

AGE OF WORMS CAMPAIGN

Players begin as residents of the seedy mining town of Diamond Lake where desperate folk toil in lightless depths for a pittance while corrupt mine managers live in largesse. The players will dare to seek a better life, and those who survive may find their travels taking them to dangerous and exotic locales, from ghost-haunted jungle cities to a blood-soaked gladiatorial arena to a tyrannical bandit kingdom. These are the lands of the fierce nomadic Uigan hordes, gnomes who live in fantastic towers perched on seas of ore-rich lava, and the spiritual barbarian elf tribes. These are the homes of dark robed wizards who draw power from the black moon that only they can see, to secretive clerics whose powers have only recently manifested and seen by many as dangerous sorcery, and to towering minotaur legions who live by the creed "might makes right."

Whether one chooses to play the wizard who must carefully utter the language of magic knowing one botched syllable could mean death, or the enigmatic shape shifting high ogre hiding in plain sight amongst humans, or a tiger clan tamire elf barbarian steeped in ancient ritual and power drawn from his *qouyai* animal totems, know that true heroes of this world are few and far between and most often found only in story and legend.



When desperate folks slave in dank tunnels to profit greedy masters, an opportunity for profit is an opportunity to escape.

--

Tirra, elven adventurer

How to Use this Guide:

This guide provides information for making characters native to Diamond Lake and the continent of Taladas, in the year 352 AC ("After Cataclysm") on the world of Krynn. Peruse it carefully, for many new races and cultures exist, some classes are drastically different than you may be used to, and supplements will be provided to enrich your character and immersion into the setting.

THE REGION

At a perfumed arcade known as the Emporium, Governor-Mayor Lanod Neff rubs shoulders with common laborers awaiting an appointment in the Veiled Corridor. In an adjoining antechamber, snakes and exotic dancers gyrate to a sonorous weave of cymbals and seductive pipes. A floor below, a gaggle of gasping miners presses against the windowed door of a darkened cell, impatient for a glimpse of a two-headed calf.

Out in the street, a gang of rowdies screams obscenities at a crumpled kender, kicking it as if scrambling for a ball. Their drunken laughter echoes off shuttered windows and bolted doors.

In a tower-flanked fortress across the shadowy square, filthy men with nothing to lose shout hymns to the Highgod, clutching to their idealism and principles like cornered animals. Their wild-eyed chief minister smiles as he draws a cat-o-nine-tails across his bare back, awash in their adulation and the spirit of his god.

But it's just another night in Diamond Lake, a seedy mining community nestled in hills laden with the tombs of a dozen lost civilizations. Meanwhile, witty bards and wrathful preachers remind the citizens that the current age will pass, and an even worse mythic age of decay and darkness is soon coming...or might already be here.

Diamond Lake is divided into two types of people: those with nowhere else to go and those who have come to exploit them. The town provides essential silver and ore to the nearby city of Kristophan. Ancient cairns dot the landscape with faded depictions of six-armed spellweavers, and the area boasts a historical legacy that has been combed over by treasure seekers after discovery of a cache of artifacts a century ago. This does not deter well-gear'd adventurers from Kristophan, who drift in from time to time. These men and women drop coin on the Vein, the rowdy economic heart of Diamond Lake, and seek out lost artifacts in some forgotten tomb.

Oh, the rockslide may not get you / The fire might pass you by / When the gas goes up / It might not be your time to die; / But every year gets harder / To draw a simple breath / When the black lung gets you, / That's the kiss of death.

-- Miner's song, sung in tribute to Old Thom

The Prophecy, a two-act play and true accounting

Act II, Scene I: The room melts away into darkness [kill lights] as the air fills with strange and frightening whispers [cue whispers].

Narrator: It sounds as if a hundred different voices speak in a hundred different languages, but an instant later, the voices have joined into one and the language resolves into familiar words.

Soothsayer: I hear the words speak of the prophecies [continue whispers], I have seen events as if I were a god looking down on the troubled world. Violence and horror! I

see legions of worm-eaten dead rise from soggy graves. An immense and demonic tree explodes into destructive life from the heart of a faraway city. A burning comet lances down from the heavens like the Cataclysm to strike the earth in a tremendous, mushroom shaped cloud of destruction.

[cue sounds of explosions and lamentations]

Soothsayer: Another city, its town square wreathed in a cloud of black smoke filled with eyes is in the grip of shadows that move of their own accord. A cackling man attaches a clawed and withered hand to the bleeding stump of his arm, and the hand writes into unholy life! A city built in the heart of a volcano suffers tragedy during a partial eruption that sees the collapse of the entire southeastern quadrant! I see these things with a crushing sense of certainty that these events have already come to pass. [fade out]

Narrator: A new Age comes, the prophecies are nigh, and the soothsayer is never wrong. Only a short time remains before this world is cast into this age of decay and darkness. We must prepare.

-- Partial script from unknown author, purported to be a true account of a mad soothsayer whose visions come true, performed at the Emporium



CHARACTER CREATION

Taladas is a vast continent as varied as its scattered civilizations, from wild Tamire barbarian elf tribes to fierce nomadic Uigan hordes, to the mighty League of Minotaurs to gnome towers perched on a sea of fire. Some races are new, others have serious differences from what one may be used to, and handouts will be provided for each race and human culture. Players should strive for character creation based on culture rather than maximizing stats. Here, one can play a Uigan warrior, recognized by his tattooed cheekbones and forehead, who shaves his head except for a single lock to signify his role as fighting man of his tribe, rather than simply human fighter, STR 16.

A Race Handout will be provided and should be consulted for the culture and unique abilities of each race, which may vary from the Core Rulebook. Races follow the Core rules unless otherwise indicated. This section merely suggests how a particular race might fit into Diamond Lake.

Playable races: Dwarf, Elf, Gnomes, Goblin, Half-elf, Half-ogre, Human, Kender, Minotaur, Irda (Mischta branch, the "twilight" ogres).

The following races are not on this world: orcs, halflings, drow, and lycanthropes.

Dwarves: Players can be *Fianawar* (surface) dwarves or *Scorned* (the Nylgai Hadirnoe) dwarves. No dwarves of any kind want to call Diamond Lake home although a few live there. Most have some business with the Graymere Covenant (area 23), perhaps as a guard, negotiator, or advisor.

Elves: The majority of elves are from the barbarian Elf Clans and Silvanaes. Right-thinking elves abhor Diamond Lake as it represents everything churlish and cruel about humans. Only Ellival Moonmeadow (area 26) and his exclusively elven deputies seem to have stomach for the place.

Gnomes: Mechanical geniuses who generally reside in iron towers perched on the Sea of Fire. Gnomes outside citadels are entrepreneurs or furthering a Life Quest. Gnomes are divided into two groups: "gnomoi," who are leaders, thinkers, and craftsmen, and "minoi," the workers, artists, soldiers, and everyday folk. Gnomes might be lodgers at Tidwoods (area 5) or agents of any of the mine managers. Those with a theatrical flair might find work at the Emporium (area 1) since gnomes are rarely seen in these parts.

Goblins: One of Camoen's four ill-favored races of Taladas, some goblins are skilled at smithing and trading and a lucky few can find their skills in demand in Diamond Lake. Those down on luck will be given only the most menial of jobs, though their innate darkvision and size makes them highly desired in the mines.

Half-elves: Half-elves are rare but might belong to the Bronzewood Lodge community or live among the "civilized" poor of Jalek's Flophouse (area 9). They might find themselves in the employ of Ellival Moonmeadow, but soon become aware that the mine manager simply doesn't like anyone other than elves, and half-elves don't *quite* qualify.

Half-ogres: Usually born out of violence and slavery, half-ogres often try hard to win acceptance from any culture. Given their size, they make excellent brute force for any mine manager or a bouncer. Because of the stigma of the ogre heritage, they are not welcome in

the militia despite their strength. However, the local sheriff, if sober, would not object to an intimidating deputy.

Humans: Humans can fill any role in Diamond Lake, from the humble miner to the child of a prominent citizen. Most are laborers. Cultures vary heavily. Only cultures local to the area are available.

Kender: The few kender who call Diamond Lake home and have not wandered off serve in menial roles and are often the source of suspicion when something goes wrong. Their small size does lend them much desired in mining operations to squeeze into narrow (and dangerous) spaces when they can be organized and focused. Kender also have a knack for farming though the land is extremely poor.

Minotaurs: Minotaurs in Diamond Lake are rarer now that the League has pulled its shock troops south to guard against the Thenol threat. Any who stay may have been in desperate need of work or a family obligation to remain. Regardless, their powerful presence would be in demand anywhere.

Mischta (twilight ogres): Mischta are a branch of the High Ogre Irda whose island paradise lies to the south and west of Hosk. Normally they have no reason to leave their home; those in Diamond Lake may be seeking lost Irda artifacts, or doing penance for past violence by assisting others in secret. They would use their shapeshifting ability to remain "hidden in plain sight."

Dragonchess is a metaphor for life and the forces that squabble for control of the world. Before you can win, you must know that you are playing the game at all.

-- Allustan, retired wizard



CLASSES

Krynn is a world of unlikely heroes and villains, and the town of Diamond Lake is the humblest of places for a hero to arise. This section provides the context in which your class may fit into Diamond Lake.

Magic: Little on this world is as awe-inspiring, misunderstood, and feared as magic. The power to manipulate the fabric of creation of the gods is no little feat. A separate handout is provided for any who wish to play arcane caster types. Primal (spontaneous casting) arcane magic is prohibited by edict of the gods.

Divine Healing: Since the Cataclysm 350 years ago, clerical powers were absent from this world, having returned a year ago. A separate handout is provided for divine classes. The power of the Gods to heal is reserved only for those who choose to devote themselves to a higher calling. As such, certain classes will not have access to healing magic.

Alchemist: *Only Irda may be alchemists.* An Irda alchemist operates in relative secrecy, perhaps as apprentice to Benazel, the town's resident alchemist by trade, and the ability to manipulate ore and blow things up is welcome in a mining town. *Alchemists are barred from use of healing magic or activated items.*

Barbarian: Likely descendants of the nomadic Uigan or Tamire elves, these folk wander into towns from the secluded valleys of the cairn hills or steppes where primitive traditions hold strong and rages are induced by ritual. One may have given up their ways or had other reason to call this area home.

Bard: A spellcaster bard must worship Branchala, the bard king, to receive powers and is the only class allowed to spontaneously cast arcane spells and use healing magic. Any bard needs look no further than the Emporium to fit right in. Others may find employment at a reputable local tavern, like the Spinning Giant.

Cavalier: *The charge ability and mount are unlikely to get full use in this campaign. However, this class is not being barred outright. Consult with the DM first.*

Cleric: Once devoted to their god, a cleric cannot multi-class, though they can take prestige classes. Established temples include Qu'an the Warrior (justice), Jijin (nature), and the Highgod (an abstract principle that grants no powers). Outside town a small cult of the Greylord (knowledge) exists. Priests of Mislaxa (healing) operate in secrecy. If these do not appeal to a player, she might be "on loan" from another allied temple or a lone prophet.

Druid: Clerics of nature with, they fit right in at the Bronzewood Lodge community outside of Diamond Lake and might be representatives of Nogwier, who leads the community and sends his followers into the hinterlands chasing fantastic undead and strange worms.

Fighter: Most skilled fighters are part of the militia, though one may serve with one of the mine managers as muscle or even as a deputy sheriff.

Gunslinger: *This class is prohibited except for the gnomoi archetype. There are no firearms available outside what the gnome can create for himself, and they are restricted to*

early firearms. The gunslinger is an oddity who might make ends meet in the Emporium or work security with Tidwood the gnome jeweler.

Inquisitor: Heresy surely abounds in Diamond Lake, and association with one of the established temples gives a base of operations. Inquisitors tend to roam and may represent a more distant faith, drawn here for a particular reason.

Magus: As a mix of fighter and wizard, one would likely apprentice with Allustan, though their martial skills may be employed elsewhere part-time.

Monk: Monks revere a deity, drawing through their acts of meditation power through that god. Only recently has this translated to the superhuman abilities of which monk legends speak. Diamond Lake residents would likely come from the Twilight Monastery outside town and would have cause to venture into town through friends due to the monastery's seclusion.

Ninja: *Allowed as rogue variant. See Character creation.*

Oracle: As oracles mysteriously receive their powers, could be a byproduct of inhaling too much mine dust or some other divine mystery. They also may be drawn to the area as part of their mystery. Oracles are cognizant of which deity grants power, but it manifests quite differently from clerics.

Paladin: Extremely rare, few receive the call to directly serve the gods in the rigorous role of holy warrior. The church of Qu'an routinely has one to two aspirants from Kristophan who are sent here in a lesson of humility on a path to greater things. *As with the cavalier, charging mounts are disadvantaged by the terrain.*

Ranger: See "Druid." A ranger also would find a place in town as muscle or with the militia as a scout. Rangers must choose a deity to be able to cast spells.

Rogue: Rogues are at home in Diamond Lake and would find work in the Emporium or Midnight Salute. Each of the mine managers maintains a group of "toughs," and it is possible the player works for one of them as well, even a "gofer" for Smenk.

Samurai: *This class is prohibited, does not fit theme.*

Sorcerer: *This class is prohibited by the campaign as primal magic does not exist anymore on Krynn. This is purely for the setting.*

Summoner: *See "Sorcerer."*

Wizard: With only one native wizard, any local wizard would likely be apprenticed to Allustan. For a true wizard, magic is life, and some wizards make seek to achieve true power by finding the mythical Towers of High Sorcery to be Tested. The League maintains a College of Magic with a yearly fee and requires wizards swear not to use magic against the League.

Witch: Witches practice a combination of magic, ritual, and religion. They receive powers directly from the three gods of magic through their familiar and honor their deity by adopting some item such as a white sash or red orb. They are closest thing to "clerics" for the gods of magic. A witch seeking to expand her knowledge base would find Allustan to be the only native resource in the area and generally would use their craft in secrecy.

LANGUAGES

Taladas has no “common” language, though due to intermixing of trade and culture, many languages have adopted words and common usage. Such languages are contained on the table below. Each * marks a 10% difference in comprehension **of the spoken word**, meaning that one fluent in Ancient Elvish has 80% comprehension of Tamire Elvish and a 60% understanding of Uigan. Languages not on this chart have no chance at comprehension without learning it, and this has no assistance to reading comprehension.

Every dot incurs a -1 penalty to any skill checks related to use of that language, such as trying to Bluff a Uigan-only speaker while speaking Tamire Elvish (2 dots, -2 penalty).

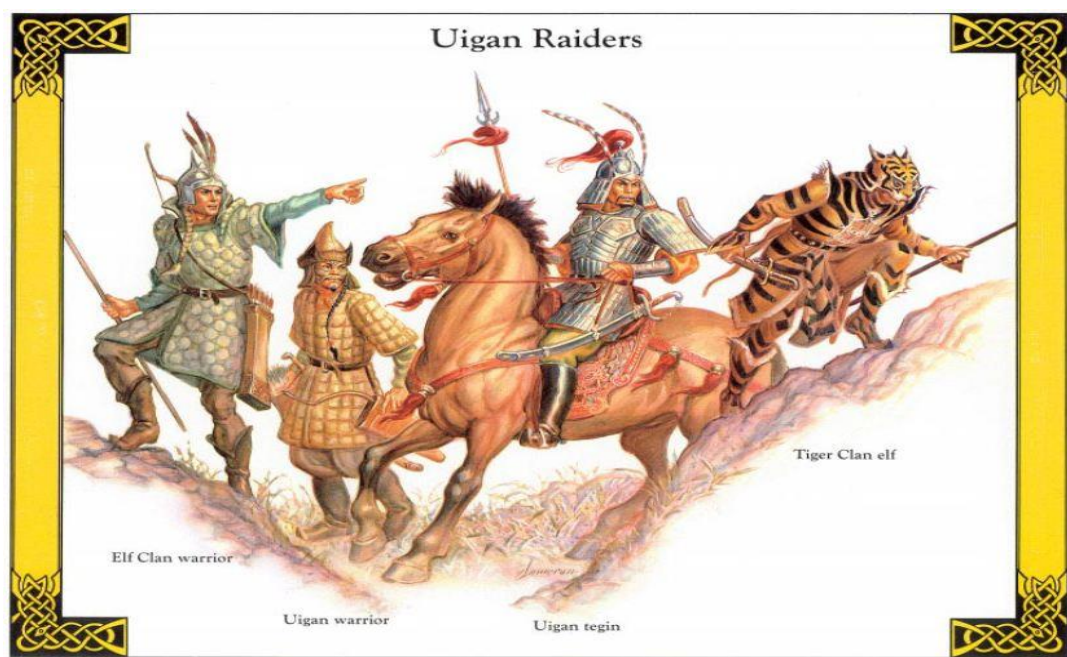
Human Regional Languages: Thenolian, Hoor, Auric (old empire), Uigan, Alan-Atu. The following are not native to the region and are not recommended: Payan, Panak, Baltch.

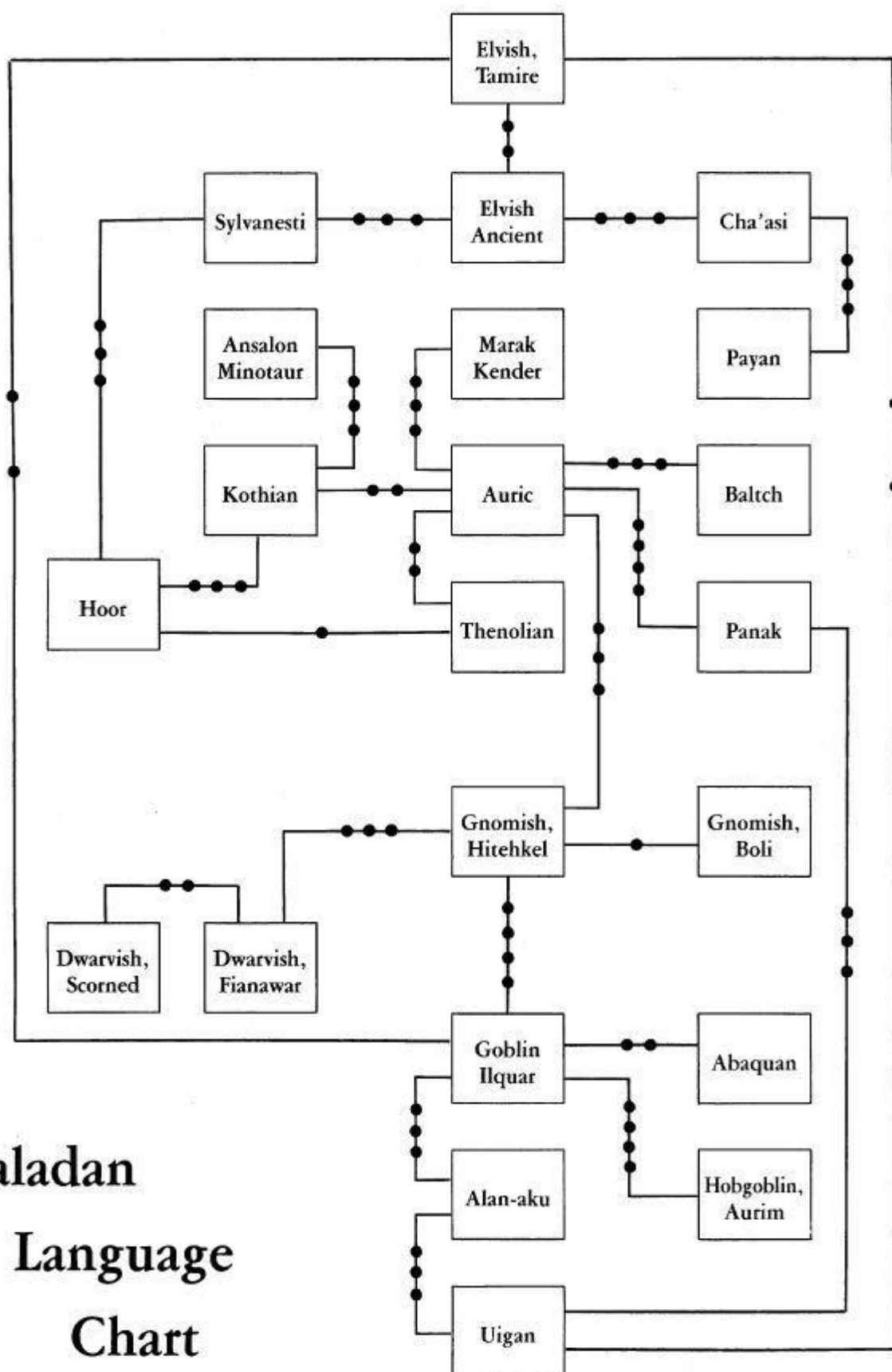
Elvish: Tamire, Ancient, Sylvanesti (Silvanaes). Cha’asi are wild elves of Neron, not native to Hosk.

Minotaur: Kothian, Ansalon Minotaur (old empire). **Ogre:** Abaquan

Others:

- Hammertalk: series of taps on stones to communicate concepts, no written form.
- Camptalk: crude mercenary language with no written form.
- Kolshet (high ogre): the musical language of the Irda.
- Magius: Language of Magic, only spoken in casting of spells, but sometimes used in writing to send messages to other wizards. Only learned by arcane casters who use a spellbook. Words have power, dangerous for the uninitiated, and slight misuse could open a conduit through a person to draw power the person does not possess...





Taladan Language Chart

Diamond Lake chat with Knuckston Grizzlebeard

So, you wanna know what life is like in Diamond Lake? Hells man, why would you want ta give a shit about this place? It's a piss hole. My old bones sweat their last in those mines, and I've got nothing to show for it except a case of gout and the hacking lungrot.

You ain't going away are, ya?

Well then, sit down. . . I'll talk to ye about the sights around here, but it'll cost ya a few rounds . . . the Good Dwarven stuff too, you cheapskate.

Okay, where was I? Diamond Lake, a shithole like no other. . .

Politics

Governor-mayor **Lanod Neff** is the head cheese around here. He's been appointed by **Kristophan** itself because his father was a head cheese and got him started with a position at the Garrison that he didn't deserve. Now, he sits in his massive manor house on the hill overlooking the town. It's constantly under construction, mostly so **Neff** can try to outclass the other bigwigs in this berg.

The man himself? Hells! He's a lying, cheating philanderer who spends more time chasing tail than doing any real work. He lines the pockets of his cronies to stay in power, and pays off that sheriff to keep him and his boys in line.

If it weren't for his brother, **Allustan Neff**, **Lanod's** body would have been dumped into a dry mine years ago by the other power brokers in town. **Allustan's** a pretty powerful Wizard, probably the smartest man in town. I heard that back in **Kristophan**, he had designs on being the head of a wizard's academy, but when his mother fell ill with the **Red Death** he came back home to take care of her since his brother was "too busy." Since he was born and raised here, he ended up back where he started.

Anyway, the law around here, if you wanna call it that, is a big old bastard named **Sheriff Cubbin**. It's no secret he's in the pocket of the Mayor, and spends his time drinking and carousing in the various cathouses. When he got elected Sheriff, we laughed in our cups and threw darts at his head, until he arrested us all with his private battalion of cronies. Son of a bitch. . .

The only other law in town is the **Garrison**, ran by **Captain Tolliver Trask**. He runs about 60 men in the old keep, but the snots never bother to step foot inside the town proper. Mostly, they patrol the miles of wilderness outside of town, and pray to their self-righteous god of honor. Truth is, **Trask** doesn't care a lick for Diamond Lake, and he keeps his men out of our affairs. He's just here to make sure his precious metropolis **Kristophan** don't get attacked from our direction. If anything really bad happens here, the gates of the keep will shut so fast that any honest wage earner standing in the way'll get dashed against the walls.

Business

The mines are everything here, and I've been breaking my back inside of 'em for 30 years. The mine managers come and go, and deeds exchange hands over blackmail, gambling, and even downright murder and theft. At least that's the rumor. It a tough business and I can say that through it all, I'm still here, digging away to line the pockets for every backstabbing son-of-a-bitch that ever owned a mine.

Right now, there are six mine managers, who are considered to be the ones that matter in town. They have the chink to ignore the law, and hire their own thugs to keep order in their respective areas of business. They fight with the mayor sometimes, but for the most part they don't do much but bicker amongst themselves for every scrap of ore they can squeeze out of the hills.

You want a rundown of who they are? What's the point of that? It won't last. . .

Ah . . . the hells with it . . . keep the ale coming. . .

Right now, the comer is **Balabar Smenk**. He is a fat, lecherous bastard who got his start from his old contacts in **Kristophan**. He spends his time gambling, drinking, and scheming up new ways to take over this entire town. The mayor hates him, mostly because he's scared. **Smenk** owns 4 mines right now, and is poised to get more. **Balabar** may have just enough of the town in his pocket to stage a coup of his own, but he's usually too powdered up with perfume and sweaty finery to think about lifting a sword.

Of course, this has really pissed off **Gelch Tilgast**. Right now I work for the old fart, but it may not last. Before **Smenk** come into the picture, **Gelch** reigned over this berg for years like a petty lord, and now he's getting a taste of what it's like to be on the outs. I've even heard rumors that he's trying to get support from other mine managers to fight off **Balabar Smenk**, but that's probably hogwash. **Tilgast** doesn't know which way is up these days, and they sure as hell wouldn't deal with him after the way he's backhanded them over the years.

He's still better off than **Luzanne Parrin**. She inherited her mines from her mother, who died in the **Red Death** when she was still a pup. Now, twenty years later, she's almost bankrupt, and it's no secret that she's sleeping with **Chaum Gansworth** to try and protect her own skin. She'll be broke soon.

Chaum Gansworth has been in town for a while, and keeps a pretty low profile. Other than the fact that he's sleeping with **Luzanne**, there ain't much to tell. He does own the **Rusty Bucket**, and has dinner there quite often. I guess his mines are doing okay, but then again . . . how the hell am I supposed to know?

The same can be said for the other two mine managers. one's an elf, some prancing panty waste named **Ellival Moonmeadow**. He only owns one silver mine, and doesn't have anything to do with regular townsfolk like us. He just hangs out with his fellow elves, doing . . . well, whatever it is elves do when they're together. Haw ha!

The other one is a dwarf, named **Ragnolin Dourstone**, who's been here ever since I can remember. Like most Dwarves, he does well for himself in the mining profession, and has handpicked a number of spots to start new mines, all of them pretty damn successful. So far, neither **Tilgast** nor **Smenk** has managed to dent his business one bit . . . though they've both tried their best over the years.

In addition to the mines, all six mine managers share a single smelting house, located near the old piers. It's pretty much monopolized by some guild from **Kristophan**, and run like a tight ship. The **chief smelter**, **Vulgan Durtch**, is a recluse, and the entire operation resembles a fortress with no windows, and no unguarded entrances. They had to step things up a bit security wise, after one of the mine managers sabotaged a rival's shipment.

History

Well, I can't really go back all that far. My memory gets a little fuzzy when I think back to the old days. . . I do know that the area near the lake was run by some uppity feudal lord a long time ago. He built a keep, which currently houses the Garrison's men. There are also a couple of old fences in the **Cairn hills** where he tried to get his farming subjects to grow carrots and potatoes. I wonder how many of the idiot's subjects starved to death!

Well, his sons started exploring the **Cairns** and old gravesites that litter this whole area. I guess they found quite a bit of loot from the olden days . . . and I don't mean 50 years ago. I mean really old days. Hundreds of years ago.

Anyway, all this loot attracted the attention of **Kristophan**, and pretty soon the bulls bought off the noble kids, scared off the natives, and annexed this whole area for themselves. They hired a group of adventurers to explore it all, and sucked every last treasure dry from those old tombs.

That would have been the end of Diamond Lake, except prospectors and surveyors came in and took measure of the land. It's still shit for growing anything but weeds, but wouldn't you know they discovered a massive cache of silver lodes and massive veins of iron under the hills, including the one we're sitting on right now?

Now, years and years later, it's said that that we're the cornerstone of **Kristophan's** ore supply. Not like they'd pass any of that wealth onto common laborers like us, you understand. When I was a kid, getting a meal was as easily as casting a line in the Lake. Now, the smelting house and associated runoff has polluted the water so much, the merchants have to send off to **Kristophan** just to get a week-old, salted flounder.

As far as recent history goes, there ain't much to tell . . . honest folk are still getting screwed and the wealthy are still getting richer off of our sweat. Let's see. . .

There's an old ring of stones out in the boonies, called the **Menhirs**. It's visited by Rangers, Druids, and other freeloaders. No one knows who built it, but they say the worn stone have been there for centuries.

The **Old Observatory** used to be a haven to some scholarly Monks, who used to prance about and read off astrology. They packed up shop when I was just a kid, and since then it's pretty much sat abandoned.

Then, of course, about 19 years ago, a pretty bad plague called the **Red Death** swept through and killed a good many of us. I lost my sister to the Boneyard, and me son's still got vapors and can't make a living. I even had it myself, but it's weren't too bad on me. I did get a pretty lumpy scar from it on the back o' my head though. You wanna see it?

No?

Ah well. . .

Entertainment

There's nothing like spending a day's wage in Diamond Lake. We may not get much in the way o' housing, sanitation, or any of that frilly city crap that doesn't do any good anyway . . . but we do have entertainment in spades.

If you have the money, **the Emporium** is the place to be. It's run by a lady of the night, **Zalamadra**, and she's got a whole cadre of the sweetest ladies you ever saw at her disposal. They sit in perfumed glory in the upstairs area she calls the **Veiled Corridor**. There aren't any veils there that I've seen, but then again, I've never asked for one. There's also a **Den** on the top floor where you can obtain the use of other substances that twist your mind around and make you talk funny, if you're into that. There are plenty of games of chance, and a very interesting freak show downstairs full of dangerous and exotic creatures. Just last week, I heard a rumor that a crazed demon child escaped its cage and went on a fiery rampage. They haven't caught it yet, and I'm keeping a sharp lookout. They say its hide has magic designs on it, and I'll bet it's worth a few pennies to its owners. I have a boot dagger handy in case I run into the thing.

If you like boredom, you can always visit **Lazare's House**. It's a fancy, high class place with a steep price I remember when **Lazare** managed a mine in town, until his wife got sick and he was bankrupted, selling everything to that bastard **Smenk**. Inside his place, there's no music, no dancing girls, and no fun. I heard everyone sits at tables and plays Dragonchess. Give me a game with over 40 pieces and a multilevel board and yah get a confused man. **Lazare** used to be a champion, and has somehow pushed his habit on some of the upper crust. It's a snore, but at least you can gamble on it.

If you find yourself a little light of chink, there are a few other places you can visit for fun. **The Midnight Salute** is a pretty cheap place to get some female action, but they cater heavily to the Garrison's crowd. If you're looking to get drunk or do some low-end betting, there's **the Feral Dog**, where you can see some pit dogs tear each other to pieces, and get into a bar brawl or two. It can get rough, even for a guy like me, but it's worth it because they don't charge you to get in. Your other choice

among the chaff is the **Spinning Giant**, but the other patrons are usually garrison soldiers, so you have to be tolerant of drunken chants and men who like to slap each other on the butt. They don't tolerate stealing or bad manners, and there isn't a card game to be found anywhere in the vicinity.

If you're just hungry for some food, you can go to the **Hungry Gar**. The chef there is a pretty decent cook, but there's only so much you can do with snared rabbits and deer meat. One alternative is the **Rusty Bucket**, which has a pretty decent common room as well.

Finally, if information of the outside world is your cup of tea, many out-of-towners stay at the **Able Carter Coaching Inn**. The main thrust of the business is running coaches and supplies back and forth to **Kristophan** and across the Tiderun when the waters recede. Boarders from all over stay there, mostly for short term business, so a good conversation about **Kristophan** and other part o' the world are in good order there. Plus, if you're willing to pay, they'll take horses too.

Nine Hells, you can always do what I do. You can always spend thirty years of your life slaving away to **Gelch Tilgast**, only to see your life get poured down the drain when he sells the mine to **Balabar Smenk** in a few years. **Smenk** pays two coppers cheaper, and you work a longer shift. Bastards.

Shops

There are plenty o' places to get business done in Diamond Lake. You got something to buy or sell, you can most likely procure your needs right here.

Let's see. . . we got **Tidwoad's Jewelry**, run by a uppity gnome of the same name. He cheated my mother out of her jewels for half their worth, so I can't vouch for his honesty, but you should see his collections in the window - whew! . . . He swears that his shop is burglar proof, and so far, no one's taken him up on the challenge. I'd like a few of those baubles for myself, that's the honest truth.

The General Store is where you can pick up just about any mundane equipment you'd ever need. **Taggin** runs it pretty reasonable, and has all the supplies you need to travel overland for a month, or survive a mountain climb. He stays outta people's business, and sticks to his own outfit.

The Lakeside Stables are run by a half-elf named **Lanch Faraday**. I ain't ever owned a horse myself, so I don't know him well. I only met him once, during a card game, but I took my leave when he upset a table and pulled a knife. He's a mean, sour drunk, but he takes care of most of the community's horses, so he can't be all bad.

If you're looking for weapons, **Tyorl Ebberly** has a good shop. He claims to be a watch captain in **Kristophan**, but he must've done something wrong to end up here. He has a few artifacts from the **Cairn hills** that he's found. If you're interested his place is called **The Captain's Blade**.

Venelle's contains some of the finest bows in the land. **Venelle** herself is happy to sell anything she has, if she can locate it through all the clutter o' her shop. I took up bow hunting myself once, and stood all day in a tree stand, on her advice. The only thing I caught was a damned cold.

Manlin Osgood. . . now there's a man I can hang a reputation on. He's a right fellow and an able drinking companion, if his head's right. He doesn't bluff at cards, he's always ready with a backslap and a handshake, and he makes the finest masterwork armor in the region. A few from **Kristophan** come to **Osgood's Smithy** special, just to access his team of apprentice blacksmiths.

That's about it. There are other places in town to get things, but I wouldn't recommend it. When your life depends on a wooden girder underground, you better make sure the right hands set it up, if you catch my meaning.

In Diamond Lake, it's better to be gouged by an honest exploiter than outright cheated by a thief, so stick to those places I mentioned . . . you should be fine.

Churches

There are a few churches in town that have gained a following, but I wouldn't recommend any of 'em. The best church for me are the **Halls of the Veiled Corridor**, where you can tithe your money for a cause that's worthy of your coin, and get a little bit of sweetness besides.

However, if you insist, you can go to the **Church of the Highgod**, right on the center of town. The sermons there are full of piss and vinegar, led by **Jierian Wierus**. His following is 150 strong and growing.

If they'd make you feel welcome, you can go to the garrison and sit at the **Chapel of Qu'an**. It's mostly full of soldiers, who like to puff themselves up with honor before riding around the countryside in their fancy armor. **Valkus Dunn** is the righteous bastard in charge, preaching about public do-goodery, but doing nothing about it. He opens the service up to the public, but no one goes except men who swing swords for a living.

If you like nature, you can traipse out in to the boonies to visit the **Bronzewood Lodge**. Its run by **Nogweir**, a follower of **Jijin** who likes to scare people about bogeymen in the hills, but I can't imagine why they'd sit out in the middle of nowhere with nothing to entertain them. Trying to fill the coffers so he can get back to real civilization is my guess.

There's also a **Temple of the Graylord** around here somewhere but you won't see them much unless you go the Boneyard and visit the graves they tend to. When my Suzie died from the **Red Death**, they took her thin, deformed bones and washed her up real pretty. Then they stood around and gave a little speech about mortality and life, but I didn't have a penny to give 'em. They went ahead and did it for free.

Anyway, that's pretty much a good rundown of Diamond Lake for ya. You wasted enough of my time, so get out of my face and stop asking questions. I got a few coppers left in my pocket, and I want to get to the **Emporium** to see that damned two-headed mule again . . .

Knuckston was buried in the Boneyard of Diamond Lake and is survived by his son, Renald Grizzlebeard, who works for Gelch Tilgast.

"The joys of the rich man are nothing, as they who hang around with sinners, scoffing at the simple paths of righteousness. Their delights are a pittance compared to eternity, and their rewards shall be devoured by the wriggling powers of darkness. They seem as trees along a riverbank bearing luscious fruits, but I tell you: they are plagued from within by blind, consuming things that eat without mercy and leave nothing behind. Not a one of them will be safe on the day of final judgment, when the slithering darkness feasts upon them. We tread toward a red day, full of writing doom and a dread feast of bloated, ravenous hunger. Dark times are coming. Slithering times, when the clouds snuff the sky and the austerity of flesh is the path of salvation. Be ready, and prepare your body for the coming Age."

-- Jieran Wierus, eulogy for Knuckston Grizzlebeard

