger marked with blood-red rubies is clutched in the other.

Connections: Boraz was exiled by the goblins of the mountain wood (11.01) and the kobolds use his tree as a way point when travelling

between the Broken Spear (40.06) and the Garden of Amelar (36.04).

Hooks:

-Why does Boraz’s ghost want acorns? What is up with the goblin connection to oak trees anyway?

-What sort of forbidden magic could get a goblin exiled? Was he learning something from the nordanbjorn?

-Where did the kobolds get the silver figurine?

Hex 40.06

The Broken Spear

Connects to hexes: 13.06, 36.04, 37.07, 38.05 and 51.29.

Near the eastern edge of the Kingswood is a twisted tower of strange metal that no art known to humans can cut or melt. Some legends maintain that it that it is the spear of Alberon, and it fell to earth after he used it to defeat Tiamat. Some of the oldest elves of the Court of the Kingswood claim differently, though, and remember seeing it fall flaming from the sky and shaking the earth when it finally struck the ground. Elves are known to spin tales to make themselves appear older and wiser than they are, and have a longstanding grudge against Alberon and his cult.

The tower itself can be entered through several puckered and scorched holes in its side, and the interior is made of the same strange metal as its outer walls. There are dozens upon dozens of floors, connects by ladders or strange, empty shafts that must be scaled with ropes and grappling hooks. Kobolds have taken up residence in the upper levels, and the bottom is occupied by gnolls who hunt the lands east of the Kingswood, but leave the kobolds be for fear of their traps. The gnolls themselves are (if you can imagine such a thing) unusually hideous; some have strangely colored fur, others are covered in suppurating sores, and it is rumored that their chieftain has two heads, like an ettin. Perhaps they have taken up dark magics and been warped as a result, because adventurers who have been brave enough to go near the tower at night report that the lower levels glow from the inside with an eerie blue light.

Courier Bats

Most of the creatures that lurk beyond the World’s Edge (42.07) are terrestrial, but the courier bats are an exception to this. As the name implies, they bear a resemblance to regular bats, but they are much larger, with a wingspan of around 10 feet. Those who have studied them up close can also attest that their heads have a more canine appearance, and from their chests protrude a pair of limp, almost vestigial paws. The Courier Bats emerge from the savage forest more or less at random, though they are seen more often during the time of the new moon. They fly west from the cliff-face, past the Broken Spear, and circle around the Kingswood before proceeding on toward the west. None have ever been sighted on a return journey.

Their curious name comes from the bats’ habit of carrying objects, not in their weak forepaws but in their strong lower legs. These objects are usually parcels wrapped in paper or cloth, and may contain any number of items - useful, valuable or simply bizarre. Where these items originate from is a mystery. However, it is known to certain well-travelled men that the roses from the Garden of Amelar (36.04), when burned, attract the attention of the Courier Bats. The kobolds of the

Broken Spear take advantage of this, setting ambushes atop the tower to kill the bats and steal the objects they are carrying.

Rumor has it that recently, the kobolds retrieved from a Courier Bat an item of great value, perhaps even one with mystical properties. If this is true, it is doubtful whether they will understand its true significance.

The Lady and her works

The Broken Spear has had many masters over the centuries. Before the current gnoll chieftain took over the lower floors of the tower, it was ruled by a sorceress known as the Lady. She arrived from far lands and drove the former inhabitants of the Broken Spear into the darkest corners of the pile. There she drew on the power of her own arts and the strange energies of the mysterious metal that the building is composed of to conduct research on the molding of living flesh.

The Lady acquired the services of several kobolds and a small band of exiled male gnolls, who gathered what she needed and ensured that she was not disturbed in her researches. The kobolds were promised certain trinkets and the gnolls mates. Agents hired by the Lady abducted female gnolls from the matriarchies of the southern plains (51.29) and brought them north in cages along the Welt Road (see 27.04 et. al.).

Things both fair and foul were given life by the Lady and, when suitable subjects were unavailable, she dabbled in alterations of her gnoll servitors. But one day a wyrm erupted from the depths of the earth, twisting through the halls and stairs of the Broken Spear. The Lady did battle with it but was finally killed. However, in her final moments, she spoke a word that sent her spirit from her body and into the metal of the tower. Since then the tower has been animated by the Lady’s soul, or at least some portion of it, and none know what she is now capable of or what she now plots. It is said that the gnolls have found her hidden study and have taken up the study of her arts, in a most clumsy fashion...

Connections: the kobolds harvest forests from the Garden of Amelar (36.04), dry and burn them in order to draw migratory birds (and other things such as courier bats) into their nets. The kobolds maintain a secondary lair a ways to the east (38.05). The courier bats that the kobolds catch from from beyond the World’s Edge (42.07). The gnolls of the Broken Spear originally hail from the Burning Lands that lie around the City of Smoke (51.29). One of the Lady’s creations, a creature named Zor, now lives along the banks of the Witchwater (37.07). The Lady is partially to blame for the creation of the ettins (13.06).

Hooks:

-Could dwarves craft the metal the tower is made from?

-Might a thorough exploration of the tower shed light on its origins?

-What dark sorcerers are the gnolls working in there?

- Where do the courier bats come from? Is someone sending them?

- Where do the courier bats go, and why do they never return?

- What did the kobolds find?

-Just what can the spirit of a dead wizard trapped inside a twisted tower of alien metal DO? What does it want? How much control does she still have over the gnolls? How much has her present condition changed the Lady...

-What are the gnolls now capable of?

-Is it true that the Lady can be returned to life if the correct body is found for her?

Hex 41.02

Crossbow Henry’s Hut

Connects to hex: 25.04, 37.01 and 46.10.

In the Withered Moors, atop a stony ridge, there is a hut built on stilts. The man who lives there is known as Crossbow Henry, a violent and paranoid man who believes beyond all reason that anyone he meets is conspiring to kill him. The area around the hut is strung with fine wires, some attached to bells that sound the alarm, others to crude but vicious traps. More traps are built into the ladder that leads up to the door and into the hut itself. Inside the hut crouches Crossbow Henry, clutching his poison-tipped crossbow and staring out across the plain, watching for enemies who many never come.

It is said that Crossbow Henry was once a prosperous trader on the Welt Road, a jovial sort whose caravan was welcomed by all who knew him. But then, it is whispered, Henry made the mistake of gazing into Mirror Lake (37.01). There he saw himself reflected with blood dribbling from his mouth, and dark lacerations all across his face. Knowing this to be a vision of the future, Henry was driven half-mad with fear, and has since devoted his every waking moment to a desperate attempt at cheating fate.

Connections: Crossbow Henry’s life was changed by looking into Mirror Lake (37.01). A woman who might be Henry’s disowned daughter frequents the Sundial Inn (25.04). It seems that Crossbow Henry must leave his hut at least some of the time, for he has seen the light of the Lost Lighthouse (46.10) shining at the World’s Edge.

Hooks:

- What happened to Henry’s fortune?

- What is Henry’s destiny really?

Hex 42.07

The World’s Edge

Connects to hex: 40.06

Fools and loudmouths often claim that east of the Kingswood lies the very edge of the world itself, though any man who claims as such has clearly never seen it with his own two eyes. The truth is almost as strange. Beyond the Broken Spear and the Mirror Lake are the accursed reaches of World’s Edge - a stretch of dank, uninhabited scrubland which is cut short suddenly by an enormous precipice. There are lands to the east of World’s Edge, but they are almost a mile lower than the upper lands of the Kingswood. From the top of the cliff, one can see a great expanse of undisturbed forest, like a silent sea. The cliff itself is composed chiefly of limestone, and is generally quite sheer. Even those places where a path may be discerned are treacherous with crumbling rock.

Few men travel in the lands below World’s Edge, for they are the domain

of strange monsters. Even the kobolds and gnolls of the Spear choose to avoid the areas near the cliff. The savage forest below is inhabited solely by ravenous beasts, with not even the mocking semblance of civilization given to the demihuman races. Occasionally rumors spread of a human traveller coming up World’s Edge, but most likely this is mere fancy.

What is known for a fact is that the creatures of the forest sometimes climb up the cliff and encroach upon the world above. Enormous reptiles, primeval beasts and half-breed monstrosities are all common threats in the areas of World’s Edge. When they come too close to the Broken Spear, the kobolds and gnolls will sometimes band together to drive these monsters away. Strangely, no such interlopers have ever been sighted within the bounds of the Kingswood.

Geographical note: the geography here is a bit similar to some periods of prehistory in which the Mediterranean Sea was dry (or nearly so) and was basically an enormous Death Valley. The lands beyond the World’s Edge aren’t as desolate, but they would be much warmer than the surrounding terrain due to having an elevation significantly below sea level.

Connection: the beasts that emerge from the World’s Edge sometimes tangle with the inhabitants of the Broken Spear (40.06).

Hooks:

-What cataclysm caused World’s Edge to take its current shape?

-Are the rumors true, about travellers emerging from the savage forest?

-Why is there no civilization beyond the cliffs?

-How far do these cliffs extend?

-Where do the monsters of the forest come from, and what makes them different from those of the world above?

Hex 43.08

The Weeper’s Tower

Connects to hex: 13.01, 29.07, 29.14, 42.07 and 46.10.

The Witchwater, which begins with a geyser that bursts from the earth before the gates of the Holt of the Bloodied King (29.07) flows through the eastern parts of the Kingswood before finally falling off of the Edge of the World in a great waterfall of breathtaking beauty.

Next to the great waterfall at the Edge of the World, rises the tall ivory tower of the elven wizard known as the Weeper. Once he employed magical means to return to the Holt each night to pay his respects to the elven king but no longer. Since the disappearance of his daughter he has not set foot outside his tower and his sobs echo up and down the waterfall, their sound strangely amplified and intermingled with that of the fall.

In his youth, the Weeper was a great geographer and his journals are one of the best sources of knowledge of many places in these lands, but these days few are allowed within his tower to speak with him and the overly-persistent are driven off lamenting.

Connections: the Witchwater (29.07) meets the World’s Edge (42.07) here. A story about the Lost Lighthouse (46.1) may shed some light on the fate of the Weeper’s daughter. In his younger days, before the

loss of his daughter, the Weeper was known as Palendar and built a menagerie for the Doge in the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14). It remains there still. The actions of the Weeper’s daughter also resulted in the creation of the Skullcrusher orcs (13.01).

Hooks:

-What other secrets does the Weeper know?

Hex 46.06

The Lair of the Grey Worm

Connects to hex: 30.15.

Deep in the forests beyond the World’s Edge (see 42.07), there lies a lake warmed from beneath. In a watery cave by the edge of this lake, hung around with vines, one may find the lair of a terrible monster known as the grey worm. Though not as large as its purple cousin, it is known for its rapacious greed and animal cunning. It sometimes enters the lake, where it will ambush the su-giraffes who drink there. One such beast, swallowed whole, will satiate the grey worm for two weeks.

Connection: An up and coming boss of the Wedding Band (30.15) has offered a reward for the capture of the grey worm.

Hooks:

- Why is the lake heated from below?

- Su-giraffes? What the hell are those?

- Who is the poet Trimueil, and where was he exiled from? What other poems has he written?

- Are the burning eagle and the grey worm really ancestral enemies?

Hex 46.15

The Isle of the Heget

Connects to hex: 29.14

The nameless crayfish god (48.13) is not the only danger of the chill grey waters of the eastern end of the Keening Sea. Far from established trade routes is a hilly isle that the local fishermen are careful to avoid where the Heget and her sons live.

The Heget, a webbed and withered female humanoid, emerges from her cave at night and creeps about her isle searching and searching for any sign of passing ships or foolish travelers. If she finds any she attempts to enchant the most handsome male she can spy with a powerful enchantment that causes her to become irresistible. Inflamed with lust, all but the most strong-minded males are drawn to her and after having sex they are eaten by the Heget.

Nourished by their father’s flesh and blood, a new son grows rapidly in the Heget’s womb and is born three months later. These sons grow quickly into creatures that are much like their fathers, but stunted in mind and body. The Heget ignores her sons completely and the island is often filled with their hungry moans.

A small percentage of these sons (perhaps 10%) grow true, resembling

their fathers almost exactly and often even gaining fragments of their fathers’ memories. One of the Heget’s healthier sons looks eerily similar to old paintings of the Doge of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14).

Connection: perhaps the Doge of the city of Shuttered Windows (29.14) is the father of one of the Heget’s sons.

Hooks:

-Why does one of the Heget’s sons look like the Doge? Is he the father? How could that be if the Heget eats each of her mates?

-Who else has the Heget eaten?

Hex 46.10

The Lost Lighthouse

Connects to hex: 00.09, 25.04, 41.02 and 43.08.

By the edge of the world stands a lighthouse. The glass at its top has been smashed and its whitewashed walls are smeared with anti-elf graffiti.

Where the whitewash has been scratched away, a red metal shines through. The entire lighthouse was seamlessly cast from copper.

If you follow the staircase around the outside of the lighthouse you can come to the light itself. The fuel rotted away long ago, but if you talk to Crossbow Henry (41.02) he will insist that some nights the lighthouse shoots its beam out over the Edge strongly enough for him to make it out.

Many years ago a curious traveller asked the Weeper (43.08) about the lighthouse that lies not so far from his tower and came away with this story:

Once the lion priests maintained the lighthouse (although they did not build it) and said that the light they shone showed that their god gave hope in even the greatest darkness. They also helped those returning from expeditions past the Edge of the World for the Keepers would throw down a great rope ladder to travelers emerging from below, back in those days when going beyond the Edge was somewhat less suicidal.

The Keepers served alone in the lighthouse for lonely two year terms. The last of them was a young man by the name of Nikos Farver. He had loved an elf lady who had given up the forests of her homeland forever for the cities of men and he gave her all of the kindness that his foolish heart possessed. She rewarded him with smiles and long talks over bottles of hobgoblin shroomwine (16.04) but little else. Nikos grew mad with infatuation and began pressing gifts into her hands, crude ugly things in elven eyes, and finally professed his love to her in verse that flew from his heart like a plump chicken.

She laughed in the way that elves do, meaning no harm, but Nikos stormed out in anger and went to the lion priests and begged to be allowed to be the next Keeper of their lighthouse, preferring the loneliness of isolation to the loneliness of living alone among thousands.

Long did Nikos brood in his lighthouse, his thoughts growing darker and skittering between the walls of his mind, and when his appointed two years as Keeper had passed he saw his replacement walking with his escort up to the tower. Knowing that the time had come for him to return to his homeland and see the elf lady walking, talking and

laughing with others in the places that he gone with her he panicked and trained the house’s light on his replacement, who burned up under its radiance like an ant under dwarven glass.

For many years Nikos remained at his post, swinging the light wildly and scrawling mad rants against elvenkind on the walls. He had no need to eat, for the lion priests had woven a potent spell around the top floor of the light house so that anyone who stayed there would need but a rare sip of water and the light of the sun upon their face to receive sustenance. Some say that Nikos remains there still, although if there is any truth to those rumors he is ancient indeed...

Connections: Crossbow Henry (41.02) has seen the light of the lighthouse and the lighthouse may hold some hints about the fate of the Weeper’s daughter (43.08). For more information about the religion of the lion priests see (25.04). The priests who once supervised this lighthouse’s operation once had a disagreement with those of the Salt Point lighthouse (00.09), which resulted in the priests of Salt Point being wiped out.

Hooks:

How far into the earth does the lighthouse go?

What is Crossbow Henry doing far enough from his paranoid haunt to be able to see the light?

Who lights the flame, and for what purpose? Is it Nikos or his ghost?

Who has a forge large enough to cast a thing?

-Is the elf lady in the story the Weeper’s daughter? What happened to her anyway?

-Is Nikos still in the tower? His ghost?

-If the lion priests didn’t build the tower, then who did?

-Is the spell on the top floor of the tower still intact?

Hex 47.00

The Cloud Forests

Connects to hex: 29.14.

The World’s Edge (see 42.07) extends in a great loop far beyond the lands of the elves. The terrain where it crosses the Grey Mountains north of the Withered Moors (41.02) is truly spectacular. Dozens of great mountains were shattered to pieces by the cataclysm that created the World’s Edge, some leaning drunkenly over the Edge and others cut as sharply as if by a knife. However, it is a rare day when a traveler can cast his eyes upon the sights for these lands are almost constantly shrouded in mists and clouds blown in from the east. Their moisture nourishes a surprising profusion of plants, some clinging to the very cliff of the Edge itself. These plants are noted for their potent poisons, as are the animals that lurk among them, and are highly valued by the Smiling Men of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14).

Connection: the poisons of the Cloud Forests are sought by the Smiling Men of Shuttered (29.14).

Hooks:

-What withered the Withered Moors (that’s the area where Crossbow

Henry lives since it's the most godforsaken place imaginable)?

-Why so much poison in the cloud forests?

-Who are the Smiling Men of Shuttered?

Hex 48.13

The People of the Claw

Connects to hexes: 29.14 and 51.12.

Near where Melnir's Mount (51.12) now stands, there was once a colony of the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14). Its founders hoped that it would be a staging ground for caravans bound for the lands beyond the Keening Sea. Their hopes came crashing down when the town was badly damaged by earthquake and flooding and then destroyed when Melnir called forth rivers of liquid rock from the quivering ground.

However, some of the colonists refused to be evacuated to Shuttered and stayed in these lands, rebuilding the lost colony into a humble village that now owes no allegiance to their ancestral home but rather to their strange god.

Their god is indeed strange. Everyone knows that giant crayfish never stop growing and one that lives in the eastern waters of the Keening Sea grew to enormous size. A theologically innovative priest of the old colony viewed it has a manifestation of the God of the City of Shuttered Windows but generations of villagers have forgotten that distinction and now worship the creature as a god and their prayers have made it so.

The nameless crayfish god is now the size of a blue whale but is still a crayfish and knows nothing but cold hunger and unconsciously impels his worshipers to satisfy it. They do so by doing anything they can to lure travelers towards their lonely corner of the Keening Sea so that their god may feast on them. Any travelers that the locals can catch are also tied to posts sunk into the mud offshore while the villages pipe and drum to call forth their god to feed.

The chief of the village, the self-styled Voice of the Claws, dominates the rest with threats about what will happen if they fail to do the will of their mindless god while his wife, the village wise woman, often shrieks out during the strange watery dreams that haunt her nightly...

But for the most part, the villagers are simple fisher folk who spent all of their lives in and around the water of the Keening Sea and often bathe in it to preserve their skins from the dry air.

Connections: this village is people by the descendants of Shuttered (29.14) colonists who stayed behind after the eruption of Melnir's Mount (51.12).

Hooks:

-If the giant crayfish is a (very) minor god, what powers does it have? What powers can it grant its followers?

-Are there any interesting ruins of the original colony?

-Dry air? What?

-What techniques do the villagers use to attract travelers?

Hex 51.12

Melnir's Mount

Connects to hex:: 48.13.

Melnir's Mount is an active volcano that rises high above the thin strip of land that separates the Keening Sea (the freshwater sea that the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) borders) from the World's Edge (12.07). Long ago an earthquake rocked these lands and great waves roiled the sea. The land upon which Melnir's Mount now lies shuddered and cracked and it seemed that the waters of the Keening Sea would pour out over the World's Edge, drowning those lands and leaving the Shuttered City sitting next to a sunken desert.

In order to prevent this one of the greatest human mages of those days, a northerner by the name of Melnir, went forth and struck the earth with his staff, summoning the molten blood of the earth to him. Within days the great fountain of magma that erupted from the ground had become the volcano which still vents smoke daily. Of Melnir nothing more was ever heard.

The growth of the volcano has kept the Keening Sea penned within its banks but its magma flows have softened the sheer wall of the World's Edge making this one of the easier spots to climb down into the world below.

Connections: the eruption of Melnir's Mount destroyed a nearby human settlement but a few people remained behind instead of being evacuated. Their descendants are the modern People of the Claw (48.13).

Hooks:

-Is there any danger that the Keening Sea could pour down over the World's Edge in the future?

-Is there anything left of Melnir? It seems strange for a powerful wizard to do something suicidal...

Hex 51.29

The City of Smoke

Connects to hexes: 29.14 and 40.06

One of the reasons that the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14) has never been conquered by any of the Twelve Nations is the land that lies between them. It has been called Bergolast and the men of the City insist on calling it the South Marches still, but most call it the Burning Lands because of the fierce firestorms that rage over the plains in the high summer. Some say they are started by rogue fire elements, others by a curse of the last Princes of Bergolast and others merely by the heat of the season, but they burn without fail every summer.

After the fall of Bergolast, the“Southern Marches”were claimed by the City of Shuttered Windows and cattlemen from the city ranged over much of the plains that lie south of the Keening Sea. But then came the gnoll clans and the Gnawbone Wars. The men of the City were slowly driven out of the South Marches and only the drowning of an entire gnollish army at the hands of the men of the Waterworks saved the City itself from siege. Since then, only a bare handful of humans

dare graze their cattle south of the Keening Sea and those that do are careful to pay the proper tribute to the gnollish matriarchs.

In the course of the wars, the gnolls learned the value of having a ready source of food and began herding beasts that are a crossbreed of the blackhorn aurochs and the City's own cows. These cows are great shaggy beasts and gnoll jerked beef will last longer than nearly any other kind of food although that could be because, as men joke, the flies won't eat it.

As is normal for gnolls (the gnolls of the Broken Spear (40.06) being a notable exception), the gnolls are ruled by clan matriarchs. Young male gnolls are driven out of the clan sod huts never to return. These exiled young gnolls form bands and engage in hunting the great beasts of the plains, raiding their neighbors and other adventures. Most of these gnoll youths die, but the bravest, richest and luckiest are able to secure themselves places as the mates of the matriarchs of another clan. Some of these youths are not so lucky live out their lives beyond the Burning Lands as mercenaries or bandits, always dreaming of a chance to return to the gnoll lands in glory.

Some of the bravest of these gnoll youths slaughter beasts and consume their hearts raw according to an ancient gnollish ritual. The gnolls say that this binds their soul to the spirit of the animal and gives them great strength and other powers. This is usually done with aurochs but it has been known to have been performed on everything from mammoths to ghost apes, with varying effects. The gnolls report that the gnolls who do this enjoy no afterlife, for the souls of the gnolls are too closely entangled with the spirits of animals to leave this world and drink the honied milk of the Mother of All.

Traditionally, there has been no authority over the gnoll clans but the Mother. She dwells in the City of Smoke (or the“City of Shit”according to the men of Shuttered), so called because of the dried cow dung that always burns there. Many gnollish disputes have been settled there by the wisdom of past Mothers. The Mothers are indeed wise for when one dies, her successor consumes her heart raw, and gains a portion of her soul, memories and wisdom.

However the current Mother, the so-call Great Mother, is a gnoll of a different color. As the last Mother lay dying, matriarchs of all of the gnoll clans gathered in the City of Smoke to pay their respects and choose her successor (traditionally done by gathering the matriarchs in a closed hut wherein the dung of a cow poisoned by bleeding berries is burned until the matriarchs who have not yet passed out can come to an agreement). This time, followers of the gnoll now called the Great Mother burst into the sod hut there the matriarchs had gathered and subdued almost all but three, who managed to escape, with nets and magics. There, at the urgings of their leader, the throat of the Mother was slit and her heart was forced down the throat of one of the captured matriarchs. When the terrified gnoll had finished her feeding her own throat was slit and her own heart was fed to the next matriarch.

This gruesome ritual continued, each matriarch being proclaimed Mother and killed in turn, until the Great Mother emerged from the hut, dripping in gore and resplendent in power. Entwined with her own soul was not only the dying wisps of the soul of the previous Mother but the vibrant ones of all of the matriarchs (save three) of all the gnoll clans. One can almost see the souls roiling within her and the ghostly images of writhing arms and snapping jaws surround the Great Mother in a terrible halo. Gnolls are unable to withstand her and all who come into her presence grovel before her, even those of other species find her voice, which howls in a hundred tones at once, impossible to ignore and difficult to disobey.

When the blood on her fur had not yet dried, the Great Mother set

about uniting the gnoll clans. She would not squat in the City of Smoke and wait for them to come to her for her wisdom, she would rule. Within a scant few months she forged the gnoll clans into at least a semblance of a nation and sent her armies howling south into the lands of the Twelve Nations. Thanks to a well-timed alliance with the orcs of Grumluda, the cataphracts of the Golden Realm were crushed in a field of blood and fire.

These days much tribute and many slaves are brought from the south into the City of Smoke. The Great Mother, in wisdom or madness, seeks to turn the City of Smoke into a true city and the slaves work without rest to raise a city of stone and wood far greater than the old collection of stinking gnollish huts. The Great Mother has marked where the walls of the city are to be built with the impaled bodied of gnolls who displeased her and they are indeed extensive. Already some foreign merchants gather within the marketplaces that the Great Mother has marked out, for her tyranny has made the Burning Lands far safer for travelers than it has been for generations and trade between the City of Shuttered Windows and the Twelve Nations is booming.

These days all gnolls live in fear of the Great Mother and her three outland advisers, especially the priest who claims to worship the lost gods of Bergolast and who is always wreathed in magical light so bright that he cannot be looked upon. Some young gnolls, such as those who live in the Broken Spear, fear to return from their wanderings and others whisper in secret of the three matriarchs who escaped the Great Mother and yet plan her overthrow.

Urged on, they say, by the whisperings of the bright priest, the Great Mother has commanded the gnolls to seek in the ruins for Bergolast for objects of great power that she claims will allow the gnolls to establish an unbreakable imperium over the Twelve Nations, instead of the occasional tribute payments that the Great Mother is able to currently obtain.

Connections: the gnolls have an uneasy peace with the City of Shuttered Windows (29.14). The gnolls of the Broken Spear (40.06) originally hail from here.

Hooks:

-How did the men of the Waterworks drown an entire gnollish army?

-What was Bergolast? What happened to it? What does the Great Mother hope to find there? Is that thing really there or has she been misled by her advisers?

-Who are the three non-gnoll advisers? What do they want?

-What really causes the summer fires in the Burning Lands?

-Except for ruins and gnolls, what else is in the Burning Lands?

Cosmology

In the dead of winter the sun grows dims and finally fades from the sky, leaving the world blanketed in darkness for the week of the Long Night (which is celebrated joyously in the Lands of the Night Cattle, see 28.04) while in midsummer the sun shines so brightly that the horizon is rimmed with rose even at midnight.

Hooks:

-The planet has no axial tilt, but instead the sun gets brighter in summer and dimmer in winter. What does this process look like? Does

the sun change size? Color? Have shadows run across it? What? What causes this?

-Any interesting Long Night traditions, rituals or practices?

REFERENCE

MONSTERS

Half-breeds are listed under their non-human full breed (e.g. for half-elves see Elves (half-elves)).

Types of bird are listed under Birds; types of insect are listed under Insects.

00.00: More than one of this creature can be found here.

00.00: A single one of these creatures can be found here.

00.00: A passing mention to one or more of these creatures is made.

Aarokocra (04.00, 29.14)

Aboleths (22.25)

Angels (02.03)

Angels, destroying (07.06, 37.01)

Ankhegs (15.04)

Apes, ghost (51.29)

Bats, courier (40.06)

Bears (nordenbjorn) (11.10, 14.00)

Beings of fire and smoke (03.04)

Birds (burning eagles) (30.15)

Birds (falcons) (36.04)

Birds (firebirds) (03.04, 04.05, 04.06, 06.05)

Birds (ibises) (27.18, 29.15)

Birds (mockingbirds) (25.07)

Birds (white ravens) (01.06)

Boars (03.08)

Butterflies, gilded (23.10)

Cats, razor (29.14)

Cattle (aurochs) (05.07, 51.29)

Cattle, night (27.03, 27.04, 29.03, 30.03, 30.04, 29.14, 33.16)

Cattle, vampire (29.14)

Crayfish, giant (48.13)

Demi-gods (03.04)

Demons (03.04)

Demons (snake-demons) (06.10)

Destroying angels, see Angels, destroying

Dogs (04.08)

Dogs, black (04.02, 05.05, 05.07)

Dogs, blink (29.13, 30.15)

Dragons (01.02, 01.08, 04.06, 22.25)

Dragons, blue (20.24)

Drakes (01.08)

Dwarves (02.03, 03.04, 03.07, 04.05, 29.01, 33.00)

Dwarves (derro) (05.06)

Dwarves, deep (29.14, 33.00)

Elementals (03.04, 17.07, 18.07)

Elementals (fire elements) (51.29)

Elementals (water spirits) (29.14)

Elves (13.03, 20.08, 22.06, 28.07, 29.07, 29.10, 36.04, 43.08), see also Fairies and Fey

Elves (half-elves) (31.04)

Elves, high (29.14)

Elves, unseelie (28.07, 31.04, 31.07)

Ettins (13.06)

Faeries, see Fairies

Fairies (29.07), see also Fey

Fairies (queen of fairy) (00.06)

Fey, see also Fairies and Elves

Fey, seelie (04.06)

Fey, unseelie (04.06, 29.07)

Ghosts (01.08, 17.03, 20.08, 46.10)

Ghouls (13.08)

Giants (02.03, 02.03, 07.01)

Giants, frost (02.03)

Giants, hill (02.03)

Giants, storm (00.06, 04.00, 07.01, 31.07)

Giraffes (su-giraffes) (46.06)

Gnolls (40.06, 51.29)

Gnomes, sand (20.24, 23.23, 29.14)

Goatscorpions (29.14)

Goblins (03.08, 11.10, 14.00, 29.14, 38.05)

Goblins (hobgoblins) (15.04, 16.04)

Golems, clay (01.09, 22.25)

Golems, flesh (37.07)

Griffons (29.14)

Halflings (11.08, 17.03, 29.01, 29.14)

Heget's sons (46.15)

Homunculi (06.05, 08.03)

Insects (29.14)

Insects (mosquitos) (29.14)

Insects, giant (fire beetles) (06.05, 06.06)

Insects, giant (giant bees) (10.09, 10.10, 13.08, 27.03)

Insects, giant (giant stag beetles) (06.05, 06.06)

Insects, giant (man-sized centipedes) (02.08, 04.06, 13.08)

Kobolds (29.14, 36.04, 38.05, 40.06)

Krakens (01.08)

Leucrotta (04.07, 30.15)

Leviathans, see Whales

Liches (18.07)

Liches, arch (29.14)

Mammoths (51.29)

Mice, plague (29.14)

Minotaurs (29.14)

Monkeys, spider (29.13)

Mummies, ice (03.02)

Ogres (00.06, 01.07)

Orcs (13.01, 20.04, 29.14)

Orcs (half-orcs) (13.01, 17.07, 29.14)

Ostriches (11.08, 16.04, 17.03, 17.07, 18.07)

Owlbears (29.14)

Phoenixes (03.04, 04.05, 04.06)

Rhinoceroses, wooly (03.02)

Rojarshans (28.07)

Sandlings (22.25)

Skeletons (29.14)

Snake-demons, see Demons (snake-demons)

Snakes (pythons) (06.10)

Snakes (winged vipers) (27.18, 29.15)

Snakes, albino (13.08)

Spheres of annihilation (04.31)

Spiders (13.08)

Stags (29.10)

The Temple of Alberon, see Troglodytes

Tieflings (05.04)

Troglodytes (29.14)

Trolls (14.00, 15.01, 30.15)

Turtles, giant snapping (29.15)

Were-men (18.10, 31.04)

Were-sharks (00.06, 01.07, 31.07)

Were-spider monkeys (29.13)

Whales (00.06, 02.07)

Worms, grey (30.15, 46.06)

Worms, purple (46.06)

Wyrms (40.06)

Xortoises (29.14)

Zor, see Golems, flesh

PROFESSIONS OF THE SHROUDED LANDS

GODS AND THEIR PRIESTS

[Nameless crayfish god] (Voices of the Claw)

[Nameless ibis-headed god]

Alberon (Priests-Militant of Alberon, Monks of the Temple Indivisible, Assassin-Priests of the Temple Invisible, Priests of the

Temple of Alberon [heterodox], Brothers of the Grove)

Pirate Kingdoms (?).

Chimalia (High Priestesses of Chimalia)

Dead Tiamat (Cultists of Dead Tiamat)

CELESTIAL EVENTS

Drinker of Iron (Monks of the Drinker of Iron)

The Lion's Day

Goddess of the Labyrinth

The Long Night

Grahakzahak (Prophet of Grahakzahak)

Green Lady

She Who Waits (Whispering Sisters, Acolytes of She Who Waits [male])

The King in Splendour (Lion Priests)

PRIESTS OF UNIDENTIFIED GODS

Dragon Cultists

Druids

Goblin Shamans

Monks of the Sacred Foot

Poor Brothers

Priests of the Creche of a Million Young

Priests of the Lake

Shamans of the Corn People

OTHER PROFESSIONS

Bear-Bards

Beggars

Electors

Mages

Nobles of a Great Family

Witches (Witch Queens)

Wizards

THE TWELVE NATIONS

Alacoda.

Golden Realm.

Grumluda.

Naros [destroyed].

