

## THE TEST OF THE YOUNG BLOOD

### I. Campaign Introduction

**Scope and Style:** *The Test of the Young Blood* (TotYB) will be a starting level Heroic Tier campaign. The starting conceit of the campaign will be that a number of adventuring groups are being marshaled under the authority of the King of the city-state of **Alpha** to establish colonies and conduct heroic quests within the frontiers of several areas within **The Known World**. For your characters, the unifying bond may be that each of you are the young second or third sons or daughters of established human nobles that serve the Crown of Alpha. You could hail from a family of local who swore fealty to the king upon his arrival to the Known World a generation ago or maybe you are one of the pure-blooded Alphans themselves. Alternatively, you are a bright and talented member of a non-noble order – such as a wizard’s apprentice at the **School of Glantri** or possibly an up-an-coming paladin of Bahamut – who would be placed into an party of well-to-do adventurers to accomplish some quest or mission in the name of the King of Alpha. Thirdly, you could be a foreigner to the lands of Alpha who has proven himself or herself to be a cut above the rest. You have a lot to offer a potential employer thanks to your special skills or background. In any case, your character will be politely and secretly contacted by an agent of the Crown whom informs you that the **Secretary to the Royal Seneschal** would like to speak to you and take your measure regarding a secret long-term quest. He requests that you make haste for the **Gilded Goblin Tavern and Festhall** by dinner time on Market Day to hear more about this important matter.

**Setting Overview\*:** This campaign will take the ‘start small’ approach, and the setting will grow with your characters as the sessions progress. For the name of the world – you’ll notice I simply referred to it as the Known World. It is said that a great **flight of dragons** and other scourges brought down the ancient human-led **Empire of Nerath**. As such, dragons are still greatly feared to this day, despite their relative rarity. The world is only now recovering from the five centuries of darkness that followed. The current bounds of the Known World are roughly the combined size of the states of New York and New England and have a climate similar to that region as well, but there are vast unexplored regions on every horizon. The geography of the Known World is simple. In the **North**, there is a great forest that serves as a barrier to most travelers, in the **East** there are a number of barren cold deserts and the jagged ranges of the northeastern **Rimefrost Mountains** and the southerly **Glitterglum Mountains**. In the **West**, there are a wide swath of open plains and lesser woodlands that stretch off into the horizon. These lands would be considered rich for exploration and expansion if a group or city-state wanted to find a new home or establish a colony. Unfortunately the western frontier is also dominated by various **goblin** and **orc** tribes, as well as the occasional lumbering **giant**, and there is also rumored to be a kingdom ruled by a terrible **dragon**. In the **South**, there are a number of swampy lands and river flood plains that are known for their lush arable soil. This is where most of the small towns and city-states of the humans are located, including two of the more prominent city-states – **Rivercrest** and **Threshold**. The rivers and swamps eventually meet the cold waters of **The Old Sea** – a dangerous and little explored frontier. Only the recently established city-state of Alpha on that sea coast has any traditions with sea-going vessels. Other city-states probably exist as well, but Rivercrest, Threshold, and Alpha just happen to be three of the more prominent.

\* - More information about the setting is interspersed in the race, class, and religion sections below. The Known World consists of more than the people and places mentioned in this guide. If you have an idea for a new town or region, or even a new god that is part of your character's background – you are encouraged to be creative.

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## **II. Character Generation Guidelines:**

**Character Level:** First level characters.     **Ability Scores:** Standard Point Buy (22 points)

**Alignment:** Lawful Good (LG), Good (G), and Unaligned (U) characters only.

**Background Benefits (Optional):** Each player is encouraged to create an interesting background for their character. To help simulate your character's uniqueness, you may take a Background Benefit. When you create a character you can select one of the following background benefits:

- Gain a +2 bonus to checks with a skill associated with your background.
- Add a skill associated with your background to your class's skills list before you choose your trained skills.
- Choose one language connected to your background. You can speak, read, and write that language fluently, in addition to any languages you normally speak.

Use these ideas for inspiration in creating a background as unique as your character. Above all, remember that a background is more than a game benefit. It forms the foundation of your character, provides hints of what lies ahead in the campaign, and informs your character's personality.

**Important Note:** A player only needs to bring their character sheet and dice to a game session. If they want to bring additional books, that is great, but I don't require that. Also, if a player sees a note about a race, class, or other option that is mentioned in this guide that they do not have access to – simply ask the DM. I have a D&D Insider, so I can send you a digital excerpt of the information or I can just show you the reference at the next session.

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**Eleven Character Races:** The eleven races available for this campaign will be divided into three categories: *common*, *uncommon*, and *rare*. Four common races are allowed with no questions asked and can choose any character class available. Four uncommon characters are restricted only by their cultural background or origin – not generally by choice of character class. For uncommon races, just run it past the DM first. Three rare races are simply outside the normal ken of knowledge for most common folk in the world and as such require a fair degree of player-DM collaboration prior to play. There are many races from published 4e D&D sources that are not listed in this document. Consider them to be unavailable and probably non-existent in the campaign setting; **however if a player wants to play an unlisted race, just ask the DM and**

**possible accommodations can be made. Also, if a player does not have the book or online article that lays out the rules on the eleven races listed below, let me know and I can pass it along.**

***The Common Races:*** **Humans, Dwarves, Elves, and Gnomes** are most common. These four common races are also typically considered to be among the *original seven pure races* set into the world by the gods in bygone days. The other original pure races include **dragons, giants, and goblins**, but these races are not suited for player characters. One additional ‘common race’ includes the **orcs**, which are mentioned here due to their population – in terms of sheer numbers – are probably the second most populous race after humans in the Known World. Goblins would be the third, while gnomes, elves, and dwarves would tie for the fourth place. Orcs are considered one of the major races of the world, but they were in fact a created race that was said to have been forged through evil magics which combined some of the worst aspects of humans, giants, and goblins.

**Humans** are the most widespread race in the Known World. They have no great kingdoms or empires in this age – merely nomadic tribes, small villages and towns, as well as the occasional city-state. There are largely three types of humans: **barbarians, villagers, and the Alphans**. The barbarians are a catch-all for the numerous nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes that dwell in wild areas along the western and in the eastern frontiers of the Known World. They are also referred to as ‘hill folk’ and sometimes derisively as ‘the bandit folk.’ To some of the more civilized humans and the dwarves, the barbarians are viewed as being little better than goblins or orcs. By and large, the barbarian peoples are followers of the gods and spirits tied to the Old Faith.

The term ‘villagers’ is another catch-all that simply refers to humans who gave up the ways of the barbarian and took up agriculture and a sedentary way of life in villages, towns, and one of the handful of city-states. Some of the most prominent of these city-states includes Rivercrest, a sprawling center for merchants and caravans, which is located at the confluence of several rivers and major trade routes in the southlands. It is notable for being one of the few places where titles of nobility are not recognized. In this city the only thing that matters is money and this is good for Rivercrest, since the city’s ruling **Council of Oligarchs** controls the richest silver mines in the Known World. The Council includes many of the city’s most powerful trade guilds – including the infamous **Thieves’ Guild**, the **Miners’ Guild**, and the **Moneylenders’ Guild**, as well as the local **Archcleric of Erathis**, the local **High Lorist of Ioun**, the commander of the **Night Watch**, and the feared sorcerer **Daniel Malarn**. Another important city-state is Threshold, which is located on a high strategic bluff that commands the eastern trade route to the lands of the dwarves. Threshold is known to be a rough and tumble place and it has not had a stable government for many years, simply a revolving door of would-be kings with delusions of grandeur. Nonetheless, Threshold’s high walls and its strategic location help to keep most of its people safe from the bandits, barbarians, and marauding goblins. The ‘villagers’ tend to worship the gods of artifice and civilization – to include Erathis, Ioun, Kord, Avandra, and Pelor, as well as a healthy dose of respect for the Raven Queen. Bane, the dark god of war, is also worshiped in quiet and clandestine circles.

The third group of humans are the Alphans. They are often considered a new or foreign race of humans, since they arrived from across the Old Sea a mere generation ago. Not much is known

about the lands of their origins. And the Alphas themselves will reveal very little of their homeland to outsiders. Physically, the Alphas have darker hair and a slightly darker, more olive complexion than most of the humans in the Known World. Since their arrival, they have established a strong city-state named Alpha along a mighty river near the sea coast. Alpha is ruled by their warrior king – **Ericall the First**, a man now near old age who is said to be seeking a true and worthy heir after both of his sons were lost recently in battle. The Alphans are also considered strange because they honor the dragon god Bahamut above all other gods. Ericall is served by a vanguard of mighty paladins who fight in the dragon god's name. The Alphas are also notable for having established the only known academy for wizards in the Known World in the coastal town of **Glantri**.

Another major race is the **dwarves**, whom though small in number, have established independent clan-held mining enclaves and trading emporiums throughout the Known World. There is also one known dwarven kingdom in the far eastern lands – specifically the northern vistas of the Glitterglum Mountains – that is known as the **Hold of Radsvinnir**. It is said that a fabulously wealthy **King of the Dwarves** rules there, but many dwarves found abroad in the world do not acknowledge this king or Radsvinnir with any special affection, especially since the Hold is notoriously secretive and has never allowed any outsiders into its great walls. In fact, if dwarves from Radsvinnir do travel abroad, they will always pretend to be unaffiliated with the Hold in order to better protect knowledge of their home from outsiders.

Of the **elves**, much less is known. The greatest concentration of elves in the Known World are said to be in the Great Forest – a brooding stretch of boreal forests and cold taiga that lies across the northern horizon of the Known World. The elves have a rich and advanced culture and are thought to organize themselves into semi-nomadic clans and are said to bow to a council of monarchs, though little about these rulers is known. The elves refer to themselves as the **Andlang** ('the heavenly and true people') and are rarely seen outside their foresthome, except for matters of a personal agenda, trade, and retribution. Elves traveling in the lands of men are typically treated with respect and a level of caution, due to their reputation as fierce swordsmen and unparalleled archers.

The **gnomes** are often considered the last and the least of the common races. The gnomes themselves consider the fox to be something of a totemic animal for them, and it is easy to see why. Like foxes, gnomes are known for their talents at stealth and misdirection, as well as a certain cleverness and subterfuge that enable them to get the better end of any situation. In fact, gnomes are often referred to as the 'hidden race,' since they are thought to be relatively large in number and are widely distributed throughout the Known World, but even if that were true – it's exceedingly hard to uncover a gnome warren. Gnomes only emerge into the world when it suits them – whether it is for to trade with their neighbors, to go on a hunt, or possibly just find an adventure. Many gnomes who reach early adulthood are given over to a bit of wanderlust and will travel for a few years while looking for a spouse in another gnome warren. These wandering young gnomes are typically talented, friendly, and somewhat naïve, and are usually what most non-gnomes think of when they think of gnomes. To the other races, gnomes are also commonly viewed as cheerful tricksters and or worse -- petty thieves. In a few rare cases some canny human rulers often use gnomes as scouts or spies and some gnomes are known to have studied in Glantri to become wizards of merit.

**Uncommon:** **Half-elves, Half-orcs, Lupines** (Longtooth Shifter) and **Rakasta** (Razorclaw Shifter) are considered uncommon and are few in number, but these races still have well-established places in the world. The uncommon races have little trouble coming and going in most places, aside from the occasional prejudice or suspicion by some limited group or individual.

Born of two very different cultures, **half-elves** are often viewed as an outsider. Half-elves are rarely encountered, but most people will easily recognize the individual's mixed heritage. Also, nearly all half-elves will be raised in human culture. Half-elves born among the elves of the Great Forest are usually abandoned outside a human settlement wrapped in swaddling clothes and a small payment of forest spices or poultices or maybe a gemstone. In elven culture, half-elves are simply anathema. This situation has given all half-elves the reputation of being the 'eternal bastard' or being a foundling orphan. Most half-elves could be understandably bitter.

**Half-orcs** face many of the same prejudices that half-elves face only worse. Half-orcs raised among their orc kin are often born of human slave mothers, while half-orcs raised in human culture are often viewed as the product of rape or a raid, even if this were not the case. Despite their troubled beginnings, half-orcs can thrive in both human and orc culture with skill and a little luck.

Of the newer races in the world, none have a stranger and more celebrated origin than the **lupines** and the **rakasta**. According to legend, an ancient cleric of Avandra came to a great walled human city that was beset by hordes of besieging orcs that were led by a dark warlock with hellish powers. When the cleric used Avandra's blessings to pass through the besieging forces unharmed, she found that the surviving city-dwellers were in dire straits. On the verge of starvation from the long siege, the humans were considering eating their pet hounds and the stray cats that still inhabited the city. The cleric however said that she would have none of it. The humans were outnumbered, why would you go further into folly by killing their would-be allies – the cat and the hound? And so she called down a column of rainbow light into the city streets and thus emerged the first lupines and the first rakasta. At least that's how the legend goes. In reality, the lupines and the rakasta have fairly distinctive cultures and identities. They are relatively few in number but they are considered to be true, intelligent races by most other races. Also, despite being two races with a common origin, lupines and rakasta have little regard for one another. As with cats and dogs, the two go their separate ways and fight when their interests conflict.

The lupines, true to their canine natures, have a more positive and friendly view of other races. Lupines adopted a semi-nomadic close-knit tribal lifestyle and over the centuries have earned the reputation for being excellent mercenaries and loyal friends. Some lupines do seem to fall into a naturally servile role when in the presence of certain charismatic or domineering humans, but these lupines are looked down upon by their own kind. Traditional lupine culture values independence and honor above all, but lupines still see themselves as a guardian of humans and have an ingrained hatred of orcs and other evil humanoid races. To this end, some lupine tribes have migrated into the western lands to do battle with their ancient orcish foes.

While the lupines adopted a close-knit tribal society, the rakasta never developed a single cultural tradition. Like the stalking tiger, a rakasta is above all an individual that moves through life hunting down its prey and seeking new horizons. Some rakasta are drawn to the towns and city-states of humans and come to enjoy the trappings of civilization. Other rakasta spurn the settled world and have returned to nature and live alone, rarely developing close ties to anyone except to possibly mate with another rakasta for a few years here or there. Rakasta are seen as fickle and often dangerous hunters by many.

**Rare:** **Shadow Elves** (Eladrin), **Tieflings** and **Wildens** are either rare in numbers and are extremely unusual or they are considered dangerous monsters in the eyes of the common folk. The Shadow Elves are rare and inscrutable race which is viewed with great caution and suspicion by humans and elves. The shadow elves are said to live in a strange otherworld known as the ***Land Within the Winds***, and they come and go as they please, possessing strange magics and often great otherworldly wealth. Shadow elves look much different than their wood elf kin. Whereas the elves of the Great Forest are resemble tall and lithe, gold-skinned warriors, the shadow elves are short and have a slight build, as well as having pale features and dark black hair.

Tieflings are, by and large, a foreign race to the Known World. A mere two years ago, a caravan containing a score of heavily defended wagons rolled east, into the towns of Sparrowhawk and Alpha. The bulk of the caravan was made up of many strange-looking humans – most of them had dark-hair with contrasting light-skin tones and unusual almond eyes. The leaders and guards for the caravan however were even stranger. They were tieflings – horned men and woman with red dusky skin and slithering tails – who spoke of a land **Beyond the West**. Local sages suggest that the tieflings’ who seemed to lead this caravan are somehow born of devilish blood – perhaps results of an ancient warlock covenant. Aside from speculation, the true origins of their appearance are not currently known.

Wildens are a furtive race of nature spirits that dwell in the Great Forest and the other wild places of the world. They appeared to mortals only within the last generation or so, but they appear to be guardians of the forests and have become implacable foes to encroaching orc tribes, furriers, and rapacious hunters.

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**Classes:** May choose from the *Players Handbooks 1, 2*, and the seeker and the rune priest from the *Player’s Handbook 3*, as well as the Essentials books: *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*. The bladesinger from the *Neverwinter Campaign Guide* is also allowed. I will allow the Psionic classes *Player’s Handbook 3* and classes from *Heroes of Shadow* on a case by case basis. Any classes or class builds from other sources, such as the online *Dragon Magazine* will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

**Class and Society:** The **Martial** classes are represented in all levels of society and are quite common. Divine characters – except for the esoteric lone-practicing Invoker and Rune priest – are members of specific churches devoted to one of the gods. (see Deities/Religion below). Nearly all characters in the **Divine** classes will feel well integrated into society unless they are

suffering from any special circumstances or are part of a heretical sect. **Primal** characters are all part of the international religion known as the **Old Faith** and are ruled through a secret network of **Archdruids** and other powerful primal spirits. Primal characters are fairly well understood – most people see druids and their like as simply ‘nature priests’ whom follow **Melora** and the other nature-oriented gods. The integration of **Arcane** characters is more mixed – wizards have a single established academy within the lands of the city-state of Alpha, but there are lone practitioners or small covens of wizardry found in various parts of the world, typically in a town or a larger city-state. Wizards are usually understood to be dedicated men of learning and are typically considered beneficial to a society. In addition, bards are also viewed in a favorable light. Though uncommon, bards are seen as an elite profession that channels beauty, magic, and story in ways that make bards well-regarded by commoners and nobles alike.

Other arcanists are not so lucky – people see warlocks and sorcerers to be delving into dangers best left hidden – and therefore many kings, city watches, and especially many churches are interested in monitoring and in some cases eliminating those who they see as practitioners of dark magic. That said, some spellcasters become so powerful or have proven their loyalties that they can overcome suspicion. Practitioners of **Psionic** and **Shadow** magic are extremely rare in the world and will be viewed with curiosity, confusion, and fear by some. Sometimes psionic and shadow characters will even be viewed as dangers akin to warlocks and sorcerers – other times not so much.

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**Powers and Feats:** Powers and Feats from the *Players Handbooks 1, 2, and 3*, the *Heroes of the Fallen Lands* and *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, *Mordenkainen’s Magnificent Emporium*, as well as *Arcane Power*, *Divine Power*, *Martial Power 1 and 2*, and *Primal Power* are available. Powers and Feats from the *Psionic Power* and *Heroes of Shadow* books, as well as content online *Dragon Magazine*, are allowed on a case-by-case basis.

**Languages:** We will use the standard ten languages described in the Player’s Handbook 1 and the two Essentials books. In addition, there are six new languages that can be learned:

**Alphan** – the language of the ruling class and military of the city-state of Alpha, as well as the clergy of Bahamut. This is considered a foreign language from across the sea. It uses the Iokharic script.

**Gnomish** – the beautiful and intricate language of the gnomes. It uses the Rellanic script.

**Lupine** – the rough language of lupines. It sounds like dogs barking mixed with a great deal of body language and a few words. It uses the Common script.

**Nerathan** – a language of the ancient empire that once ruled the Known World many centuries ago. This language is the purview of scholars, the clergy of Ioun, and some adventurers. Nerathan uses the Common script.

**Rakasta** – the feline language of the rakasta. It includes a pidgin of words from Elven and Common and also is known for several words and phrases evocative of a tiger stalking its prey. It uses the Rellanic script.

**Western** – little is understood about this language. It is only spoken by the human and tiefling members of the exotic caravans that arrived in Sparrowhawk and Alpha two years ago. It is a very strange language which uses the Barazhad script.

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**Starting Wealth:** You may purchase up to 100 gold pieces (gp) worth of items. There are several places to find listing of the same standard equipment. These include the *Player's Handbook 1 and 2*, the *Heroes of the Fallen Lands*, *Heroes of the Forgotten Kingdoms*, and *Mordenkainen's Magnificent Emporium*.

**Royal Largesse:** In addition to your initial wealth, your benefactors from the Crown of Alpha will probably bequeath to you several magic items and monies to better prepare you for your quest. At the least – you will receive a **riding horse**, two *Potions of Healing*, **traveling papers**, and one **common magic item** of 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> level. If you have preferences for what that common magic item may be -- let the DM know. Otherwise it will be something appropriate to your character and it will be given out early in the first session.

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**Deities/Religion:** Most scholars say that the gods are part of a single family of deities, a pantheon, which is often compared with a large extended family of mortals. In practice, most of the gods are worshiped singly and their followers, while not denying the existence of the other gods, sometimes view their god to be preeminent. This broad view has led to not a few religion-infused conflicts in the past. For the entries below, the “domain” entry refers to the type of Domain that a Warpriest would acquire if they worshiped one of the following deities. Domains are generally from *Heroes of the Fallen Lands (HotFL)*, *Neverwiner Campaign Guide (NWC)*, *Heroes of Shadow (HoS)*, and online *Dragon* Material (*Dr*). I can provide additional information upon request.

**Avandra** (Good) – The fickle goddess of luck and fate. She has few if any grand temples, merely roadside shrines and drinking holes. Despite this, Avandra has many followers and is considered to be the patron goddess of the lupine and the rakasta. Warpriest Domain: Selune (NWC)

**Bahamut** (Lawful Good) – Bahamut is considered a foreign god in the Known World. He is only worshiped by the ruling elite and the soldiers of Alpha. In fact, his emblem is incorporated into the standard of King Ericall himself. As a foreign god, Bahamut is little known to others in the Known World. In fact Bahamut's symbol may inspire more fear than respect, given the terrible destructive legacy dragons have in the Known World. Warpriest Domain: Torm (NWC).



**Bane** (Evil) – the only god of evil that is widely known or worshiped by a large segment of civilization. Bane is all too often the god of last resort who rulers, soldiers, and others turn to in their darkest hour. One of the only known temples to Bane is located in the Barracks District of the city-state of Threshold. Bane is also one of the dark gods regularly worshiped by orcs, goblins, as well as other foul-hearted monster races. (Not available to Player Characters).

**Corellon** and **Sehanine** (Unaligned) – The coupled gods of magic, mystery, and the change of the seasons. Both Corellon and Sehanine are considered the parents of the elven and gnomish races, but they are also honored by non-elves for their influence on the seasons and the natural world. These gods do not empower Divine characters in general, but it is not outside the realm of possibility. A Divine player character devoted to these gods is allowed; however they typically work their mysteries through Fey Pacts and through Primal characters. Warpriest Domain: Corellon (NWC).

**Erathis** (Unaligned) – The traditional goddess of human civilization in the Known World. The people of Alpha see her as a possible sister to Bahamut. She has a great temple in all the major towns and city-states in the Known World. Each temple is ruled by an Arch-cleric who gather together to promulgate canon law once every five years. Warpriest Domain: Torm (NWC).

**Ioun** (Unaligned) – The goddess of knowledge and prophecy. Her religion has followers amongst many human towns and city-states, the elves, the gnomes, and even the dwarves. Her temples are libraries that contain the small remnant of knowledge from antiquity. Warpriest Domain: Oghma (NWC).

**Kord** (Unaligned) – The mighty Thunderer. He is a distant and willful god who has no temples but has many many followers. Warpriest Domain: Storm (HotFL)

**Melora** (Unaligned) – The very earth itself. The All-Mother. Melora is the creative and destructive impulses of the wilderness and the sea. She is said to be the mother of many of the gods. Her followers do not gather in temples, but her name is invoked by many from many races. Her religion largely empowers only Primal character classes.

**Moradin** (Lawful Good) – The god of the dwarves. He is sometimes honored for his role as a master smith, but most non-dwarves usually honor Erathis for these activities instead. Warpriest Domain: Earth (Dr)

**Pelor** (Good) – The All-Father. The ancient god of life. Pelor has shrines and followers in many places throughout the Known World. There is no central organization to his religion. He is said to be the father of many of the gods and is said to favor his daughter Erathis above all. Pelor empowers few individuals with his blessings. Much less so than the other gods it seems. Warpriest Domain: Sun (HotFL).

**The Raven Queen** (Unaligned) – The keeper of the Dead and the goddess at the end of all things. Her religion is decentralized. She mysteriously empowers only women of a certain age with her dark gifts – making her the only god to differentiate their blessed servants by gender. Warpriest Domain: Death (HoS).