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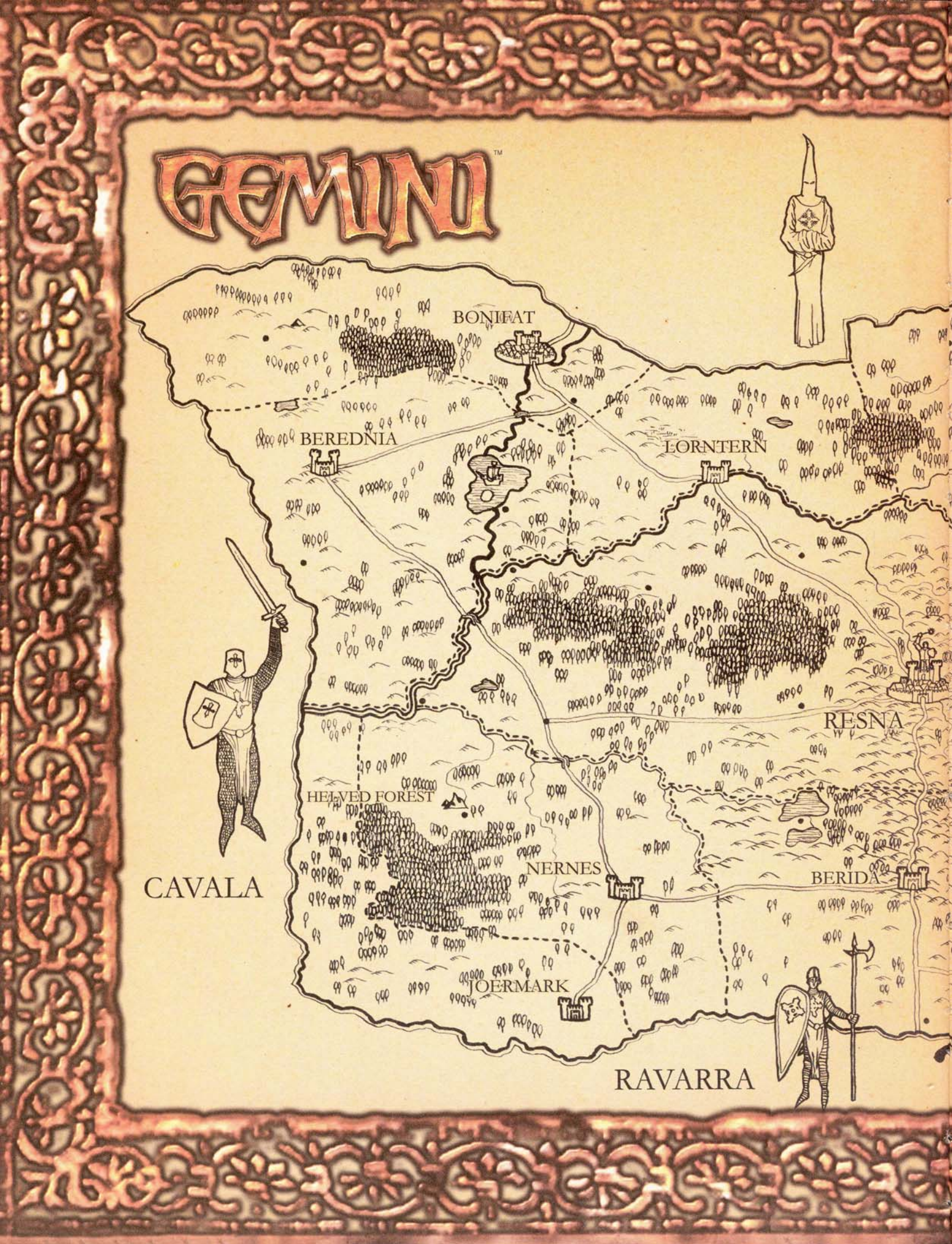











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ORSCHILD - WINDS OF WAR

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Welcome to Orschild

Fall has come to Orschild.

Biting winds sweep in across the rocky highlands, bringing promises of war.

Cold rain falls from the ash gray skies on the tired inhabitants of the refugee camps. It whips their sore bodies and reminds them of their vulnerability – that everything they have fled from is near yet again.

From the north comes the ruthless Black Storms – the uncompromising messengers of death – and in each direction the sworn enemies of the province are arming for war. The blessed Knights Templar of Marquis Tarsus, the elfen hordes of Malachdrim and Marquis Lazarus' heretic legions all stand at the borders, ready to strike when the time is right.

In more and more places across the province the hatred between men and dwarves grows. Jealous nobles who have seen their privileges lost to the dwarves rush the people to unspeakable atrocities in the name of freedom. They have learned nothing from history, and therefore they are doomed to repeat it; doomed to force Orschild into a devastating civil war. In the middle of the warmongers stands the elfin warlord Gemorion, ready to use all his skill to finish a personal vendetta.

The Sau kin defends their honor with their lives. Their foremost champion has left on a quest for the lost origin of the dwarfen people and the key to the mysteries of the Great Dividing. His departure is a large burden for his brothers, but if his search succeeds all might change.

After all, when history awakes, the road to the future is laid out.

In the heart of the province – the city of Resna – stands Lord Gideon, and beholds his land. He is proud of what he has achieved. He has managed to pass on the legacy from his proud forefather, who once drove the Church out of the province.

But the mandate of history is not eternal, and now he has reached a crossroad in time: a crossroad where he has to defend his right to rule, not only before his subjects and his enemies, but before himself.

In Orschild the winds of fall whistle a sad song.

It tells of terrible treason, blood brothers in bitter struggle and a sovereign in tears. It tells of abandoned ideals, lost souls and broken hopes...

...of people who did not have the strength to carry on...

...and of heroes who had the courage to defy destiny.

The King of Nordel

Before the Enlightenment, Orschild was once ruled by a wise and fair king known as Tuor of Berenar (later Berida). Tuor ruled the land for only three years, and in this time the land prospered as it had never done before. The harvest was bounteous, the land was green, and fresh spring blew through the kingdom all year round. At the end of his third year he mysteriously disappeared, leaving no descendants or any known family, and people began to wonder why nobody knew who the Berenarian king had really been. Many myths have grown up around this hero of Orschilder history, but only in Nordel do they have any evidence to support their tales.

Two years ago a tomb was found. On its wall was carved the insignia of the fair king and within were found his remains. Popular history says that this was not all they found. Allegedly the crypt also contained documents that claimed that the king was in fact from Nordel and that he had taken the place of his friend, the true king, after he died in battle. Scholars discredit the story, but in Nordel it is regarded as indisputable fact.

The Iron Gate has been opened. Marquis Lazarus gathers his heretical followers in the northeast, and the elfin vassal Malachdrim leads his wild hordes to the south. The bordering Church provinces of Cavala, Cergovia and Ravarra offer salvation, but at the same time they plot to bring down Lord Gideon and take back the land that they once owned.

And amidst all these foreign evils there is an even greater threat, one closer to home, as Lord Gideon is haunted by the past. A pact made with the dwarves centuries ago has split the land into two factions. Divided, Orschild must fall.

The Rule of the Church

Over twelve hundred years ago, before the Enlightenment and the assault of the people from the north the ancestral fathers of the current Lord, Gideon Bernon, ruled the province of Orschild. They had carved out the domain through bloody battles and strong leadership, but the onslaught of the foreigners changed this. Had it not been for the aid of the Marquis the people of Orschild certainly would have been enslaved. After the raising of the Iron Gate the Church ruled the province from the Cathedral of Ravarra through the Archbishop of Resna. For a time all was well.

But the Church grew greedy and over-zealous. Their reign turned to tyranny after the plague, and Orschild could no longer bear the ravages of the Inquisition. All of this was hardest for one man, Gideon Bernon, descendant of the ancient Ceric, the first king of Orschild. He still had his castle and some control over the province, but he could see how the Church usurped all the real power that should have been his. He saw how it collected the taxes belonging to the nobles of Orschild who had been there long before the Church was founded. He had studied the history of the province and knew that he was its rightful ruler.

While watching the public burning of an alleged witch, he decided that he would overthrow the Church and reclaim his throne. But he could not do it alone.

He needed help.

The Pact with the Dwarfs

In his search for allies Gideon turned to the noble Genorius Sau, head of the dwarfen Sau kin. In return for their help in the rebellion, the new Lord would grant them lands and power. The Dwarves agreed, and they were amongst those who fought hardest against the Knights Templar and the warrior monks when Orschild declared its independence from the Church. After Gideon Bernon's triumph he remained true to his pact. The Sau kin was given lands and power. In time they would grow even greater in prominence as their trading houses spread over the province.

The Lords of Orschild since Gideon Bernon have to varying degrees remained true to their ancestor's pact. This was especially true after the Second Elf War, when the grateful Lord of that time accorded them several privileges as a token of his thanks. And so a very close bond has developed between the Lords of Orschild and the dwarfen kin. The dwarves have always remained true to the Lord, and the Lord has protected them from persecution and harm.

This alliance has remained immensely important to Lord Gideon, the present ruler of Orschild. Should war break out, he will need the assistance of the dwarves. Still there are those who look with envy upon the dwarves' power. There are whispered allegations that the dwarves, through their advisers and wealth have more influence than the Lord himself. Jealous governors have seen their control diminish by comparison and many would wish the dwarves crushed or exiled.

Twice a Promise of a Piece of Nernes

In these troubled times Lord Gideon has had little time to care for his children, and so they have come to be ignored or overlooked. This is especially true for his second son - Orwen.

Orwen was a sickly child. His father, therefore, had little time for him. If truth be told Orwen was deemed weak - an unworthy heir to carry on the proud name of his family. It did not matter that he showed himself to be more ambitious and intelligent than his brothers; he still won little favor in his father's eyes. Despite this, his mother loved him, and Gideon could not disown him, so he was promised part of the domain of Nernes to govern when he grew old enough. Orwen was content with this as a start, though he had greater plans for power. He intended to do what his father never could; he would save Orschild from the Church and the Darkness.

However, all did not pass as Orwen had hoped. The dwarfen kin of Sau also wanted new domains for the prominent men of their kin. As they grew in wealth they also wished to grow in power. Cenobius Sau, head of the kin, privately approached Lord Gideon. He brought with him a dwarf, Veul Sau, who had come to dominate the proceedings at the Moon Trading House, which was one of the kin's biggest centers of trade. Though immensely rich, the dwarf had no real power and the kin had none to offer him. They asked Lord Gideon for a domain that was worthy of this prominent dwarf. Seeing the jewelry that covered the merchant's body, Gideon understood that only a sizable portion of land would satisfy the kin and he was quite happy to oblige. It was a quick decision, and he offered Veul a part of the domain of Nernes out of gratitude for his trading services, and to repay him for his grandfather's part in saving the life of his own great grandfather during the Second Elf War.

Cenobius left, satisfied with the Lord's pledge.

The River of Gold

The Scale Trading House has long been the cause of a history of conflict in Nordel, but it might never have existed if not for the lapse in judgment of their own governor. One thing that the dwarves lacked when they arrived in Orschild was the ready supply of gold necessary to make use of their fine goldsmiths. Responding to demands made by Lord Kale, the governor of Nordel at the time, Geller Uliss, granted them a piece if land long regarded useless because its rocky soil made it impossible to farm on. The dwarves were aware of this, and were thus as surprised as anybody when they discovered that it contained rich deposits of gold in its only river. Geller immediately demanded that the land be given back on the grounds that he had not been aware of the gold when he gave it away. His claims were rejected by the Lord, however and the Sau were allowed to keep their supply of gold.

The Claim is Resolved

Gideon returned from his negotiations with the dwarfs and spoke to one of his advisers. The learned man recoiled in horror, and Gideon realized that he had promised the dwarves what was already reserved for his own son. He realized that there was no way he could ask the dwarves to relinquish their claim and so he came to the only alternative. He would tell his son what had happened and what would be done about it. The boy would be given some other, minor, domain when one was made available. Pleased that the problem had been resolved so simply Gideon moved to speak with Orwen as quickly as possible to ensure that a careless word did not spoil all his negotiations.

But when father and son confronted one another Gideon found his boy less easy to placate than he had hoped. Orwen refused to acknowledge the dwarves' claim, responding by saying that the son of the Lord had more right to the land than a minor dwarf merchant. Certainly blood had to be thicker than water. He screamed at his Lord, claiming that he had been betrayed by a man unfit to rule the province.

Gideon's temper rose alarmingly as Orwen shouted abuse at him, and he pushed the young man to the floor, using his superior size to dominate the argument. In a fit of rage he took away Orwen's entire heritage, telling him that he deserved nothing, but that out of respect for his mother he would still be allowed to rule the smallest and least important domain in the province.

Turning his back Gideon marched off to his conference room. Orwen was left on the floor, humiliated.

A Rejected Son's Fury

After their confrontation in the hall, father and son did not speak with each other for some time. Gideon, still consumed with fury at having been disobeyed by his weak son, refused to make any contact and thought no more of the matter. He deemed that Orwen had been cowed into submission and that he would run and hide behind his mother's skirts, or retreat to the village domain far out north that he had been promised.

But he misjudged his child, if he thought that Orwen would let the matter lie - if he believed that he would have the last word so easily. Orwen had certainly been cowed, but this only fuelled resentment: resentment of his father and of the dwarves who had stolen his land. In quiet, behind the scenes, he planned a terrible revenge.

He decided that his father was a mad tyrant, a weakling who submitted to the upstart Sau kin and a lot of dwarves with no family or right to land. He would take his father's place and destroy the Sau, no matter the cost. For months Orwen only fumed harmlessly, planning coup after coup without any real substance. He built only castles of sand from clouded dreams and illusions of might. Yet, soon an opportunity revealed itself by the luckiest of coincidences.

Ironically, what showed him the way to his true role, devised for him by fate, was an overheard word from his father. While drowning his anger with wine provided by the castle cellar he saw a light coming down the stairs. He hid quickly behind one of the larger barrels and listened attentively. From his fortuitous position he heard the captain of the castle guard speaking to his father about a group of men who had set fire to a dwarfen trade house; most of the conversation passed him by, but he did hear a name - the Freedomers: the fighters for freedom.

Contact with the Freedomers

During the following weeks Orwen learned everything he could about the Freedomers; he found that they were a group of noblemen, who were disgruntled by the newfound power of the dwarves. Like him, they were not prepared to sit back and watch their own influence diminish. Some still felt in debt to the dwarfs for their role in the Rebellion and the Second Elf War. Many more saw them only as a threat. A few seemed prepared to take things very far. The latter, like Orwen, wished to see the Sau kin destroyed or banished.

Acting in secret, he managed to make contact with one of the group's members in an inn down in Resna. He told his story to the man, and he was immediately taken in. Soon the rejected son of the Lord was allowed to tell his tale to others.

The listeners were attracted by his story and his blood - a rejected son of the Lord of Orschild, suffering at the hands of the dwarves and an insane and weak father. People were dazzled by the fact that the Lord did not dare stand up against the dwarves, not even for his own son. If so, what could they expect him to do for them? The tragedy had immense potential and gained followers to the cause. As for Orwen, he saw in the group a large body of powerful potential allies; men who could make him lord.

He was accepted into the group and soon began to dominate it; his capabilities as a leader helped them organize, and allowed them to win important political victories among the disgruntled nobles. Eventually, he increased his control, until he led virtually the entire movement.

With his addition they were able to gain more and more support in many counties around the province.

The History of the Avenger

The Sau kin's finest time during its history in Orschild, was over a hundred years ago, in the defense of their province during the Second Elf War, dwarfen heroes struck powerful blows for the cause of freedom.

For the first time almost all the people accepted the dwarves because of their brave struggles against the Church's



The Guild of Thieves

The Underworld has no real structure or organization. It is a land of individuals all following their own agenda. But it was not always so. There was a time when one man was the recognized King of Thieves, and when his guild was the most powerful organization of thieves and rogues in the world. Where Mercher Gart, the King of Thieves came from is unknown. Most rumors claim that he was a nobleman of some sort, one who had lost his land and power through the unjust actions of another. He began to eke out a grim parody of what he should have had, gaining unimaginable wealth. His rise and fall covered a span of only three years. When the Lord heard of him the city guard was soon sent in and everything he had was lost. But he himself was never found. Most people romantically approve of this murderer, thief, and blackmailer. Some scholars doubt the truth of his existence, but among the people of the shadows he is regarded as a god.

troops. But though it bought the kin power, it also made them several enemies - in the Church, and amongst the elves.

Cenobius Sau was young then. He led the dwarfen warriors, putting him at the forefront of the battles where he downed many foes. Though most of his blows were killing or disabilitating, some fighters faced him and lived to tell the tale. Gemorion the Gamiel elf was one of them. He had marched to war with a light heart, hoping that the deeds he would perform could win him position and favor at the elfin court. He knew that many of its most influential members had won their posts during the previous war with mankind.

The wild elf threw himself into battle without any conception of mortality, only trying to best his rivals. However, such a suicidal strategy could not prevail forever. During the campaign in Orschild, the elves came up against the warriors of Sau kin. Having no more respect for the short people then he did for the humans, Gemorion was first in every assault. On one such occasion he spotted a dwarf who seemed to be leading the rest. Thinking that such an opponent would give him great status once defeated, Gemorion ran to face the dwarf. Laughing madly, the elf wove his way forward through the tide of battle to face the dwarf. At last he stood right in front of him, but he did not stand there long. The dwarf leader swiped him aside with a blow to the side of his head, and Gemorion was lost in the tide.

The Avenger is Born

Gemorion's body was recovered, but he was lost in madness and unconsciousness for several decades, until his kin almost gave up hope that he would ever regain his wits. When he awoke from his insanity the war was over. The elves had withdrawn their support and the court had reestablished itself. Some of the more prominent intriguers were dead, but they had already been replaced. His heroics during the war meant nothing, and Queen Ketura preferred to forget that it had ever happened. Even his old role at the court was lost, as several less important rivals had overtaken him during his slumber.

He was reduced to a place at the very bottom of the pecking order. All he had before the war was gone and now he stood to face the same challenge that he had when he left the Birthing Chambers hundreds of years ago.

His initial despair was soon replaced by hatred for the one who had caused all this. He blamed the dwarf who had removed him from the period of political turmoil that followed the war for everything that went wrong in his life. If he had been awake and well, he could have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by so many deaths. He could have been one of the Queen's foremost advisers. At the very least he would have been able to defend his position. It was not enough that the dwarf had cost him his position at the court. A long scar down the left side of his face served to remind him of his humiliating defeat. It made certain that he would never be able to see himself in a mirror, or in the reflection of the underground lakes, without recalling that fateful battle.

Eventually Gemorion decided that he would no longer remain at the court as a boot licker to the most minor of dignitaries. Covering the scar with snaking tattoos he traveled to the lands of man, with thoughts of revenge and opportunities buzzing in his head like fireflies.

The Freedomers' Proposal

Gemorion did almost nothing to establish himself in the lands of man. If he thought most elves unworthy of his services then the pathetic humans were even worse. Instead, he embarked on a campaign of revenge, killing dwarves in every province of the former realm. If he could not find the dwarf who had humbled him he would kill them all. Sooner or later the dwarf at his blade would be the dwarf leader of the Orschild warriors.

Word of a mysterious killer of dwarves eventually reached the Freedomers, and it delighted them. Such a one could be very useful to their cause, and so they sent an agent to find out all they could about him. After almost five years they managed to learn of Gemorion's defeat, and suddenly they understood his true value to their cause. Putting the pieces together they realized that the dwarf who the avenger sought must be Cenobius Sau, the one dwarf in the world they hated the most. If they could use Gemorion correctly they might be able to destroy the Sau. Without any personal involvement on their part, the elf would serve as the perfect instrument.

Swiftly they dispatched a messenger to Gemorion, saying that they knew the identity of the dwarf he sought. They proposed a mutually beneficial meeting.

The Avenger Arrives

After only a few weeks, reports began to flow around Orschild, of dwarves found beheaded in alleys, or hanged by the side of the road. In an inn somewhere in a sympathetic county, Orwen and the Freedomers' most senior members met Gemorion. Their discussions lasted until the early hours, and a plan was devised to crush the dwarves. Gemorion would do the deed, and be rewarded with a powerful position in an Orschild free from dwarves.

The Dwarf Burnings Begin

As they grew, the Freedomers began to want more than just secret meetings and rumor mongering. With the addition of the fiery Orwen they craved more action. When Gemorion joined their ranks they knew that they could not fail. And so they began a campaign of terror and violence.

In the counties where they were strong they began to follow the dwarves, shouting abuse and intimidation at them.

The Lake of the Dead

Le'ne's has long been famed as the home of a most unusual lake that has a long history of bloodshed. It was here that Ceric, the first king of Orschild, and his son were killed by the treacherous knights of his brother. Much later, the last prince perished here too, defending his home from the onslaught of Darkness. The First and Second Elf Wars also saw powerful Lords and mighty enemies fall at its shores. Even during the Rebellion, though no battles were fought in Le'ne's, it was the site where the Archbishop and his court were massacred by the indignant people. For many, the lake is the spirit of Orschild. It represents freedom and ancient heroes.

It seemed like a horrible parody of the persecutions to those dwarfs who suffered. The dwarves complained to their kin, who in turn put more pressure on Gideon and the nobles. This angered them even further, making many of them join the cause of the Freedomers.

The Freedomers had forgotten what had happened the last time that the dwarves were wronged. They hoped that the dwarves could be convinced to leave with threats and hints at violence, but the dwarves responded with all the stubbornness and fire that they were known for - just the same as they had done hundreds of years before. They fought back.

So slowly the situation is brought closer and closer to eruption. The only possible result if the Freedomers are not stopped is what all the Lords and Marquis feared most during the persecutions - a civil war.

And a civil war could very well tear the province apart.

In Preparation for War

Now Lord Gideon can only watch as he sees the Church and the Darkness muster their troops on either side of the province - each responding to the other, with Orschild caught up in the middle. Reinforced Knight Templar companies and dark priests both want Orschild back to strengthen their resoective causes. Both send their agents into the province to sew intrigue, to spy on the courts, and to rally support for their cause. Orschild's allies, Bervoche and the other free provinces, despair as their diplomats see the situation within the country becoming increasingly unstable. The dwarves and their enemies cross swords, so engrossed with each other that the threat from outside is forgotten. Nobody knows whom to trust as agents from all sides spread seeds of discord, and Gideon is starting to lose his grip on the situation.

As the rest of the old realm prepares for war, Orschild crumbles in upon itself. So split apart by anger and distrust, the province can only be sucked under by the tide.



Orschild's history

Arturo stamped his feet quickly and gripped his pitchfork still tighter to shake off the persistent cold. Pressing himself closer to the side of the forge he felt the tension in his companions. Mutterings and experimentally swung shovels revealed that they were eager to get on with this, because they all had their reasons for hatred and revenge. Competition had meant that his furniture could no longer support his family. He had begged the governor for help and been flung out the back door into the snow. He had humbled himself before the blacksmith, performed menial tasks for a couple of copper pieces, and still it had not been enough.

His youngest son Selis had died last winter when he could not afford to buy him new clothes. They had taken everything away from him: his business, his dignity, and his family. They deserved to pay for their crimes. Then he had met Celt. "An eye for an eye" Celt had said, and Arturo had agreed. Feelings of revenge and hatred warmed him as his breath crystallized in the air before him. Someone passed the torches around. Arturo took three. Then he watched again, and waited for his chance to strike a blow for his son. The signal flared up in the night before him, illuminating the faces of his companions, revealing their faces, cast in the bitter images of determination and anger. Arturo screamed like an enraged animal and rushed towards the shop, unnaturally small, like its owner. Fire licked its straw roof and several men were already smashing its beautifully set windows. He had chosen his target and began kicking and swinging at the door, throwing his torches through the windows. The dark timber buckled and splintered under the pressure, allowing him and three others inside. Blinded by the smoke and his own rage he stumbled through the building.

Somehow he found his way upstairs, to the living quarters. They were not supposed to go here, Celt had said. Downstairs only!' But in the heat of the moment, all advice had been forgotten. Laughing insanely he ran through the hall into a dark room as yet untouched by the flames. He moved cautiously and had to crouch in the total lack of light, which hid the nature of the room. Then there was the sound of breaking glass. A torch landed with a hollow sound on the wooden floor. It's glow revealed a bed and a sleeping dwarf, roughly the age Selis had been.

Tears streamed down his face as he raised his fork above the body, "An eye for an eye," he thought, and brought it down.

The Holy Castle

During the years of trouble there was a general rush among the nobility to build homes in Nordel. Earl Poler Josem was one of the many who moved up north. But before this, he decided that he had to build a home worthy of his title. The finest architects in the province immediately began to build the finest castle in all of Nordel. What Poler was not aware of, was that his home was being built upon the ancient burial site of Marquis Semul. The Church immediately mounted an assault to destroy the castle, but found they could not take the magnificent structure quickly enough. Instead, a minor war has grown up around it, with the Church constantly raiding nearby lands. The Josems have responded viscously every time. His neighbors have supported him, and the castle is known as the Watchman of Semul.

Orschild has always remained central in the history of Gemini. Ripples of every major event have touched Ravarra's neighbor in the center of the world. From the time of Darkness through the Rebellion of Sovereigns, to the present opening of the Iron Gate Orschild has remained in the thick of political, economic, and religious developments. Therefore it has a rich and eventful history, full of heroic deeds and treacherous villains, that has made the province what it is today.

The Age of Darkness

(Up to the year 251 Before the Enlightenment)

Very little is left to tell us of Orschild when man was not yet united, and the One and the Darkness were not known. Ancient monuments remain, though eroded by time, to remind the people of a time when the people prayed to the sun, the water, and the air. Where Resna now stands, there is an ancient cairn where people still go to pay their respects to ancestors that cannot be traced.

The Time of Sovereigns

(The Year 251 to 1 B.E)

The Founding of Orschild

The province of Orschild is recorded as being officially founded by the mystical King Ceric, who built what is now the city of Resna in the center of his domain. Fragments of ancient writings saved from the Church say it was built 'in the shadow of the forefathers'. Present day historians believe that this hinted at the cliffs that stood outside the city walls, though they are not sure what monument may have rested there.

The king is said to have ruled his kingdom for fifty years before a tragic love affair resulted in a civil war, in which he was slain by his brother. It is said that his followers saved the crown he wore in the final battle, and hid it away at an unknown site. This has provided wild rumors of ancient treasure still heard today.

But though the king died his kingdom would remain untroubled for another one hundred and sixty years...

...until evil came to the lands of man.

The Arrival of Darkness

At a time when the ancient kings of Orschild fought the rulers of the bordering provinces came the invasion from the north, the first horrid tidal wave of evil. Orschild was close enough to the source of darkness to suffer the full brunt of its attack. Three years after the Darkness first appeared, it reached Orschild.

Bitter battles were fought as the foreigners' onslaught caught them off guard and they lacked a sufficient defense against the corrupting magic that slowly twisted the minds of the inhabitants of the kingdom.

In the Valley of the Three Cliffs- now known as the Valley of Kings- the reigning king and a retinue of his personal guard stood for three weeks against an army five times their size, before they were finally consumed and the last king of Orschild was killed. Orschild's princes eventually saw that they had no choice, and as other lords yielded to the tide, they understood that they could only do the same.

Unwillingly, they joined the ranks of the Darkness.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

THE YEAR 225 B.E — ORSCHILD IS FOUNDED. Orschild is founded when King Ceric builds Resna.

THE YEAR 175 B.E — THE DEATH OF THE KING. King Ceric of Orschild is slain by Lord Merek, his own brother.

THE YEAR 15 B.E — THE ONSLAUGHT OF DARKNESS. The Darkness first arrives in the world and attacks what is now Cergovia.

THE YEAR 12 B.E — THE DARKNESS REACHES ORSCHILD. The Darkness arrives in Orschild. Orschild holds out until seven years later when Bervoche is attacked, though most of this is a rear guard action.

THE YEAR 11 B.E — THE BATTLE OF THE VALLEY OF KINGS.

The Enlightenment

(The Year 0 to 163)

The princes of Orschild had managed to reach a settlement with the conquerors which let them retain some wealth and influence. They were in the hands of the conquerors, but they were not helpless. In their minds, the hope to free Orschild from the oppressors, was still strong. Even so, they did not know how. The hordes of the Darkness seemed invincible.

Suddenly the armies of five of the former Lords stemmed the tide of the invasion. They founded the holy Church, and preached hope, strength and unity to the people. Even in the province of Orschild, their messages found a way through. Their promise of divine aid brought back hope to the people, and a resistance began to be organized. Once again Orschild was going to fight back against the men from the north.

Nine years after the Enlightenment Orschild rose together as one, led by a man who claimed to be a direct descendent of King Ceric. He promised the people of Orschild freedom and together with the Marquis he gave it to them.

His name was Dovar Bernon, and he would later become the first Lord of Orschild.

A Life of Enlightment

After the Iron Gate was raised and the people from the north were obliterated, the Lord of Orschild resigned all his power to the Church in gratitude for all they had done to free Orschild. The province fell under the rule of the Church.

Virtually everybody in Orschild accepted the new rulers with open hearts and religion grew strong in the former kingdom. A cathedral was raised and officially opened in Resna.

Orschild became a shining example of religious devotion and piety. The people were delighted that they could prosper in the love of the One.

But it wouldn't last for long.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

THE YEAR 0 — THE ENLIGHTENMENT.

THE YEAR 9 — THE REBELLION AGAINST THE DARKNESS. Members of Orschild's former nobility, supported by the armies of the new Church, rise up against the Darkness. Dovar Bernon declares himself lord of a free Orschild. He promises that as long as his bloodline rules the province, there will be no more unrighteousness or oppression.

THE YEAR 19 — The Lord of Orschild resigns all his power to the Church. In return he is allowed to swear the vows of the Bishops and he retains control of the province.

THE YEAR 139 — The cathedral of Resna is finished.

THE YEAR 145 — THE NIGHT OF THE STORM. A powerful storm lashes Orschild, and the cliffs outside Resna split, creating the phenomenon known as the Wolf's Teeth. The One destroys any ancient monument that might have once stood there.

THE YEAR 157 — BREAKING OF THE BLOODLINE. The ruling lord and bishop dies from pneumonia. His place is taken, not by his son, but by an influential priest from Sein. Thus, the bloodline is broken of the Bernons as rulers of Orschild.

The First Elf War

(The Year 163 to 195)

Though Orschild was only involved in the cause of the First Elf War due to its association with the Church, once again, its proximity to the invaders meant that it was one of those provinces that suffered most in the coming battles. Its most important role during the war was to act as a buffer between the elves and Ravarra. As such, several knightly orders were stationed within its borders, prolonging the conflict and causing much damage to the land. It would take Orschild several years to recover from the bitter struggles, and several more to make up the cost in manpower.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

THE YEAR 169 — THE RAZING OF BONIFAT. The city of Bonifat is burned down almost to the ground by angry Gamiel elves. It is rebuilt later with modern building methods.

THE YEAR 175 —THE STAND OF ORSCHILD. The Brotherhood of the Rose makes a stand against a large army of Gamiel elves led by Gamiel himself.

THE YEAR 182 — THE PLUNDERING OF RESNA. The cathedral in Resna is plundered and desecrated by a force of Gamiel elves led by Salem elves. A cry of outrage sweeps through Orschild and many lose heart.

THE YEAR 196 — THE TREATY OF RAVARRA. The elves march back through Orschild. The people are forced out into the streets to humble themselves in front of the elves. The humiliation is complete.

The Black Ages

(The Year 196 to 554)

The Black Ages were a time of great change in Orschild. change brought about by the Plague, the ravages of the Inquisition, and the emergence of the Sau kin. Through the suffering and the hatred the new Orschild was born.

The Plague

The Plague did not hit Orschild any harder than it did the other provinces. However, to its citizens that was bad enough. Bonifat, thanks to the way it had been rebuilt after the First Elf War, managed to escape fairly unscathed, but in Berida, Resna, and Nordel sanitariums had to be set up to care for its victims. The sanitariums also accepted those from other cities who could make a pilgrimage to receive care, together with the others who had been struck by the fatal disease. In the short term it caused a massive rise in the religious piety of the people frightened by the Black Death. As soon as it had passed, however, doubt was cast over the holy power of the men of the Church.

Cyrus' Arrival

Not everyone who had lost family members or friends in the Plague turned to the Church for salvation. The word of Cyrus' preaching reached Orschild as well and found a few willing ears though most turned from the heretic. A few cults were founded in the major cities and it was hoped that he and his disciples would pass through the province. These prayers were answered when Cyrus and his followers passed through on their way to the Iron Gate. Though it was only for a few days, Cyrus' visit laid the foundations for a heretical movement, which has recently been strengthened by the opening of the Iron Gate.

The Cult of history

Le'ne's has often claimed to be the first county of Orschild over Resna because of the legends that associate it closely with Ceric, the first king. Historians have never confirmed this belief, and many inhabitants of this old land take that as a sign that what they say must be true.

Some people have taken this attitude to the limit, and thus the cult of history has grown up. These wild 'scholars' search for any proof that might confirm Le'ne's' position in history. While they have come up with no irrefutable proof that what they say is true they have uncovered many sacred sites and object which have come to be worshipped as a link back to the days of kings. For this reason, they are tolerated and respected by the people of Orschild, though most ridicule them behind their backs.

The Ravages of the Inquisition

Soon after the disaster of the Plague another scourge hit the province — the Inquisition. The fervor with which the new inquisitors pursued their heretical quarry meant that the people of Orschild lived in constant fear. At any time, any one of them could be dragged off and killed. Nobles and peasants alike were accused, tried, and punished almost instantly. Nobody outside the Church had the authority to overrule its agents, and the protests of the rulers fell on the deaf ears of the Bishops.

In a province where religion was already meeting some opposition this merely fueled the flames.

Hatred of the Church grew.

The Great Exodus

In the midst of all the chaos, the dwarves arrived from their abandoned mountain realm. In areas which had been totally cleared by the plague the Sau kin settled and began to rebuild their lives. Orschild's inhabitants met them with curiosity and fear, for this was the first time in history that the dwarves walked the lands of man. But the time was too turbulent for the people of Orschild to pay much attention to their new neighbors. They were busy keeping their own lives from falling apart.

The Church, on the other hand, had all the time in the world. The Inquisition turned their accusing eyes to the newcomers, especially the ones that bore the mark of the Curse. These were judged to have been corrupted by the Darkness, and had to stand trial. In town after town witches and heretics were joined by dwarves on the bonfires and some inquisitors went as far as claiming that the entire race was tainted by the Darkness.

Their common enmity with the Inquisition, which treated dwarves especially harshly, also united them with the humans. In them, as in the rest of the people, a loathing of the Church was stirring. Eventually, they managed to establish themselves through their hard work and superb craftsmanship; their true power would come later.

The Return of the house of Bernon

Several people were beginning to speak out against the Church, but few dared do it publicly. However, there was one shining exception: the Bernon family. Its members openly condemned religion and the Marquis. They made public speeches against obeying the abbots and bishops. They called the men of the Church liars who heartlessly exploited the people and the One an entity as ruthless as the Darkness. They claimed that the power and the wealth of the province belonged not to the Church, but to the people who had created it. They reminded them of the promise their ancestor, the first lord of Orschild had made.

It was the Church that had broken the bloodline of the Bernon. Therefore the Church was to blame for all that had gone wrong since the day the last Bernon was denied his right to rule Orschild.

And therefore the Church had to be stopped.

The Inquisition did not look kindly upon this, and the Bernons were censured and hunted throughout the province. Farmhouses were set on fire, villages ravaged by Knights Templar and innocents tortured during the intense search for the traitors. They were not found. Despite all the holy powers of the One and the might of the Inquisition, the men of the Church could not discover their whereabouts.

Meanwhile, men of power in different parts of the realm were forging a much larger plan — larger than the Church could have possibly imagined.

A plan that would change history.

Forever.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

THE YEAR 255 — THE PLAGUE COMES TO ORSCHILD. The Plague first appears in the city of Berida. It soon spreads around the province. When it disappears in 258, it has claimed a third of the population.

THE YEAR 279 — CYRUS COMES TO ORSCHILD. Cyrus' travels bring him to Orschild. Though he is not there for long, his visit provokes riots, which have to be quelled by the Church. Members of the Bernon family are said to have attended the sermons in secret.

THE YEAR 281 — THE FOUNDING OF THE INQUISITION. The Inquisition is founded and its agents soon appear in Orschild. The first witch burnings are met with strong protests.

THE YEAR 286 — THE ARRIVAL OF THE SAU. The Sau kin arrives in Orschild after the Great Exodus. They settle in abandoned villages and are soon targeted by the Inquisition. Several of their numbers who are marked by the Curse are branded heretics and burned.

THE YEAR 312 — Marquis Jerome is interred into the mausoleum at Nordel.

The Rebellion of the Sovereigns

(The Year 555 to 764)

The growing distrust of the Church was not confined to Orschild. In many of the other provinces, opinion was turning towards freedom, especially among the nobility. Gradually freedom fighters from Bervoche and Galatien found their way into Orschild and stirred the boiling pot. They soon came into contact with the Bernon family, and convinced them that there should be an armed rebellion against the Church. Soon the current head of the kin, Gideon Bernon, traveled round the

The Council of the Kin

The Sau have long been ruled by a council of their most prominent members. The head of the council is also the head of the kin, and it is at the hands of these dwarves that the future of the whole kin is decided. The council is made up of twelve members each responsible for one different organization within the kin.

After the council was established, five hundred years ago, it was made an official part of Orschilder law. The council acts as a court for criminals, a merchant guild for the dwarves, and even as an unorthodox governor. This means that it has considerable power, and this marked the turning point for the kin. The seal of council is protected fearfully by them. If it ever loses its authority, it will be the beginning of the end.

province and gathered support. Of all his family he most believed in Orschild's right to decide for itself, free from the Marquis, and his conviction inflamed those around him. Spreading the message of freedom he burned like a wildfire through the country. Wherever he went, people listened to what he had to say, and support for his cause erupted. However, he did not have enough armed support to openly defy Ravarra. His province was cut off from support and surrounded by the Church on four sides. In places like Bervoche and Luceria support could be drawn from the close proximity of many allies, but Orschild needed more assistance. So it was that Gideon approached the dwarves who had suffered so much at the hands of the Inquisition. A pact was struck and Orschild rose up in armed rebellion against its masters. Those armies that could get through from the nearby rebelling provinces linked up with the Bernons. The Church, threatened by enemies from every direction, began to lose ground.

The war hung in balance for many years. In some counties the people openly declared their independence and raised arms against the Church. In other places, the Church held the people in a firm grip of fear. Even though there was no love for the Church in their hearts, they did not dare oppose their oppressors because of the threat of eternal damnation and infernal torments. In other places still, there were people that were loyal to the Church, but they were few, and support for the Rebellion grew stronger every day.

Gradually the victories came. The dwarves proved themselves again and again in battle, increasing the people's sense of gratitude towards them. Over a hundred years after Gideon Bernon had first raised arms in rebellion the decisive victory was won in the fields outside Resna. A combined force of dwarves and humans defeated three knightly orders. The cathedral of Resna was desecrated. The Archbishop was dethroned. The head of the Bernon family disbanded the knightly orders and declared Orschild independent.

But the war was not over yet. The orders refused to give up, although defeat seemed almost inevitable.

Eventually the Lord and the Sau drove the Church out of Orschild, when they defeated three Grand Masters of the knightly orders. The Archbishop, who had remained in Orschild to organize resistance, was declared guilty of treason and executed.

The dignitaries of the Church were enraged at the failure. Many high-ranked members of the Church's inner echelons wanted to make an effort to reclaim the province, but the orders of knights and warrior monks were exhausted by almost two centuries of war. There was no way they could recapture what they had lost.

The breakaway was confirmed and religion was declared illegal in Orschild. The current head of the Bernon family — Orben Bernon — became Lord of Orschild. The nobles were granted land as thanks to their efforts and losses in the war. The pact with the dwarves was kept and they also gained land and power.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

THE YEAR 567 — GIDEON BERNON TAKES UP ARMS. Gideon Bernon and his supporters first take up arms against the Church. The dwarves and several of the other provinces aid them.

THE YEAR 678 — THE VICTORY AT RESNA. The cathedral at Resna is desecrated in the most decisive battle of the war. Orschild claims it is free from the Church.

THE YEAR 745 — THE CHURCH LEAVES ORSCHILD. The Church is driven out of Orschild, leaving only a few dignitaries imprisoned by the freedom fighters.

THE YEAR 746 — THE BLOOD BATH IN RESNA. The remaining Church dignitaries imprisoned in Resna are executed outside the palace on the charge of treason. Several hundred priests, monks, and bishops are killed. The Church declares the act 'the worst kind of heresy'.

The Years of Silence

(The Year 765 to 1136)

After its war of freedom, Orschild kept pretty much to itself. People returned to the way of life which they had known before the rebellion, though their new masters were the nobility, and their new religion was freedom of thought and speech — as long as one did not speak well of the Church, of course.

The Lords of the province were preoccupied with restoring law and order, and the dwarves were trying to establish themselves in their newfound position of respect. Rumors emerged of dwarves left in the mountains, but the Sau who would have their ancestors forgotten vehemently denied these. In their minds the traitors in the mountains were long since dead. However, the heads of the kin begin to toy with the idea of reunion with the other kin who had made the journey. They believed that their position made them best equipped to organize this.

Then fresh, almost undeniable rumors float down from the mountains. The Church claimed that the dwaves had tried to open the Iron Gate. Though the Sau continued to deny the existence of those dwarves, several people began to mutter about the evils of the short people.

Also a great jealousy over the dwarves' lands and their skill and expertise in craftsmanship had started to spread among the people. Undoubtedly, the dwarves were not like everybody else. They were different.

Although the dwarf persecutions did not reach anywhere near the heights seen in the rest of the world there was great prejudice. One governor publicly lynched several dwarf craftsmen and the Sau immediately declared war upon the



The Marquis King

When the One revealed himself to Amarus, he became one of the first Marquis, but before then he had been a nobleman and a king. When he died, his remains were taken to Orschild. During the Rebellion of the Sovereigns, they were captured by freedom fighters and lost to the Church. The holy Marquis asked that Amarus, as a member of the Church, be returned to them.

But the Lord of Orschild claimed that Amarus was a king, and should thus be kept among the free provinces. Immediately a heated argument was sparked, and it looked like there would be a second war, when a compromise was reached. It was agreed that the Church should be allowed to take the skull and the top half of the body, but that Orschild should keep the limbs and the bottom half. But because the Church would not allow anybody to open his coffin, it had to be cut in half. The top half was transported to Ravarra and the bottom half remained in Orschild. The trouble is that there was no way to give the arms to Orschild without defiling the body, and still today the argument rages on about who is the rightful owner of the arms of Marquis Amarus.

Grender family. The Lord stepped in to prevent hostilities. Despite this, a bitter feud developed, which has lasted through the generations.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

THE YEAR 780 — THE SECOND ECLIPSE. The Second Eclipse occurs and Vaun Vuriche attempts to open the Iron Gate. This sparks off evil rumors about the dwarves which are denied by the Sau.

THE YEAR 797 — THE TROUBLE IN BERIDA. The Marquis of Cergovia is captured purely out of coincidence when he is travelling through Orschild incognito. The Lord of Orschild tries using him as a bargaining device in organizing free trade with the Church. After several rescue attempts the Church eventually concedes to his demands and the dwarfen governor who captured the Marquis is rewarded.

THE YEAR 835 — THE DWARF LYNCHINGS. The governor of a county near Nordel publicly lynches dwarves. A feud develops between the Grender family and the Sau. The latest in the line — Sturm Grender— will found the Freedomers several hundred years later.

THE YEAR 945 — THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT. A free trade agreement is signed which will allow Orschild to reopen trading routes with its most important partners, like Bervoche and Cavala.

The Second Elf War

(The Year 1137 to 1195)

Concerned with its own problems, Orschild remained blissfully unaware of the activities of Marquis Geniah. The exodus of the two elfin vassals and their kin echoed through the province, but since they did not pass through, the rumors of strange goings on at the court did not reach the ears of the Lord until many years later. This explains why Orschild was totally unprepared when scouts reported large elfin and church armies massing in Cavala, Cergovia and Merodak.

Immediately, Orschild mustered an army of its own, and alliances were negotiated with Galatien, Avernus and Bervoche. But the Bernons' province was the first to be attacked, and it was cut off from support on virtually all sides. Thus, it had to stand almost unaided against the tide of elves, warrior monks and Knights Templar, which engulfed the land. Unsurprisingly, the Bernons' army was beaten back. The Lord and what was left of the army fled, and the edges of the province fell. However, a valuable commodity had been bought: time. The other Lords could mount a greater resistance and more organized alliances, and so the struggle of Orschild had not been in vain. Without its efforts the Church could have won the war before it even had begun.

For Orschild, the rest of the war was extremely costly. Bitter struggles between the army and the Church wrought destruction upon the province. Thanks to the tenacity of the dwarves and the Lord, Resna was not taken, and it continued to be used as a staging arena for the free provinces. The people lived with constant war and continued to go about a semblance of their ordinary lives. It looked as though all the fighting and the sacrifices would be in vain as the Church continued to press forward. That is, until an unexpected ally came to the aid of the Lords. There was a celebration in the province on the day that Malachdrim and his elves gave their swords to the cause of freedom. Finally the Church could be pushed back out of Orschild entirely and the tide of war could be turned. At the end, the descendant of Gideon Bernon once again led his forces in victory against the Church at the Battle of Catament. Queen Ketura ended the alliance, and the Church was driven out of the free province again.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

THE YEAR 1144 — ORSCHILD IS ATTACKED BY MARQUIS GENIAH. Orschild is the first province to be attacked by Marquis Geniah and the elves. A quick resistance is organized but Orschilds' army is beaten back. Much of the province is occupied.

THE YEAR 1165 — GEMORION IS SCARRED. Gemorion fights Cenobius Sau and is almost killed.

THE YEAR 1175 — THE ALLIANCE WITH MALACHDRIM. The elf Malachdrim pledges his support to the free provinces in front of the Lords of Bervoche, Orschild and Galatien. He is promised lands in Galatien in return for his help.

1195 — THE BATTLE OF CATAMENT. The Church is defeated at the battle of Catament and the free provinces win the war. Orschild is regained.

The Years of Trouble

(The Year 1196 to 1279)

The Second Elf War had left Orschild in a bad state. The only ones who gained from the war were the dwarves, who had been granted much new land out of gratitude for their services in battle. But it had also given it an enormous sense of pride — they had held out against the odds. The people of Orschild were also rewarded with an even deeper feeling of mistrust towards the Church.

The lord at the time decided that Orschild must be adequately defended, should the need arise again. So it was, that with the aid of the dwarves, Orschild was made ready, should disaster ever strike again. The natural fortifications were reinforced and the city walls were made yet higher. The general resolve was that never again should their ancient land have to suffer under the rule of an outside power, especially not the Church. This rebuilding meant that Orschild

The Venerable Grand Master

Within an organization that is as secretive and hidden as the Brothers of the Rose, there will naturally be dissent and rumors within the order itself. One of the oldest is the story of the venerable Grand Master. According to many of the younger members of the order, the Sublime Grand Master is not the descendant of Attamens. According to 'reliable sources' this is only a facade, established after the fourth Sublime Master was assassinated by the Knight of Junerus when the latter was possessed by a Cerite. To prevent anything like that ever happening again, the Venerable and Sublime Grand Masters swapped places. The true descendant of Marquis Attamens is therefore the current Venerable Vaster. The Sublime Grand Master, in turn, is only the true Venerable Master. There is no way to prove the truth of this rumor of course, but that does not stop the speculation.

slipped out of world politics for a while, but they did not make the mistake of former generations and kept up to date with events outside their borders.

The Twilight

(The Year 1280 Onward)

Orschild was unaware, as was the rest of the world, of the alliance between Marquis Lazarus and the former elfin vassal Malachdrim, and of their search for the key to the mysteries of the Iron Gate. But the event that shook the world did not pass Lord Gideon by. He knew as much of the opening of the Iron Gate as the rest of the world, but he, as many of the other Lords, did not comprehend its true significance at the time. Then, Lazarus declared his conversion, and that of Merodak, and as streams of refugees poured through the border of Orschild, it was understood that the heretics wanted war with the world. However, Gideon still trusted Lazarus more than he did the Church, and even as temporary camps were set up for the thousands who had escaped "conversion", guards checked through the newcomers to discover any potential infiltrators from the Inquisition.

As Malachdrim pushed further down into Galatien declaring all former alliances broken, and as Lazarus mustered for war, the general feeling among many of the advisers in the courts around the country began to be that the Church was not the main enemy. Perhaps an agreement with some of the Marquis would be profitable. But Lord Gideon remembered everything that had been done to fight the Church in the past. He decided that the Church had not been fought for hundreds of years only so that they would be invited back in at the first sign of trouble. So, even though enemies surrounded him, he did not let up on any restrictions leveled at the Church. Any pilgrims, priests, and Knights Templar, who entered into Orschild were expelled under threat of force. And advisors that opposed this program of hostility found themselves imprisoned for treason.

Meanwhile, the Sau kin worked on the plan that had began to grow in their minds during the years of silence. They wanted to unite the dwarfen kin, but the resistance they had met had shown them that this could never be achieved until the truth of their heritage was revealed.

So it was that the greatest champion of the age, Celak Sau, was dispatched to lead an expedition into the mountains, to the ancestral home of the dwarves.



The Dwarf States

There are no true dwarfen governors. No dwarf rules any of the twelve counties. However, a number of the most high-ranking Sau have been given small areas of land to rule independently of the real governors. Though these are not proper counties, their masters are still known as the Dwarfen Governors, and the land they control are called the Dwarfen States.

Most inhabitants of the Dwarfen States are actually dwarves themselves, but there are also some humans – who find it odd to conform to the strange rules and regulations of dwarfen society. But, gradually, bit by bit, these people have come to be more like dwarves. They have begun to be possessed of the same dedication, tirelessness, and ferocity so evident in their shorter cousins. The Freedomers hate these people, calling them 'Human Sau', but they are perhaps an indication that there can be a future for the dwarves in Orschild.

Now!

Orschild finds itself once again under threat. For the fourth time in its history it has to fight to keep its independence from outside rule. Many are unsure of what to do, and Lord Gideon refuses to accept any restrictions on the freedom of Orschild.

But this time its inhabitants are not united under the same cause, as they have always been before. Jealousy towards the dwarves calls the nobility to a different banner. Unable to see the greater picture petty governors start the process that will lead to war with the province's ancient allies. They believe they are acting in the best interests of Orschild as they prepare to topple Gideon and the Sau, but their folly could doom them to slavery.

At the same time the dwarves are trying to unite their kin in a mission which grows more hopeless as Celak presses on. Where is the evidence of their past that will explain why they separated, and that will hold the power to once again unite the mightiest warrior kin of the world?

In the background are the forces that have always wanted rule of the Bernons' land. The Darkness sews its cults among misled citizens and reaches ever deeper into the heart of the courts. The Church, in the form of the Inquisition, tries to convert the hearts and minds of the people, so that by accenting the threat of the Darkness they can resume their former ruler.

Orschild is divided into twelve counties, each ruled by a governor. They stretch from the high, rocky land of the Pendarens in the east, to the flatter farming fields of Cavala in the west. Most of the land is very uneven and high. These highlands cover the entire western part of the province and surround the city of Resna. Rivers that flow westward connect it to Cavala and Cergovia, and ancient roads that cut through

And the Brotherhood of the Rose, acting in what they believe are the interests of the Church, conspire to infiltrate and spread disorder where they can.

Lord Gideon cannot seem to hold his province together and is driven deeper into his despair at his own inadequacies.

He must live up to his heritage and once again save his province from its enemies.

IMPORTANT EVENTS

THE YEAR 1281 – THE CONVERSION OF MERODAK. Refugees storm over the border into temporary camps that have been set up. Conflicts and suspicions mean that many carry on to the more hospitable Ravarra.

THE YEAR 1286 – THE BATTLE AT NORDEL. Lord Gideon leads a company of knights in a victory against the Brothers of the Cross, who are escorting pilgrims through Ravarra.

THE YEAR 1291 – THE SEARCH FOR THE HERITAGE OF THE DWARVES. Celak Sau and his expedition leave for the mountains where they will try to find the lost past of their kind.

THE YEAR 1291 – THE BLOOD BATH OF RESNA. A dozen or so incompetent advisors who have been imprisoned over recent years are executed.

THE YEAR 1292 – THE FIRST SETTLEMENT IS REACHED. Celak Sau reaches the first dwarfen settlement and dispatches a messenger back to Cenobius Sau to tell of what he has found.

Orschild

Jerimis lay on the ground and thought of everything he had seen and done in the last few weeks. Around him were a thousand or more men, women and children who had shared the experience of flight through a foreign land. He did not know where his own family was, and even if he had his suspicions he refused to acknowledge them. They would find each other when he reached Ravarra. For a young boy such as himself, it had been frightening and strange when the priests and the knights who he had always admired had attacked and burned his village to the ground. He had been tending to the sheep when the orange flames first danced across the thatched rooftops. That's when the dream had begun, and it was only just now beginning to give in to the light of the shrouded sun.

He had been one of thousands of refugees as they crossed the border in torrential rain, which had turned the roads into the mud that wanted to suck him under. Then he had slept under the stars. At the border they had been met by a lot of knights, which weren't like the ones that he was used to – they were Orschild's knights. They had told them to move to a camp that had been set up. A few of them got taken away by the knights – those of them who looked like priests or monks.

Then they had crossed the mountains. It had been cold even though it was summer. Some of the kids had played in the snow until one of them got lost. Someone told him that they found him later, but they weren't allowed to play after that. A kind man who looked like his uncle had fed him and helped him past that inhospitable place. Every night riders came and went through the crowds. Sometimes they had bread with them.

Coming down from the mountains they crossed a great river. Jerimis had thought that there would be fewer hills now, like in Merodak. But there were still a lot of ups and downs, with beautiful valleys and high crags. It had gotten warmer and they had passed what the kind man who looked like his uncle had said was a very holy place. One of the old Marquis had been buried there, so it must have been very important. But the riders did not let them stay there very long. Soon after, they had come to the camp where there had been a lot of other refugees. They had recieved hot food when they arrived, and the children had been allowed to play again. The kind man had said he would take Jerimis to the cathedral at Ravarra. Jerimis did not really want to go, but in the hope that his mother could be there, he would.

He liked Orschild, with all its lovely climbable rocks and rivers and holy places. But he would carry on with the others, the ones from his home.

The Ring of the Prince

Several stories have always circulated around the mysterious and adventurous part of Resna known as the Underworld. For some reason, there is something that attracts people to the excitement of that life. One of the legends concerns the ring of the third prince of Orschild. According to the stories, it was stolen off his finger by a scarlet man, a thief of legend. The thief later lost it as part of a marriage arrangement. What happened to it after that is confused, but it is definitely hidden somewhere in the thieves' quarter, on the finger of some poor street girl who does not understand its significance. This story is especially popular among the poor. For them, it symbolizes their struggle to prove themselves as worthy as the rich.

the hills joins it to Ravarra and the rest of the world. It is a fairly hostile land, with hundreds of crevices and natural fortifications that serve it well in its current situation. Before it split away from the Church its central position and proximity to Ravarra gave it great trading status. However, in recent years, cut off from its allies by the Church and the elves, it has come to be almost suffocated.

The Counties and the Governors

The first king of the province originally created the counties when it was founded. He split the land between the generals of his armies, his family and friends. This created the divisions that largely remain to this day, and the noble families that rule them.

It is a system that has remained for thousands of years, with minor modifications brought about by outside influences. These days, the ruler of a county is known as its governor. Mostly, these governors will also have another title, which is hereditary, such as the Earl of Nernes. There is a direct correlation between the size of a governor's land and the importance of his second title, but technically, the governors are all equal in political power. Originally there were twelve families which ruled Orschild, but the pact with the dwarves, and several years of war have changed this. Today there are only ten. Of these, the four most important are the Sau, the Bernons, the Gregarians, and the Setrens. The other noble families must scheme and intrigue to gain greater status.

The Sau

The Sau are unique among the noble families for three reasons. Firstly, they cannot trace their ancestors back to the time of the kings of Orschild, as they only arrived in the province following the Great Exodus of their people. Secondly, they do not directly rule any of the counties, though they do control parts of them. Lastly and most obviously – though perhaps not most importantly – they are not human. They are described in greater detail later on in this book, in the chapter 'The Sau'.

The Bernons

The Bernons are the family of Lord Gideon, and they have always been the Lords of Orschild. They claim to be direct descendants of King Ceric and rule the county of Resna as well. The current governor of Resna is Dalton Bernon, who is Lord Gideon's younger brother.

The Gregarians

The Gregarians can trace their line all the way back to one of the greatest figures of ancient Orschild. They were originally called the Gregars and their founder was one of the first king's most prominent generals, Lord Carmon. They are often the subjects of controversy, owing to the allegations that this general eventually turned against his king. The Gregarians control the counties of Berida and Nernes. The current head of the family is Herd Gregarian, the governor of Berida.

The Setrens

The Setrens were not originally particularly powerful, but they have risen to control the single largest domain of any of the families, because of an almost prophetic ability to ally with the great Lords. They were probably the first family to ally with Gideon Bernon, and he repaid them. Then they were the greatest opponents of the Church during the Second Elf War, and were quick to capitalize. They are the only family to control three counties: Lenes, Lorntern, and Nordel. The current head of the family is Norden Setren.

A governor in Orschild fulfils much the same role as described in any general explanation of a governor's duties. They have pretty much total control over what laws and punishments are prevalent in their counties, but Gideon has been known to constantly exercise his right to pardon those whom the governor has found guilty. This is a necessary evil in a time when many of the governors have inappropriate political sympathies. Even so, it has nonetheless made him increasingly unpopular among those in his own class who resent the interference and humiliation. They are also required to provide an unusually large amount of soldiers and knights for the Lord's army. Though most see the wisdom in this, it has only rubbed salt in the wounds of the others. Because of this, many governors would like to see the Lord replaced.

The Bailiffs

The bailiffs are the petty officials responsible for the day to day affairs in Orschild's counties. Each bailiff is personally appointed by the governor and needs only his approval to start working. When a governor dies, his son typically will replace any bailiffs with appointees from amongst his friends. A few of his father's younger officials will remain to teach the new blood. This has proven to be an effective means to secure their loyalties. As long as the governor remains the bailiff's position is fairly secure. If he should die or disappear, however, the bailiff is most likely out of a job. Several families within each county have come to monopolize these positions, By being closely associated with the governor's family – thus assuring that their sons are the ones that the governor's son is most likely to play with as a child.

The bailiffs are often responsible for the tax collecting and the day to day maintenance of order in one village or group of farms. Larger cities, like Resna, can have as many as fifty bailiffs. Most places will have only one, and most governors only require the services of one or two.

The Thrones of Rock

These two mighty pinnacles of rock stretch their tips towards the skies of Le'ne's. As well as the name given to them by affectionate historians and geographers, they are called the Thrones. One is the Throne of the King, the second is the Throne of the Prince. It is rumored that it was in front of these mystical mountains that the first king was crowned, and not in Resna as is thought by most scholars. Popular legend in Le'ne's definitely says so. The stories claim that after the king and his son were hurled into the waters, the mysterious spirit in the Lake of the Dead took them to rule Orschild once more from the pinnacles – and that they watch over Orschild from their heavenly seats.

A career as a bailiff is seen as very desirable for two reasons. Firstly, it allows the person to keep in close contact with the Lord and therefore it offers many opportunities for self promotion. Secondly, a bailiff has a small garrison of soldiers under his command – usually four or five – to help him collect taxes and keep the peace.

The Peasants

The peasantry is largely unchanged by the troubles in Orschild. They still continue with their lives unless something comes and hits them on the head, like a war. It does not really matter to them if Lord Gideon, Lord Orwen, or Lord Sau is on the throne in Resna. Their lives will not change much. However, this does not mean that they do not care. In fact, no great political movement would work without the support of the peasants. There would have been no revolution against the Church, there would be no dwarf persecutions, and there would be no large heretic cults if it wasn't for them. They tend to lend their support to one party or another, even though the parties themselves do not care too much for them. The peasants are the greatest supporters of Lord Gideon.

The Merchants

The merchants care for one thing only: profit. They will favor whoever will give them the best chance of gaining it, though a rare few have political principles of a non-monetary nature. At the moment, this means opposing the dwarves and supporting whoever promises the most stability and open minded trade relations. Unlike the peasants, they oppose Gideon, as they see him as a paranoid madman who will give the province to the Sau, while cutting off the province from any outside trade.

The Armies

Gideon's armies are organized into three groups : the peasantry, the knights, and the commanders. The peasantry makes up the bulk of the armies and is composed of men-at-arms and longbowmen. Each governor will usually supply about a hundred peasant soldiers in times of war, and half as many again if the situation is desperate. They are relatively badly trained, and commanded by soldiers from the castle garrison. The knights are the sons of the nobility, and wear heavy suits of armor and high quality swords. Usually a governor will be able to supply only one or two of these as their equipment is very expensive. Often the governor will be a knight himself. The commanders are the sons of noblemen who have decided to make fighting their way of life; they are the professional warriors and draw up the battle plans from a comfortable distance.

The Countryside

Life in the countryside is slow. Any developments in the rest of the world will reach them last. They are also isolated and cut off. The patchy news that reaches these places is often incomplete, and so the danger of political groups is not fully appreciated. Newcomers will be viewed with distrust at first. Once they are accepted, they will be totally relied upon, and people speaking out against a long-term villager will be instantly disliked. This means that they are ideal breeding grounds for revolutionary anti-dwarf groups, as well as dark cults and church organizations. A dark priest can move into these places, set up a trade for a few years, and slowly spread a very strong cult which will be accepted by the majority of the villagers, and any investigators that attempt to crush the cult will be violently opposed.

The Towns

In the towns, life is much more changeable. Politics, trade, and life flutters like a pennant in the breeze as revolutionary ideas and speakers hit them very quickly. This has made the towns people very skeptical and less vulnerable to conspirators. But it is also in the towns where the true power and anonymity resides. Therefore, it is on these places that Lazarus and the Marquis concentrate their efforts – whereas the Freedomers favor the countryside, as that is where racial prejudice and the governors are strong.

Resna

Ferrer drummed his fingers on the desk and fiddled with the pearl-studded signet ring. Its mark was the same one that innumerous weavers all over Orschild sought tirelessly. Those that had it protected it fiercely. Yet in recent years it had not been enough. Before the Sau, this symbol had commanded the power to buy people security. It had guaranteed safety and a happy life for thousands of honest craftsmen. The only silks and cloths that fetched real prices were those that carried the symbol of his guild. But the Sau had changed all that.

Their goods were always solid and durable, and of the highest quality. Soon the seal of the guild did not matter as much. The people had learned that the word of a dwarf was worth as much as the guild's approval. It did not seem strange to him, in light of this, that resentment had grown. He had seen members of his guild reduced to abject poverty because of competition from the Sau. And the weavers were not the ones hardest hit. He could only imagine what it must be like for the smiths.

But he was a businessman, and he did not hate the dwarves for doing as well as they could. The Freedomers created disorder and fear; they were as bad for business as the dwarves had ever been. He looked again at the proposal which lay on the surface in front of him: An unsigned message, a call to join Orwen Bernon, the Lord's lost son.

It had truly gone further than he had imagined. Getting up he looked out of his window at the city that sprawled out below. It teemed with activity, thousands of people. If they were turned to the banner of Gideon's mad son, they would be a frightening army indeed.

He returned from the window to his desk. No matter how bad the situation, he could never accept this sort of proposal. He understood what it might lead to.

Conversely, he knew that many of his colleagues would not be so wise.

Resna is the center of Orschild, and it is therefore appropriate that it resides in the heart of the province. It is still close enough to the Pendarens to be surrounded by a cluster of low hills, but also far enough to preside over a substantial area of good farming land. All the roads of the province connect to the capital, and it is home to the largest city in the province, as well as to the court of Lord Gideon and his advisors.

The governor of Resna is in fact not the Lord. Lord Gideon is too preoccupied with ruling Orschild to have time for ruling Resna as well. And so it is, that Resna has its own governor, who is traditionally of the Bernon family. This governor tends to hold the greatest influence over life in Orschild when compared to his peers. This is partly because of his relation to the Lord, but more importantly because of the importance of Resna. In terms of trade and politics, Resna far surpasses the other counties. Thus, the current governor, Dalton Bernon, is one of the most powerful men in Orschild. His political affiliations, are of extreme importance, and it is fortunate for the province that he has shown himself to be a very stable and honest ruler. Furthermore, he has been totally supportive of his brother. As long as Dalton rules Resna, Gideon can feel safe from attacks close at home.

The people of Resna do not worry as much about the political situation as do the people of the rest of the province. Within the heartland of Orschild the Darkness and the Church have still not managed to exude their influence. Of all the political factions, only the Freedomers have established themselves properly near the capital. Because of this, the people of Resna are far more relaxed and friendly then those further towards the borders.

Meredia

Noed leaned his weight onto the blade of his shovel, then brought it up with a black parcel of potato roots and writhing worms, within which he picked out another prime bunch of fresh produce. He discerned that the pile that now lay to the right of him constituted enough work to finish his day, and began the tiring task of wheeling them back to the master's storage.

It was still a bit early, but he was in a hurry today. He wanted to get away before the twilight began to hand itself over to a more complete darkness. He had a meeting to attend.

It had been only days ago that his fellow workers had told them about the man in the village– a man who could perform miracles, they had said. He had scoffed at them but secretly hoped. Now his head was better than it had ever been before. The aches did not come as much any more. He was happy. The hooded man had simply laid his hand on his forehead, and truly he had been soothed. This was nothing special, he had said then. It was a power which all of mankind possessed, if only they let themselves be free. Then he had talked about Cyrus, which had worried Noed a bit, but nobody else seemed to mind. He soon realized that everything he had been told about the dark martyr was a lie made up by the Church. Even his Lord had said the Church was evil. And the man did indeed make him feel better than he had in many years. That's why he had to go to the meeting today: he wanted to be free. Free from the pain.

Meredia will live forever in Resna's shadow. Many of the major maps do not even feature the main city of one of the very smallest counties of Orschild. It is ironic that Meredia rests on some of the most fertile land anywhere in the province. The narrow strip of land feeds most of Resna, but still it has always been in the background of events in Orschild. It has been ruled by one family, the Weardens, since the rebellion, and since then it has featured only once in the history of Orschild – during the Second Elf War when it fed the besieged counties nearby.

The current ruler, Rodnel Wearden, has been governor of his province for over fifty years. He has seen the tide of events ebb and flow, and like his county, he has let all of this pass over him without so much as a ripple to signify its passing. He neglects to attend most of the minor meetings between the governors, and is famous for missing the birth of Gideon's youngest daughter. Were it not for the fact that Resna was so close by, he might no even have been aware of the conversion of Merodak.

The Meredians are much like their lord. Most of the inhabitants of the county are farmers of one type or another, and they have very little desire to involve themselves in world affairs. This makes them the perfect target for dark cults and Church sects, but the proximity of the capital of Orschild has saved the farming community from this fate. Only this geographical fact has kept them informed about world events. Both the Freedomers, and the Darkness, still see Meredia as the easiest way into Resna.

Berída

Eldes had emerged out of his home early that morning, and for once it had proved worth it. The tip that the wagons would be arriving that day had once again shown the reliability of the toll staff's predictions. Already ambitious traders were setting up stalls, hoping that they could get rid of their goods before the others had even woken up. An early riser could have the pick of the goods if he was quick. The merchants were flocking on the scene, negating this advantage. If he were one of them, he would have had only a few minutes now to make use of the quiet hours before sunrise; soon there would be a cacophony of haggling and the clink of coins. He was looking for somebody specific – someone who had said that he would make himself known.

He passed agilely between the carts and canvas, ducking furs, and dodging persistent jewelry sellers. Gold and goods worth more than he could possibly imagine would pass through during the following months, he knew this. This would all go to feed the greed and depravity of gluttonous men. And with this money would come the sins and the women of flesh.

Money would breed sin, and sin led to Darkness.

He knew this to be true. His father had raised him to know this, and his brothers within the sect all knew this as well. Only devotion to the One and his law could prevent them from sinking back into the depths of heresy, which had existed before the Enlightenment. In Merodak, only across the border from his home, the influence of the Darkness had already turned many minds. And in Galatien, to the southeast, Lazarus' foul ally Malachdrim prepared the armies of his kind. But the Church understood the forces at work in Orschild, which was why he was looking through the market. He had been entrusted to help the holy servant of the One. Once he found the inquisitor, he would guide him to Resna. From there the man of the Church would be able to discover the enemies of the Marquis, through which the holy leaders of the Church would be able to lead the province back to salvation.

He knew that he would find this man named Jenius, and that he would act as the hands of the One. Through him they would all bask in the heavenly glory of the divine Lord.

Berida remains one of the most important counties in the whole province. Its capital is the first city most visitors to Orschild arrive at, as it is the city on the main trading route that is closest to Ravarra. Most merchants head towards Resna along this route, and almost all of them stop at Berida first. The county has profited greatly from this. Few merchants pass up the opportunity to sell their goods as quickly as possible, so they are all quite willing to set up shop in the various towns and villages throughout the county. So it has been that a lot of the best goods have already been sold by the time the wagons arrive in Resna. This has given the southerners an undeserved reputation has opportunistic fortune hunters, something that makes them ferociously angry. It has also instilled a feeling of independence, and they have always been among those who most ardently support Orschild's freedom in times of war.

The county is ruled by the Gregarian family, and is the most important source of their power. The family that controls Berida is the family that controls domestic prices within the rest of the province. The current governor is the head of the Gregarian family.

Were it not for the happy circumstance of the trading route, the county might be best known for its beauty. It has been said of Berida that it is 'all of the land in the world wrapped in a bright ribbon', and it is true that it holds almost all a nature lover could ask for. It has forests, rolling hills, rocky crags, glassy lakes, and a vast multitude of flowers and animals. It is typical of Orschild that so much exists in such a small area of land. With this it manages to support a large farming community.

Rumera

Ulther put the pile of wood deep down into the basket and quickly surveyed just how much they had for the winter. He estimated that with the lot outside there would be enough to meet the seasonal demands of his family. The winter months were cold indeed, and this year there would be another baby to look after as well. She looked healthy enough now, but even a simple flu could be deadly at that age, he knew. The miller had lost his son that way. He had vowed that the same fate would never befall any of his children.

Leaving the stove, he went upstairs to their bedroom and looked in on his son and two daughters as they slept peacefully in the bed. Creeping in softly, he kissed them all once on their cheeks, then tiptoed out, shutting the door behind him. He quickly went in to where his wife lay sleeping as well. Stroking his yet unborn child and kissing the mother, he walked downstairs.

He wished they could know but realized that they would never understand. He would never do anything to hurt them, but he knew his duty. He pulled on his winter coat and boots, then trudged out into the early snows. Walking away from the cottage he entered the forest. The snow lay heavier here and he hurried to get to the place. There were wolves in the forest, and sometimes they ventured further out than one expected.

The torch in his hand gave glimpses of the eerie landscape: green pines, dark earth, and the glorious purity of white that was the snow. He loved the snow. It always reminded him of everything that was beautiful in life; cold, delicate, soft. Like love and happiness, it swept the land in a perfect serenity two months of every year. It meant an end to all the traders, merchants, foreigners and city folk who seemed to pollute the county every summer. On a dark night like this, it sparkled magically with the reflections of the stars and the moon. A sound behind him broke his reverie, and it took him a few moments to realize that someone was calling his name.

Turning, he saw his best friend come running towards him. Turim had helped him skin those elks for sale and was probably wondering what price they had fetched. He stopped and clapped his friend on the back, expecting him to break into speech, but he only stared solemnly and pointed. Ulther understood, but he had not realized that they were so close. Almost reluctantly, he turned to face the man Turim was staring at— Turim and all the others who had come to this place. The man in the center spoke.

"Welcome brothers. Tonight I will speak from the Gospel of Immanuel. Join me and find freedom."

Rumera is a harsh and unforgiving land. To the east it is dominated by the rocky impassive face of the Pendarens; their hand covers the whole province. High crags litter the landscape, and rolling hills filled with rocks make farming an impossible dream. But still people have managed to eke out an existence, even a comfortable life, from the windswept and blasted cliffs. The people attribute this to two things. Firstly there is the Berrer Forest, which shades the western half of the county in a leafy green. Amongst its trunks there are a vast number of boar and fowl. The hunters of Rumera have gained a modest amount of fame throughout the years for their unsurpassable woodsman's skills. Secondly, there is the Monesora River, hailed and loved by the rest of the inhabitants. It provides the county with its only truly fast mode of travel, and connection to the rest of the province through Obserum. This river supports merchants and fishermen alike, and it has come to be almost worshipped, and certainly praised, by those whom it supports.

The governor of Rumera, Irkel Osern, is a traditional and tough survivor from the glory days of Orschild. He hates the Church above all else, and could almost have been one of Gideon Bernon's generals during the rebellion. He sports an extremely wild exterior with tough tanned skin and a bushy beard, and feels a close affinity with nature and the people of his province. They in return, see him very much as one of them, the tough frontiersmen who defy the elements.

Obserum

Jorden whistled and his sheepdog Aerel turned the flock of longhaired Monny sheep towards the ice cold mountain stream for a drink. without that, he had learned, they would soon become agitated and difficult to control.

He felt elated. This was the first time he had been allowed to take them this far on his own. From here he could actually see the clouds which surrounded the peaks of the Pendarens, beyond which, he knew, lay the province of Galatien.

He relaxed by the side of the stream, sticking a blade of grass between the gap in his front teeth and leaning over the side of the bank to wash his face and to quench his own thirst. The clear sharpness refreshed him and made him feel like a true explorer, as if he was the only man in the world. He liked that: he loved the solitude of watching the flock.

He decided that he would take his cares even higher, to where his father had said the untouched grass lay, where they were only taken when they were fattened up for sale. He had never been up there, where, it was said, you could see all the way back to the market in Peller. He got up decisively and whistled Aerel to call the Monnies back from their drink. Then he let them set a leisurely pace ahead of him as he strolled under the blue sky, feeling like the king of the world. It took only a couple of hours, which made Jorden feel even surer of himself. His father had always complained about the time that it took to bring the herd over the rocks; he was becoming even better than his teacher. And when he reached the plateau fields he knew straight away that it had been worth the effort; the green grass would keep the sheep happy, and he would treasure the view for hours.

Settling back in the grass, he prepared to taken in every drop of the landscape when he heard something he not expected. Whirling around he saw a man calling him for help. Behind the man crouched a couple of frightened children and a woman lay at his feet. It was only when he looked closer that he saw the arrow sticking out of the man's thigh and the woman's chest.He realized, that these people were not from Orschild.

Then his idyllic existence was disturbed by elfin war cries.

Resna has been said to be important only because of the existence of Resna, its capital, and this may be true, but is definitely debatable. With much more conviction and certainty, you could say that Obserum has its capital to thank for its significant position in the political life of Orschild. It is very much an undesirable county in terms of location and land. The Berrer forest cuts it off from the heartland of the province, and to the north it is surpassed by Lénés as the prime county. The rest of the land is rocky and hilly, with poor farming and hunting to be had, and the few mines it houses produce far less than their equivalent to the north. It survives simply because of its one city, which exists on foundations so shaky that only a large city could manage the feat. Basically there is one easy way into Orschild over the Pendarens. This is to cross over the narrowest and lowest part of their chain, which happens to be in Obserum. From here you travel down the Monesora River to the city of Obserum – which happens to be the only city for miles around. Thus the city has become an important political route towards the east, and the county has flourished.

The governor of the province is Virn Bilter, and the city is the crowning achievement of his family. It was built by the founder of his line and was based only upon his vision. Since then it has been the duty of the governors of Obserum to hold up the shaky foundation that is the basis of their power. Virn has proven himself surprisingly adept at this. He has shown a keen interest in world politics, and always makes sure that he is well informed about what is going on at the court of Lord Gideon. He has even begun to build up a network of carrier pigeons similar to those found in Bervoche. He has used the conversion of Merodak and the advancements of Malachdrim to their full extent, claiming that his county is more important than ever now – though part of this is based on a true compassion felt for the victims of the Darkness to the east.

Nordel

Holat leaned back in his chair, crossed one leg over the other, and joined the tips of his fingers in an open pyramid. Across the desk from him, one of the dangerous fire brands of his guild looked like he was about to have a fit. Looking closely, Holat believed that foam was actually pouring down the corners of his mouth.

The man was Opar, one of the men who had resented Holat's leadership of the guild. He still believed that the goldsmiths' true master was the idiot who had been exiled centuries ago. It never ceased to amaze the guild master how great the sphere of influence of the traitor still was. Rumor said that his descendant was back in Orschild, leading the Freedomers from behind the scenes. But then, rumors had a way of finding obvious answers to embarrassing questions. A great amount of shouting interrupted his reverie at this point and it seemed that Opar had recovered from his madness enough to respond.

'My Lord, you do not seem to realize the extent of this crisis.' The lengths that they went to in order to remain civil always amused Holat. He could not keep the smile from the edge of his features. One of these days they would eventually insult him to his face. He wondered briefly what they expected him to do about that.

'I am fully aware of the situation that you seem to think constitutes a crisis. Governor Hinger has chosen to go to the dwarves for his new signet ring this year. There are other contracts.'

'But my Lord, he has always come to us in the past.' Opar was actually growling with the strain of his hatred now, animal-like.

'Then he will probably do so again. In the light of the recent illness of our most skilful ring smith I hardly find it surprising that he has turned to the dwarves.'

'But this is unprecedented, Lord'.

'But not surprising. Are you afraid that their work will surpass ours?' This was always the stumbling block: they would never admit any inferiority.

'No. Of course not.'

'Then he will return to us. You may go, Opar. Now.' The smith's face flushed as if he was in his forge. He started to say something, but thought better of it. Apparently disgusted he stormed out of the room. Holat, let out his breath and relaxed.

'One day.' he thought, 'they'll put a dagger in me.'

Nordel is officially recognized as one of the truly great and powerful counties, but nobody quite seems to understand why this is so. It has no real natural resources, nor is it in a favorable position in terms of trade, and it is not advantageously situated geographically. But nobody doubts the authority of the governor of this province, nor the vast sums of money that his taxes bring in for the Lord. The truth is that Nordel is a living testimony to the idea that money makes money. It has long been the county of the rich merchants and nobles without land. The Lord is the head of the Setren family, and Nordel has long been the jewel in those nobles' crown. It is also difficult to see why so many of the rich and powerful inhabit this modest little patch of land. True, it is not an especially harsh land, but nor is it particularly beautiful or temperate. Its proximity to Cergovia is of no real advantage, and there are many counties that are as close, or closer, to Resna. It would seem that it is only the product of a happy accident. The Setrens chose to settle here when they acquired it after the Second Elf War, and they took a few hangers-on with them. Fortunately for them, a number of other rich people soon built their homes upon its rolling hills – as was the fashion of the time – and the county gained a reputation as the home of the propertied and the rich. Needless to say, the Setrens did everything they could to promote this, and once they had a few nobles under their foot, the rest quickly followed. It is the vast sums of money that these people control which leads to Nordel's profitability in terms of taxes. Their power lends its hand to that of the Setrens.

This association with money has had a pronounced effect on Nordel. A visitor would find disproportionately few tenant farmers and other common folk, compared to a ludicrous number of exuberant mansions, which cover and waste acres of farmable land. It has become a county obsessed with status, where it is important to know exactly who is above and below you, as well as a county of affected accents and strict social codes. Nordel claims that this is modern and healthy as the rest of the province looks on disapprovingly, but as long as the money keeps flowing in, Lord Gideon remains very pleased.

Luter

Kelp hauled the cart further up the shaft. He could see the light now, but that was a mixed blessing. He could also hear the abuse and the harsh encouragement from his work shift leader. If he slowed he knew that he would feel the blow of the leader's hand. A mighty last effort was required; the boss obviously wanted the cave-in cleared quickly. Not surprisingly, since the end of the summer was fast approaching, soon the merchants would leave and not come back until next year. So if the boss wanted fast money, it had to be now. And the boss always wanted as much money as he could get at this time of year. There would be the inevitable end of season competition.

The boss was related to the governor, he knew. And Lord Gideon would soon be asking for his taxes. He would be able to see which of his counties was producing the most. The boss wanted to help prove that it was this county. More importantly, he wanted it to be these mines. If his mines were producing the most, then he would get the most credit for success, and the least blame for failure. So at this time of year he always wanted everything done as quickly as possible. Becal, the shift leader, had told all the lads about that. And he had heard it from the mine boss who was his cousin. All in all, nobody begrudged this state of affairs. They knew that if they worked hard and the mine did well, they would get their share of the credit too. So they were all happy to pitch in at this time of year.

This time there had been a cave-in in the main shaft. It had happened during the night and they had discovered it in the morning. Becal had said that some malcontents had sabotaged it. It was a fairly pointless protest and one that would be quickly cleared up and forgotten. But as long as that shaft was blocked, there was not much work to be done, so all hands had been put to shifting the rubble.

But when he emerged into the twilight, he was surprised to find that nobody was standing at the entrance waiting to go down. Instead, most men were crowded round one of the other carts. Cohen was sitting to the side, hugging himself and rocking back and forth. Ino stalked towards Kelp, shaking almost uncontrollably and with a wild stare in his eyes. He came up and shook him, stuttered, shook him again, then spoke.

'They were down there. They were down there working through the night. They made them work through the night.' He turned then, and began to sob. Kelp only stared down at his cart. He had not seen it in the darkness of the mine, but the rocks were sullied. They were stained red.

Despite Obserum slightly further to the south, Luter is the main county of the east. It is far less hostile than both of its equivalents to the south, and certainly more accessible from Resna. This has allowed it to capitalize on the successes of its neighbors, and when the hunters of Rumera and the miners of Obserum want to sell their goods, it is to Luter they come. But what really makes the bastion of the east what it is must be the great mining empire it has managed to set up. The mining town of Lénés is very close to some of the richest deposits of iron in the entire ancient realm, and with this the Setren family have built their power base.

Luter is probably the most gentle of the easterly counties. The high peaks of the Pendarens shelter it from most of the bad weather and the land levels out surprisingly quickly, even allowing some large farms near the border to Meredia. The Monesora River also has one of its main sources in Lénés, allowing easy access to the south and to Ravarra. There is almost a distinct division between the eastern and western parts of the province. The miners of the east have their harsh lifestyles and rough character, in direct opposition to the more urbane and polished westerners who sell their goods. The struggle is symbolized by the capital, Gernis, in the west, and the largest town, Lénés, in the east.

The Governor of Luter is Hinger Setren. Little more than a stooge, Hinger is the brother-in-law of the head of the Setren family. He tends to keep his mouth shut and always agrees to what Nordel proposes at meetings. The only thing he does feel strongly about is the Freedomer movement, and the Sau have long had a safe haven in Luter. In return, they have been very generous about the services of their blacksmiths.



Lorntern

A sense of elation filled the minds of the One's servants. They had taken those pilgrims to the holy site of Marquis Torques in the heart of their home, under the noses of Gideon's officials. They had been like bright shadows. Surely the blessing of the One had hidden them from the eyes of the captain and his knights. Ten pilgrims to see the stone which marked the place of the miracle – it had been the cult's greatest achievement.

Only a month ago the inquisitor had contacted them. The Church had finally been made aware of their activities and had found a use for them. They worked only a couple of miles from the holy place. They could establish a regular route for the pilgrims who wanted to catch a glimpse of what the priests had talked about all this time.

The night now seemed to shine bright. The stars filled it with an almost divine radiance. Their breath crystallized before them, and they could forget that there would be no sunshine, only twilight. It was true; they could uniquely serve the One as nobody else could. It was encouragement enough, all they needed to keep their faith strong. Even their village basked in red light. Strange so long after sunset; truly the One must smile on them.

They turned to each other and their eyes spoke of a miracle. Their steps fell faster now; the smell of the hearth filled the night, and heat – an odd heat at this distance. As they stopped and took this in, one by one it dawned on them. As they turned again, their eyes spoke not of miracle, but of discovery and of fire.

Lorntern is undeniably small; it is the smallest of all the counties of Orschild, and is always treated as the Setren family's third. This constant comparison with Nordel and Luter makes an insignificant province seem even more so. Sparsely populated and very provincial, it is where the hand of time always seems to loosen its grip.

Old practices are welcomed here; they are treated the same as the new ways. With this comes old ideas and dangerously backward views. By anybody's measure, it is a hostile place, but not because of any geographical accidents, only because of the bitter enmity of its citizens. They have grounds of course. When the Church realized that here was a county that was valued only very slightly by Orschild, and one that was extremely near Cergovia, they found their foothold. Small places are easier to work with, and if these places are also especially fond of old ideas, the chances are that there might be a few Church sects knocking about. The Mission intensified its activities extensively, even going as far as to send priests to hold sermons in the border villages. The Darkness, for its part, has understood the value of Lorntern to its cause. Thus, this little county has become the focus for the oldest conflict in the world of Gemini. The governor, Beecher Setren, is fighting a permanent uphill struggle from his castle in Lorntern itself, and most of his fellow noblemen really do not care. Nor do his subjects place much faith in a gibbering, weak-minded old fool. Gideon, however, has begun to become concerned, and many of his knights have been permanently stationed there to prevent any trouble – against the wishes of his Setren advisors, it might be added.

Bonifat

The village burned fiercely, as if seeking to defy the Church as its inhabitants had done. The orange glow crackled and spat as the Knights turned their mounts back towards Cavala, back from the tormented remains of what had once been a city, back to their camp, only a few hours ride from here.

Lektet watched them go, and lent his cry of frustration to the will of the flames. He stood in the market place, surrounded by the smoking remains of the cobblers, the slowly melting anvil of the smithy, and the lives of his family. Spread out on the ground before him, lay the bodies of most of the rest of the village, frozen in the act of defending their homes. He watched, as the faceless men who had done this would not even spare the time to take him as well. Tears streamed down his face and he clutched the broad sword till his knuckles revealed the bones that supported them.

'Come on!' he cried at them. 'Turn and face me, you cowards!'. For a minute he felt that he could run and catch them, that he could make them pay for what they had done in the name of their God. But he only stood and watched as they disappeared from his view behind the hill.

He had dreaded this moment, subconsciously he had known that this meant that he had to face reality, that he would have to turn and look at the smoldering remains of what had been a life. He surveyed the destruction around him, averting his eyes from the faces of his brothers, his sister, mother, and the blacksmith.

Not yet, he would look at them, perhaps later, when he could summon up the courage. But for now, for all his sixteen years, he felt that he would lie down and cry like a child.

Bonifat is about as far from Resna as it is possible to get, and the inhabitants of this fiercely independent community could not be happier about it. Admittedly, it does mean that their power and influence are greatly dented, but they consider this a small price to pay. It is suggested that the very charismatic and outspoken governor, Earl Hereg, is mostly to credit for this attitude. What the Earl would want most is probably independence from Orschild altogether – not because of any real sense of national pride or independence, but because he will not be ruled by any who he considers weak, and he considers Gideon one of the weakest.

Life so close to Cavala has made the people of Bonifat extremely militant. This has come to be respected as a sign of worth. Strength and honor have become the foremost values. This is a grand generalization of course, but one that Hereg has promoted tirelessly. He believes that the Church should have been attacked long ago, and that the Darkness should be next. It is often at his request that Gideon sends his men to crush pilgrimages and raids, and Gideon is often more than happy to oblige. Secretly he agrees totally with Hereg, and his patronage has kept the Earl in place.

The people of Bonifat are, again, very rural. But they are tempered by the constant attacks made by the Church, giving them a suspicious and violent manner considered barbaric by much of the rest of Orschild.



Berednia

'An honest trader should not have to put up with this.' Reinult realized that his protests would achieve nothing, but felt that he had to make an effort on principle. He was used to the routine. They would go through his chests, rip out all the cloths, hoping to find something to break. He had turned from glass trader, to fine silk, and finally to coarse wool. He had been forced to, in order to sell anything. His more specialized competitors had been forced out of business by the recent 'inspections'.

'What you got in these carts?' Ah, the questioning had started. It always had the same result anyway; they would search the carts.

'Only what I had last time. Wool.'

'Can you prove that?'

'No. There is no way for me to do that.'

'Then we'll have to search 'em.' The grin almost made him want to turn away. No dye could achieve such a deep shade of black, or such a bright yellow. It was incredible that it still made them so happy. Day after day and it still made them giggle inanely.

'Go right ahead and search them. I've got nothing to hide.' He settled back, put the reins aside, and tried to get more comfortable. There was a shudder and a bump as the three men got onto the cart, but that would be the worst for now. Reinult rolled his eyes upwards and took in the clouds. A nice day for an inspection it was. The sky basked in the cool warmth of the spring blue. It was pale and refreshing, the kind of blue that lifted one's spirits. Another shudder, they had obviously decided to unload the chests. It was a shame that negotiations had broken down between the Governor and Lord Gideon. They would have to go through this for a month or so, and then, when they found no connection with the Church, they would start to talk again. At the end of the day, it was bad for trade. It allowed the traders of Joermark to gain an advantage. One of the soldiers was coming round the front. Odd, they never usually had anything to say. Maybe they were sulky because there was nothing to destroy.

'Found anything?'

'We don't like your attitude, trader. Anyway, I've got a message for you.'

'I'm listening.' The next move was as surprising as it was frightening. The soldier grabbed him by his collar and pulled him off the cart. He hit the ground hard, the air knocked out of him. He started coughing, blowing clouds of dust up over the track.

'Next time, you wanna pay us a little toll, or maybe we'll just find something. For now, we'll take a few cloaks.' Reinult would have leaped up to defend his goods like his forefathers had defended Orschild, but he couldn't find the air to do it.

He could only lie on the dirt, as Gideon's own soldiers robbed his cart.

Berednia is the heartland of the west. It is the great connector of the western counties – their link back to Resna. This is partly due to its prominent size, but mainly because of its extensive system of roads. The governor of the county, after the Second Elf War, realized that there was only one way to increase the prosperity of what was at the time a very insignificant province. The only resource available to him was the geographical position and the lack of obstructions, which made travel fairly easy. The summer breezes, the soft rains that make the county the lush green carpet that it is – all stem from its only claim to fame; it is the flattest county in Orschild, and therefore serves as the perfect pivot from which the west spins.

The governor of Berednia is the quite brilliant scholar, Deren Galar. He is very proud of the achievements of his ancestors, and is firmly committed to continuing their work. He is also a great admirer of Mordinan, and claims to base his county upon its mould. The people have gradually come to accept his views, which are merely the latest in a long line of radical ideas held by his family, but Gideon has not. The Lord suspects Deren of being one of those in favor of union with the Church. This is in fact true, but only as part of a wider view of unity, but it has nevertheless caused a great deal of friction in the past.

The people of Berednia are truly modern. They appreciate the benefits of new improvements, as this is what their whole system is based on. They are also very much for close ties and unity, as this has won them wealth. They are therefore exceptionally tolerant and open.

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Joermark

The Brothers turned to each other, but all eyes were focused only on the Knight of the East and West. He was their leader and their superior in the degrees of the holy order. Julias received their glances steadily. He had been here before; he knew the routine well. Tonight the moon flickered behind the clouds, obscuring the details of the forest, leaving only the sounds and the smells to guide them. It was just as it had been on the night when he had been only a Knight of Perfection such as them. That night he had looked for the first time on the artifact he and the others had searched for year after year – ever since he had completed the ritual to become a knight.

It had disappointed him at first. It was a flask, browned with age, containing only a trickle of liquid, almost concealed by the amount of dirt it had picked up during the millennia. Who could say how long it had been lying under the rubble of that monastery, its holy radiance concealed from the eyes of the world? A flask containing the wine of Marquis Torques – that is what they had said it was. It Contained the wine of the faithful Marquis. Then he had looked upon his leader and superior much as these knights looked upon him now. The respect was evident; they wondered what secrets he might have gleaned in the ritual – what the Knight of the Sun had told him. He had even spoken to the Venerable Grand Master, called the eyes and the ears of the Sublime Grand Master himself. And indeed he did know.

He knew that what they were searching for represented a corner stone, it was another step on the way to the reclamation of the faith. Another few steps down the path would prepare the world for the Second Coming of the One, when all would be judged, and the heretics would be found unworthy. This was what they were searching for. It was nothing less, and what could be more?

If all went well, they would find it tonight.

Joermark is another county with very pronounced Church influences. It resides far from the influence of Gideon in Resna, and is surrounded on two sides by both Cavala and Ravarra, making it a prime target for the Knights Templar and the Inquisition. Unlike Bonifat, however, Joermark has always tried to maintain a more stable existence despite this. In between raids, there is much work to create an extensive network of trade and roads. This would be very profitable for Orschild. The province has very good hunting grounds, provided by its share of the Helved Forest. This provides it with leather and meat, and more importantly, rich deposits of valuable stones. How these got there is a mystery to Orschilder scholars, but the forest definitely hides gemstones more commonly found only in the mountains of the north. Resna and Berednia, who stand much to gain from its growth, have encouraged Joermark in its efforts.

The lord of this mild and temperate southern province, covered by rich forests and farmlands, is Algor Joem, a direct descendant of the original lord under the king. He shares the view of his people that if not for the Church, his county would be one of the major powers in the province. This has given rise to a hatred for the Church, and an almost unbreakable determination in the face of adversity.

Nernes

Melek hunched over the scripts and squinted in the dim candlelight to make out the words faded by years in the damp gloom of the cellar. It was the kind of text that he would normally have given up on. But there was something compelling about this story. Maybe it was the mysterious circumstances that surrounded its discovery.

He had been closing the library late at night. Baron Gailad had gone to bed, and Melek had been left to make sure that his precious collection of books was safe. It had been while making the last checks that he had found a book on the floor. It was not that strange at all, as books would often topple over in the drafts. But as he had bent to pick it up it had opened to reveal that it was in fact not a book at all. It was a box made to look like a book; and inside it a pile of documents bulged out all over the floor. He had intended to gather them up quickly and stuff them back into their original home, but he found himself just scanning them. The word 'magic' caught his eye, and he had started to read. He read until daylight that first evening, and when he eventually put them back, he never intended to look at them again. But bit by bit he kept returning to their message of freedom.

Surely, this is what his ancestors had always wanted. Freedom to look after oneself without anybody else's interference. They had given him power, too; their magic was real. He could see how he was able to pull the elements into the world. He knew what he wanted and the scripts had told him how to do it.

He would take over this library; he would become its master. Then, when he had gathered all it had to give, he would travel to Merodak where his brothers lived the ideal life he only read of. Finally, one day, he would return with an army at his back, and he would become governor of Nernes, Lord of Orschild, master of the free provinces. If only he could decipher the secrets of the documents.

Nernes is the second county of the Gregarian family, and this neatly sums up its entire existence. It has become a province completely dedicated to the ideals and ideas of the head of the family, and its sole existence seems to be to further these ideals. It is a forum for everything old in Orschild; for the old families, the old artifacts, old documents, and the greatest library in the province. Politically, it has come to represent a counterbalance to the ideas promoted by Berednia, advocating independence and the rule of the governors rather than a more co-operative form. It also promotes firmly the nobility's hereditary right to rule. The inhabitants of the province, far from resenting the views of their governor, support him utterly, as do many other provinces. They accept the strong sense of traditionalism prevalent in Orschild, and Nernes is little more than the physical embodiment of this. Unfortunately, its reputation has been tarnished in later years due to its association with the Freedomer movement.

Geographically, one might also get the feeling that Nernes is a very old place. The hills and the forests seem to represent the very bones of time. This is reinforced by the fact that much of it has remained untouched for hundreds of years, giving it a wild and much revered countryside. It also contains several holy sites from the time of the kings, which are despised by the Church, but represent freedom and history to the Orschilders.

Resna

The silver plate clattered to the floor noisily, and Theron bent quickly to sweep it up into his hands again. He proceeded to clear the long table with the ease of great practice. Shining silver cutlery, copper candelabras, golden platters still heaped with chickens, hams, and stuffed quail eggs. Lord Gideon's advisors never seemed to eat half of the food that was always wheeled in at these 'conferences'; luxurious meals that any peasant would kill for were hardly touched. Still, this meant that the servants would have a small treat, though most of it would go to the hounds.

Nothing much had happened this time; nobody was dragged away and locked up. The hangings of all the others a few months ago probably still bothered the scribes. He had laughed when he saw the looks on their faces when they held the first meeting after that. Lord Gideon had certainly put them in their place. They knew that what he says goes, even for them. Except for that one with the darkish eyes and the pale skin. He had smiled when the executioner kicked away the boxes, and whispered something into the Lord's ear.

All the servants hated that one, ordering them about like he owned the place. Probably he was up to no good – one of those Freedomers, no doubt – spreading vicious rumors about the dwarves. The cook, Restir, had said that he was a spy from the Church. His wife said he was an evil magician, and that he had cast a spell over the Lord, but she had always been superstitious. Whatever he was, he looked bad, like he could do evil things. You could tell – shifty he was.

Still, no doubt the Lord would deal with him too. He knew what to do, of course he did. He wouldn't be the Lord, otherwise. Political matters were more than ordinary peasants knew how to deal with, more than they should get involved in.

Resna is the focal point of everything that happens in Orschild. The events and people of a whole province are crammed between the four walls of the capital. And in the center of the city is the palace, where Gideon and his advisors try to deal with those problems that constantly seem to focus on their home.

Resna is the city that defines Orschild. The emphasis is on freedom and opportunity. Anyone who is brave enough, inventive enough, and smart enough, can make their measure as a man in Resna. It is a city of honest workers, skilled craftsmen, just city guards, noble knights, petty thieves, corrupt advisors, underhanded merchants, and traitorous cults. For in a city of Resna's size and status, there will always be the vultures who feed off the work of the rest of the men. But Gideon still loves Resna as the greatest achievement of his line. Three walls surround the city, and eight mighty towers keep watch over it.

When Resna falls, Orschild will truly be lost.

The Headquarter of the Freedomers

The headquarters of the Freedomers is a place that Lord Gideon would very much like to find but probably never will. The reason for this is the fact that it is right under his nose – or, more accurately, under his castle. One of the things the young Prince Orwen managed to discover, when he still lived with his family, was the secret passage of Lord Carm. This is a tunnel that leads to an even wider network of passages, eventually joining up with the catacombs. The Lord had intended to use this if Resna was ever captured by the Church. Now it serves as the secret home of the Freedomers. As long as nobody else finds the tunnels, they are as secure there as anywhere else in Orschild.

The City of Resna

Resna is divided into nine districts. Each controlled by a separate bailiff and his officials. Each has its own company of city guards, and each has its own tower. The sections are named after famous lords, and the center section – the ninth section – is the Bernon district, where the palace of Gideon dominates the skyline. The districts have come to be molded by time, and now each one represents something different. The Jeriko district is famous because it incorporates many of the great trading houses, including the Sau's Moon. The Arlen district is known as the "thieves' quarter", and it used to be extremely dangerous, until the city guard cleared it out ten years ago. There is also a guild district, a dwarf district, and the noblemen's district. More recently, some of the districts have also come to be associated with the various factions that threaten to split Orschild apart. The Gerten district has, because of the refugee camps, come to be associated with the Church, and the guild district of Kester has become the district of the Freedomers.

Though this may sound very sinister, Resna as a whole is one of the safest capitals in the ancient realm. The streets are largely clean, and the city guard is well organized and firm. Unlike many of the other cities in the world, it looks planned and sturdy. Architects attribute this to the fact that Orschild has been invaded a number of times, so it has, on several occasions, become necessary for the Lord of Resna to rebuild the city so that its defenses will be maximized. During the years of trouble especially, the Lords of Orschild have been very concerned to make the city fit for war, which means organized streets and solid stone buildings, as well as large storage houses and effective aqueducts. The people have all been very grateful for these improvements, and they are proud of their city calling it the Mountain of Orschild after the impressive rock face wthat rests outside the walls.

The Main Quarters

Some of the nine quarters are fairly inconspicuous and average. Unremarkable and uninteresting as far as it is possible for any place in a great city to be so. But there are also four main quarters which are central in their importance to Resna.

The Jeriko District

This is the district of the great trading houses. It is based around one main road named "The golden path", which is surrounded on all sides by the great trading houses. Inside these fairly large and often extravagant buildings, one or more of the great merchants run their trading empires. Because of the presence of the Moon Trading House this has also come to be the district of the dwarves, and it houses a disproportionate number of their kind and their shops.

The Arlen District

The former thieves quarter still carries the unsavory reputation which came to scare away most of the craftsmen and merchants which once thrived here. But the city guard swept through the area a couple of years ago and managed to scatter the large chunk of the Underworld that resided here. However, there are signs that the rats are returning to their old home. For this is the most disorganized and seedy of the districts, this is the only place in Resna where back alleys and cobbled paths hide those who want to be hidden. Once again the rough inns are springing up, and new deals are being struck in the dead of night, when no honest merchant would be awake.

The Kester District

This is the district of the ordinary people. It is also the district of the shops, the inns, and the market places. This is the district where most of the craftsmen in Resna ply their trade. The roads are dotted with forges and workshops. The Jeriko district is where the big deals are made, where thousands of gold pieces change hands regularly, but this is where the ordinary people go to shop. It is also therefore, the district of the guilds that control the craftsmen. And their offices dominate the area with their importance. But the district of honesty has been marred lately by reports that the Freedomers have made it their home.

The Bernon District

Finally there is the all-important district of nobility and politics. It is recognizable straight away. Entering this district, one can be suddenly overwhelmed by magnificent mansions whith their dazzling splendor. Fountains and mighty walls pave the way to the palace which threatens to blot out the very sky itself. Amidst all this wonder, the masters of Orschild wrestle for control of the province. Representatives from virtually every faction involved in the great struggle for power find their way here. Either openly or covertly, they all scheme and intrigue freely in the forest of wealth.

Powers in Resna

There are four different camps that control life in Resna. Each one dominates its own part of the city and its own inhabitants. They are the guilds, the merchants, the Underworld, and Lord Gideon's men. This seems simple and obvious enough, but real life is never quite as easy. Lord Gideon can be said to control everyone to some extent, but the others also secretly oppose him and go out of their way to hide their actions from the men of the court. Equally, the merchants might dictate the survival of the guilds, but they cannot survive without them. And of course the Underworld acts totally independently from



everyone else. When you add the Darkness, the refugee camps, the Church, and the dwarves, you are left with something that closely resembles total chaos..

The Craftsmen's Guilds

A powerful faction within the life of Resna is the craftsmen's guilds. The whole city relies on the craftsmen. Without them there are no goods to sell and no profit to make. They realized this long ago, and to consolidate their position, organized themselves into guilds so that they could exercise their power. These guilds are more than just a political club; they are also a strict governing body. They guarantee the quality of the goods produced by their members, and these are the goods that people buy. Goods without the guild seal are often substandard and cheaply made – though there are skillful individuals who, for one reason or another, are without guild membership. Most non-guilders are poor workers, and thus the people do not trust their products. Therefore it is vital for a craftsman to be a member of a guild in a big city where there are hundreds of joiners or carpenters to choose from. This allows the guilds a great deal of control over the lives of craftsmen. To be a guild craftsman, you have to have been a guild apprentice for a number of years, then you may be given your own workshop and guild approval. Demands are harsh, because if the guild's seal of guarantee fails, their power also fails.

The Power of the Guilds

The guilds have their own hierarchies and leaders. For every court in Orschild, there is a representative from at least one of the major craft guilds. This is usually the guild that is most important to the county. So in a great wool-producing county there will be a spinners' and weavers' guild member. They are the court representatives, and it is their job to report back to the head of the guild and to look after its interests. These have probably never practiced a craft themselves, as the skills of diplomacy and bargaining are much more useful to them. Most of the guilds have their headquarters in Resna, since it is the trading capital as well as the political capital. In Gideon's court there is representative from all the guilds – with the notable exception of the Goldsmiths' Guild, which left in protest when Lord Gideon granted some of the land owned by their guild master to the Sau. Their authority is amply proven by the amount of time and devotion the Lord spends in trying to placate these representatives. The accepted role of the guilds is to check any law or tax that is passed, to ensure that it would not damage them. If anything suspect is found, the guilds will protest by preventing their members

from producing any goods. The Lord obviously does not want this, so laws are altered as quickly as possible if anything is found to be wrong.

Resna and the Guilds

Because of Resna's position as the seat of power, it is here that the guilds reside. Any guild that is cut off from the capital will very quickly find itself outmaneuvered by independent craftsmen and the other guilds. Thus they decided to set up their head quarters in the city. Most of these are found in the Kester district, and they are revered and feared indeed. There are also a number of smaller offices scattered around some of the other districts to stamp the influence of the guild on every workshop and forge. The guild headquarters have become a symbol of their power and prestige. Of central importance in the scheme of things as far as Resna is concerned are the guild representatives, who serve two purposes. Firstly they intrigue and bargain within the court of Lord Gideon in the Bernon quarters, but more noticeably, there are the guild inspectors. These officials are responsible for going around and checking every workshop that carries the guild's seal. If they are unsatisfied they can demand that the offending craftsman retrain for a limited period of time, or they can remove the seal. Unfortunately an amount of corruption has crept in over the years, and there are few inspectors who are above petty bribery or even blackmail. All guild officials carry the patronage of the guild of course, so any accusations made against them had better be completely waterproof.

The Guilds and the Dwarves

The dwarfen kin Sau serves a particular role as an important influence within the life of the guilds. The dwarves themselves are some of the wealthiest merchants and the most skilful craftsmen in Orschild. However, they are not members of any of the guilds. Instead, the Sau have their name as their guarantee of quality and use the pact as their political foothold. The people and the merchants have discovered that any product made by a Sau will be of the utmost quality. The Lord has realized that as long as he has the Sau, his need of the merchants will be minimal. This has naturally angered the guilds, especially the craftsmen guilds, as their position is unusually precarious in any case. The guilds have been opponents of the dwarves for a long time and are held back only by the tide of public opinion. The governor who almost started the dwarf persecutions in Orschild was himself a head of one of the guilds.

The Trading Houses

It is certainly true to say that the tradesmen and the merchants dominate daytime life down in the city. The calls of the traders from their stalls drown out all other sound, the wealth of the mighty trading houses outstrips even the nobility, and the influence of the greatest merchants can make governors beg on their knees. No matter what else it is, Resna is a city that is run on money. At the forefront of all this money are the trading houses. These are the great organizations that dominate trade around the world. A trading house is nothing more than a number of merchants who have banded together to form a cooperative trading empire, symbolized by the name of their house. Instead of the merchant "Somebody" selling his goods, you have the great trading house Apple Tree exercising its influence. This kind of fame and recognition makes the merchants many times as powerful as they would otherwise be on their own.

The trading houses are where these great merchants run their empires. The greatest have several houses all to themselves, whereas others band together to combine their wealth. The buildings themselves are truly magnificent, great monuments to trade, where every centimeter of their relatively small surface is covered in symbols of their wealth: golden windows, bronze statues, finely wrought gates. They are places of opulence and wealth. Inside, the furnishings are fairly spartan. Make no mistake; the business conducted within the four walls is dead serious. Contracts worth more gold pieces than the ordinary townsfolk could ever dream of change hands in minutes. It is like a great model of the world in miniature, where life is based on gold and goods, represented by pieces of paper.

The Merchants

The masters of these houses are the merchants. These are men of considerable power over life in Orschild, and even the most influential of governors is sometimes forced to bow to their demands. They are governors in their own right, the only difference being that their county is of money, rather than of land. They too have men under their command, men not ruled by any governor, and they move armies of ships and wagons. But their life is more precarious; only one ship sinks, and they could be left impoverished. This is why the less powerful feel the need to band together, and it is also the source of their hardy skepticism and ruthlessness. Many lords dislike them because they do not live under the same rules as the inherited nobility. They do not have to conform to the beliefs of the Lord, nor are they bound to any one place. Merchants can afford to be unscrupulous, and their heavy handed methods often cause uproars. Above all else they are driven by profit, and most merchants will stoop as low as they have to in order to win profit.

Obserum's Dragons

The low mountains of Obserum, among many other things, are the home of a strange species of eagle. This particular bird has a cold bony skull – like that of a vulture – and oddly shaped tail-feathers, which resemble nothing so much as a lizard like tail. Combine this with their immense size, and the frozen breath caused by the cold heights, and you have the Dragons of Obserum. These birds have become the defining symbol of Obserum and they are hailed by the people as lucky and noble.

One of the most prized gifts in the whole world is a "dragon" egg, as these creatures make wonderful and intelligent hunting birds. Procuring these is both difficult and dangerous, as the nests are always situated on hard-to-reach ledges high up among the clouds. Even so, truly they are the richest of prizes.

The Trading Houses and the Dwarves

Unlike the guilds the trading houses do not fear the competition from the dwarves. The dwarfen trading empire, though it is the mightiest in Orschild; will never go far enough to push out the others. For the trading houses are not confined to Orschild, theirs has always been a worldwide venture. Thus they have profited from the emergence of the dwarves. The high quality goods produced by the dwarfen craftsmen do not carry the constraints and greed of the guilds with them, and the merchants have been quick to capitalize on this. However, they will be equally quick to withdraw their support the second that there is any sign that the dwarves will cost them money.

The Crown

The Crown is the greatest of the human trading houses, and though it is a collaboration of five merchants it has come to be associated with one man only. The master of the Crown is Keller Terent, the most powerful merchant in Orschild. The wealth that he possesses is rumored to be greater than that of Lord Gideon himself, and he is renowned for two things. Firstly there are the rumors of his legendary luck, which have escalated into whispers of foul play. When the holy trade war of the Church and Luceria enveloped the great merchant fleet of the three greatest trading houses in Resna, only his ships got away, and the fire of Le'ne's which destroyed so much of the other houses' profit left his stores unscathed. But these black words pale beside the allegations that he has made a secret pact with the dwarves. It is certainly true to say that he has always preferred trading with them, but he has always been totally motivated by profit and it seems improbable that he should have such strong political motivations. However, this has not prevented several threats being nailed to his door. If Keller does not change his ways, he may find himself a target of the Freedomers.

The Underworld

In cities like Resna, one will always find those who seek to make a fortune at others' expense: The thieves, the thugs, the counterfeiters and the fences. These are all characters that hope to get rich without having to work for a living. Collectively, they are known as the Underworld. The Underworld is not an organized group, nor is it a place, but it does exist. Those people who know where to sell stolen goods or how to contact smugglers are members of the Underworld. It is a world that coexists with the rest of Orschild, and it arises out of criminals' dependency on each other. A burglar needs a fence to buy his stolen goods, a fence needs a smuggler to transport them for him, and so the criminal elements of a city combine to form a world of their own. They all have to know each other.

It is like a parody of the rest of Resna, with its craftsmen and merchants; the Underworld has its sellers and buyers



The Lion of Orschild

The official symbol of Orschild is the mountain lion, which is strange as there are none of these creatures in the province. The reason why they were adopted links back to the time of the war against the Darkness. During this era, the crown prince of Orschild was on a secret mission to Cergovia, where he would meet with the other Lords to discuss strategy. Unfortunately he was found out while travelling through the Pendarens, and the fanatics from the north were ready to kill him on the spot. He had knelt down and was to be beheaded, but was saved by a mountain lion who had decided to make a meal out of the poor executioner. The crown prince managed to escape and got back to Orschild. After the Rebellion of the Sovereigns, this story was remembered and the Lion came to represent Orschild and its customs.

too. The only difference comes from the origin of the goods, and the fact that the city guard constantly hunts members of the Underworld, with dire penalties for anyone who is caught. This makes the Underworld a suspicious place where nobody is quite willing to trust someone they have not known for a very long time. It is also a world of anarchy, where the strong and the powerful will come to dominate society more completely then they ever could in a world of order.

Life in the Underworld

The Underworld is not a place to which you go; it is something you join. The minute you start knowing the who's and the where's of that world, is the moment when you have entered into it. Once you are there, it is difficult to leave. A young man would probably get to be a member of the Underworld by knowing someone else who is. A friend or a father might introduce a youth to a fence that would let him know that he will buy stolen goods. It can be very tempting to be presented with a way of making money, which is not subject to the laws of the guilds, or the competition of rivals. It may even be the only way out for some desperately poor families. Once you start to know criminals you are dragged deeper into their world. Because of their unsure position and their reality of always being hunted, criminals have to rely on each other for help. Escaped convicts or stolen artifacts will soon find their way into a criminal's house as partners or friends continually ask for favors. On the other hand, you can do the same to them. But there is also intense distrust. Virtually every member of the shady world has a price on his head, and even dear friends might be tempted to turn each other in. In Resna, the Underworld is a totally separate place, with its own structure and powerful figures.

Of course, not every thief has to be a member of the Underworld. Many choose to work alone, only approaching a fence to sell their ill-gotten gains. But these lone wolves do not have the protection that the Underworld gives; they have no allies in their struggle against the law. Others work in teams, but still do not get involved too much in the real world of crime. These are the street robbers and the burglars, the pickpockets and the counterfeiters. They are also the weakest of the criminals. True power is found only deep within the heart of that shady world. It lies in the hands of the fences.

The Lords of the Underworld

The fences are odd as they exist almost entirely only within the realms of the Underworld. Most criminals have a life outside it, but the fence spends virtually all their time dealing with criminals and stolen artifacts. They are the merchants of crime, and in a world where money is power and power is everything, the fences are lords. They can afford to pay henchmen to look after their security and to enforce their will. A fence builds up a contact network of thieves, street robbers, counterfeiters, and hired muscle, all of which rely on the fence to a great extent.

Clever and innovative men and women can become rich far more easily and far more quickly by acting as a fence, than those who work as honest merchants. But there is a price to pay for this ease – insecurity. A fence lives in a world of murderers and thieves, most of whom would like nothing better than to topple them and take their position as the lords of the Underworld. And then there is the ever-present risk of being apprehended by the law, of being found with stolen property. The law does not deal leniently with those who promote crime. Thus, the career of a fence is rather like the spectacle of a falling star – illustrious and magnificent, but very short. Still, for those who survive the harsh demands, the rewards are great, and great fences become figures of myth and awe to the rest of the inhabitants of the underworld.

The Places of the Underworld

The greatest home of the Underworld in Resna has always been the thieves' quarter. It is appropriate that the most disfigured and disorganized part of the city should house its criminals. But at first glance you would notice very little difference between the streets of this place and the cobbled stones of those surrounding it. The thieves' district still has its inns, shops and workshops, but their appearance conceals a deeper purpose. Thieves' inns still serve drinks and house travelers, but behind the bar the fences do their business. And the counter conceals various escape routes available to those on the run from the law, which is usually most of the clientele. Equally, thieves' workshops have a tendency to work without guild approval, and the goods they sell are not always produced in their own forges. This is the way of the Underworld, to echo the rest of Resna, but always with a slight twist of its own.

The Sun

The Sun is the only trading house of the thieves' district, and as you would expect, it is no ordinary house of wealth. The proprietor is the great fence Mirris Talek, and the first thing that strikes one is the rarity of finding a woman in charge of such a powerful organization. The outside of her house contains none of the great opulence displayed by so many of the others. And there seems to be disproportionately few craftsmen who will confess selling goods to this character. The truth is that most of her business partners do not work during the daylight hours. A nighttime visitor might see lights in her windows and the coming and going of any number of shady characters. In fact it seems that the only ones who do not understand what is going on are the city guard – which is just as well as it would be difficult to imagine any great leniency shown on their part. Her greatest supplier is also one of the



The Crown of the First King

History tells of how the first king and his son were murdered by the prince regent. But it also says that he left behind an important royal treasure – his crown. This was saved by his advisor and friend, who bore it to Nemes. He would later call himself Gregarian, and hid the crown in his own tomb. The location of this has been lost over time, but the Lords have not given up hope. Lord Gideon especially has been preoccupied with the recovery of his ancestor's crown. He believes that with this symbol he will be able to reunite his province. He may be right, but as his advisors keep reminding him, it is a futile quest with few rewards – more a symbol of what he wishes could be than, something really useful.

well-loved princes of the Underworld, the great burglar Yarek. Through him, some of the most extraordinary goods seem to find their way into the hands of the Queen of the Sun

The Refugee Camps

Recently, Orschild has come to be home to a group of people, which did not exist before the conversion of Merodak – the refugees. When Marquis Lazarus announced his true nature, thousands chose to flee Merodak rather than suffer under what they feared most. Orschild was a natural place for these people to head for; just across the mountains they would find salvation. It seemed even more natural for these newcomers to find their way to Resna. In a city where most of the major provinces of the world had their representatives, they could decide what to do with the people without homes. A number of camps were set up to accommodate the masses, guards were posted to watch out for infiltrators from the Church, and so the problem was temporarily dealt with.

The people of the camps soon began to make themselves into a permanent feature of life in the city. They spoke with the people who brought them food and were accepted. Things calmed down, but the smooth exterior masks a hot-bed of intrigue and plots.

The camps are divided into sections of fifty tents, with an inspector responsible for each different section. Apart from this, there are no real structures or facilities within the camps. The people are free to mingle as much as they like, so that they are free to try and discover their past families and friends. Each camp also has a mess tent where workers from the city come to make and serve food. Furthermore, several traders have come to recognize that the inhabitants of the camps are in dire need of their services and impromptu market places are set up on the muddy surface. This confusion is compounded to by the new laws, which allow limited numbers of refugees into the city so that they can make themselves useful. The fugitives are assigned to working as hired help, or they are trained to fight in case the Darkness should attack when they still remain within the city.

Politics Within the Camps

Most of the refugees have been devoted to the One all their lives, and though religion is disallowed they practice it in secret. The Church has recognized this and began trying to use the camps as a way into Orschild. Church sympathizers within the camps are quite willing to help them in any way. And where the Church goes, the Darkness must follow. Infiltrators from Lazarus' legions have had no problems in worming themselves in through old friends who believe that they have kept their faith. These spies try to expose any members of the Church, and spread the corrupting teachings of the Darkness into Resna. Finally, there are those who welcome their freedom from religion and Darkness. They want nothing more than to become inhabitants of the province that has been kind enough to take them in. The regular investigations made by Gideon's men do little to discover the true extent of these operations, and if they spill over into the city they could grow out of control.

The Court of Lord Gideon

The thing that makes Resna what it is must be the fact that the seat of power in Orschild resides within its protective walls. Proximity to power is of vital importance to any who wish to have their demands seen to quickly, or for those who seek to influence the tide of events. The court of Lord Gideon is the focal point and the key to the province. It is like a huge sorting room, where the Lord and his nobles, and advisors, and the guilders deal with every little occurrence in the rest of the land so that they can decide what to do about it. Trying to hold the whole mess together is Lord Gideon himself. The Church spies, Dark Priests, and rebellious Freedomers, who stir in confusion and intrigue, make his task more difficult.

The Court

The court is made up of several of the rooms in the palace. Firstly it is the common meeting places and leisure rooms, which are meant for everybody. These include the main hall, the public dining room, the exercise yard, and the card room, as well as several smaller halls and corridors. In many ways these are fairly untypical of Gideon's court, but they are also exactly what the peasants think of when they dream of nobility. This is accurate enough, as these are the premises of the noblemen and women who frequent the castle. They are places of entertainment and luxury, not of the power which dominates life in the court. For the power resides in what is often called 'the true court'. These are the council chambers, the throne room, and the hall of ceremony. These are the places where the laws are passed, where important matters are discussed, and where Gideon fulfils his role as the arbiter of justice in the province.

The inhabitants of the true court are very different to the empty headed minor nobles who dash around the rest of the castle. It is a place filled with scholarly and serious men, with little time for pointless entertainment. You will not find the bright colors and dazzling lights here. The dominant fashion is sober blacks and grays. There is one main council chamber that is used for official discussions, and three minor ones which are open to any who wish to use them. As you might expect these minor chambers have come to represent free centers for the various organizations that are tearing Orschild apart. Despite this, Gideon refuses to post observers near these places, maintaining that his family has always stood for freedom.

The City without Walls

Obserum has long been the only way in for visitors from Merodak. It houses the Broken Chain Pass, which used to be a trade route, and has more recently become the most obvious place to launch an invasion from. This pass is of course guarded, but not by a keep or towers as you might expect. Instead, a small city has grown up around it. Unusually, this city has no walls to protect it from invasion; it seems open. The truth is that the city of Broken Chain has a far more effective form of defense. It is built upon a pinnacle of virtually sheer rock . The only route up follows a twisting mountainous path that has been widened considerably to make it more practical for merchants' wagon trains. An unusual feature of the path is that it is collapsible and can thus cut off any assault, making the "city without walls" virtually impossible to capture.

The Advisors and Diplomats

The main population of the court is made up of the various petty officials who want to make sure that they stamp their authority on the seat of power. These are the advisors, the guild representatives, the foreign ambassadors, and a few scribes who are responsible for various issues of law and order. Because of the sheer numbers of people who constantly come and go it is virtually impossible to know exactly who is in the court at any one time. This is why most spies pose as members of this group.

The power of these elements individually is fairly insubstantial, they can only achieve anything when they band together, which creates the environment of constant intriguing, switching alliances, and temporary friendships which is so prevalent. This is further accented by the fact that the positions these ambitious men and women occupy are largely transitory as well, which means that they can never be quite sure of themselves. The slightly more powerful members of this group are the permanents: representatives from the guilds, and Gideon's personal advisors. They have more time than their colleagues to establish themselves and to push forward their ideas.

The Main Advisors

There are also those who consider themselves to be above the petty squabbling and disagreements of the less important officials. They are the most important advisors, the most well known ambassadors, and various scribes. These may be the personal messengers of the Lord of Bervoche, the advisor of war, or of the treasury, or possibly their scribes. These are men who have true power as individuals, or who feel secure enough that they do not need to enhance their position. Thus they spend far less time at the court, and get far more work done.

Within the inner echelons of the court, the advisors closest to Gideon himself are the advisor for war, the advisor for the treasury, the advisor for the people, the advisor for law and justice, and the advisor for trade and communications. Each is responsible for assisting the Lord in his rule of the province, and especially within their field of specialization, though any of them may speak on any matter. They tend to meet only with each other and Lord Gideon himself and they speak on matters of great importance. When they are all gathered with the Lord they are officially known as the council of Orschild, an idea borrowed from the dwarves.

The Throne room and the hall of Cermony

As their names might suggest, these places are for strictly official purposes, though they are in constant use. The throne room is where Gideon receives any foreign ambassadors and state dignitaries. It is also where he listens to any appeals made against the legal rulings of his governors. Usually he will only hear the requests made by noblemen, though sometimes, during periods of calm or in other rare situations, he will pay attention also to his peasants. Finally he must declare any new laws by reading them out from his throne. The hall of ceremony is less used. When a new family is knighted it will have its family coat of arms hung up in this room. It is also used when the new Lord is crowned and this is where the Lord's robes of office are kept.

The inhabitants of these places have suitably impressive titles: The Master of Keys, the Lord's Guardian, the Master of Ceremony, and the Lord Justice. Even more so than the main advisors, these people ignore the less important members of the court. Usually their families have kept their post for generations, and they fully expect to do the same.

The Powers of the Court

The court is the very embodiment of power of Orschild; it is the heart of the effective rule of the land. To have control over the court is the have control over the laws of the province, over any trade agreements between it and the neighboring provinces, over the application of justice, over diplomatic arrangements, over the very ideals and morals which guide the people. It is perhaps fortunate then, that access to this power is severely limited by the traditional proceedings and customs, which must be followed.

Before a new law is passed it must be announced to all the members of the court, and there is a period of one month during which these laws may be disputed and opposed. Whole teams of scribes must properly process applications for knighthood. There is the matter of what land will be granted to the new family, and finally the rest of the noble families have a chance to protest. Trade agreements have to be arranged by a multitude of different diplomats, and may be opposed by the trading houses, and so on. The list of different regulations that have to be followed is endless, making the great power of the court cumbersome and slow – some say ineffective. But very few would dispute the fact that it is far better to have a ruler with no power, than a dictator like the Church.

Of course the court does have power, and this is why the Church, the Darkness and the Freedomers all try desperately to conceal one of their agents within the heart of power, or to take control over the petty minded individuals who already make up its ranks. To date the Church is the only one of the three that has managed to achieve much success, perhaps because of their great previous experience. It is known that there is at least one inquisitor posing as an advisor within the court of the Lord. However, the other two conspirators are far from ineffective.

There are several officials who are distinctly sympathetic towards the Freedomers, particularly representatives from the

guilds. As for the Darkness, few can guess the true extent of their influence, for they are particularly insidious in their efforts. The only certain truth is that with these unpredictable elements working within the heart of the province, Orschild must inevitably sink deeper and deeper into chaos.

Lord Gideon

The man with the unenviable task of controlling the court is Lord Gideon. It can only be considered unfortunate for the man that he was destined to rule during such a period of strife and trouble. Some would say that is unfortunate for the province too. For Gideon is cursed with the same distinctive weakness that has cursed so many of his line. He has the distinct disadvantage of principles. He truly believes in the principles of freedom and self-sufficiency that were founded by his great ancestors. This is fine for fiery leaders trying to unite a country against a clearly visible foe, but less suitable for a lord who has to keep a country from tearing itself apart. If you combine this with his traits of fiery temper and fierce pride you have an explosive combination which is as likely to ruin Orschild as it is to save it. Those who do not recognize this in their Lord have fallen prey to his righteous indignation, creating a feeling of fear and uncertainty within the court, which has worsened the political divisions. And Gideon can see his rule falling to pieces in his hands. A more astute Lord might ally himself with the Church, or perhaps join with his subjects and use the dwarves as a scapegoat. But Gideon refuses this, determined to remain true to the pact and heritage of his namesake. He feels only frustration at his inability to see what is really happening, and in his desperation he becomes increasingly less tolerant and predictable. The advisors begin to whisper of paranoia and madness, but the truth is simply that a good man is unsuited to ruling a province in today's Orschild.

The Court and Resna

The court of Lord Gideon is Resna; it is what makes the city what it is. The difference between the capital and the rest of the province's cities can only be attributed to the court. Hence the popular illusion that the court literally is Resna.

Jenius Seliah

Jenius Seliah is an inquisitor of the Church. He is one of the many agents whom the Marquis have sent into the province of Orschild to find out everything that is happening in the province and especially to seek out any advisors or servants who have fallen under the influence of the Darkness. In the heart of Orschild he is well placed to pursue these goals, but he is also at risk from the wrath of Lord Gideon. And he has his own personal mission to fulfil; a debt of gratitude to repay.

The life of the Inquisitor

Jenius was born in Ravarra, the heart of the Church. His father was a priest and his mother had formerly been of the one of the nunneries. It was this that would later cause him to seek his way to the headquarters of the Inquisition to follow in their footsteps. This proved to be a decision surely guided by the One, and within the ranks of the inquisitors he developed quickly. At twenty-three years of age he was sent to Resna and there he was to infiltrate the court of Lord Gideon. On a night of calm darkness he sought shelter within the walls of Gideon's palace, claiming to be an advisor from Bervoche. He kept his actions well hidden and soon he came to be trusted. However, his recent part in revealing the identity of a dark priest within the castle has turned suspicious eyes on him.

The Debt

Jenius has his own reason for being in Ravarra, and it links back to a debt owed by his father. As a young man Jenius' father had traveled to Orschild much for the same reasons as his son, although this was before the conversion of Merodak and the treachery of Lazarus. During this time he had been discovered by a dark cult who had sent a fanatic to kill him. This mission was never completed. He was having dinner with Teklet Sau at the time, and the guards brought the cultist in dead. To show his gratitude, Jenius' father left behind a token of some religious importance.

However, in these dark times no such relics can remain outside the Church and Jenius must reclaim this token without offending the dwarf to whom he owes so much. Precarious indeed when he does not know if Teklet will greet him or kill him.

The Ring of Marquis Selils

This ring belonged to the Marquis of Ravarra during the Years of Silence, and it was used to fight the heretics in the Second Elf War. The Marquis Mertius wore when the Church executed Geniah. It found its way into the Seliah family several years later when it was given to a Knight Templar named Geris Seliah as a token of gratitude for saving the life of a powerful Bishop who was attacked by dark cultists. The father of Jenius, Esilet, wore it when he was sent to Orschild to find one of the possessed who was known to have traveled there to infiltrate the court of the Lord. It was given into the hands of the Sau out of gratitude and its present location is unknown. The ring is rumored to have a remarkable power when it is used against the possessed and in present circumstances it is of vital importance to the Church. The ring is a holy relic with a nature of 12.



The Sau

Girker's feet padded lightly over the rock, displacing thorns and small rocks by the wind of their movement. He had left the hills of Orschild behind him, only to come to the foothills of the end of the world. His eager fervor meant that it had taken him only two weeks since leaving his message to the head of his kin, he would rather have that it had taken no time at all. The others in the company had probably reached the second settlement. By now, they might be uncovering the secrets of their lost heritage even as he ran.

But he had been the first messenger and would probably be back in time to witness the most important event in the history of their people since the exodus. It had long been his dream to unify the dwarves once more. United they could reclaim their ancient home, the riches of their ancestors could save them from the ill intentions of the humans, and their united armies would be able to stand against the Darkness.

He remembered the hope he had felt when they had stood in front of the sealed doors of the first halls; he remembered how they had worked on the intricate mechanisms that sealed them. He had stood next to Celak as he pushed the gates aside and entered the halls. He had been the first to look at the walls as the light illuminated the treasure of their history. He had also been the first to see the bare room.

Those first few hours, his blood had boiled in his veins. Someone had destroyed the heritage of the dwarves, someone had entered their halls and taken everything. But anger grew into determination. The next hall would be full, and they would gradually begin to uncover the secret that would unite them. Of this he was certain.

So he had volunteered when Celak asked for a messenger. If he were the first, he would be able to get back in time. Nobody would want to leave once they started to find real evidence of the past. It also allowed him to renew his determination. The presence of his brothers, the faith they placed in the party, it was all he needed, and he knew that he would push on forever if he had to, he would travel to Cendora or through the Iron Gate if necessary, and one day they would all return.

They would return and unite the kin.

With a determination that only a dwarf could feel his feet pounded tirelessly onward. In a few more days he would rejoin the company and help in the most momentous and important task to face any of their race since they left the mountains.



The Sau are the only members of their race who have come down from the mountains and found themselves on equal footing with man. Thanks to the pact they made with Gideon Bernon they were able to gain power and land. The protection of the Lord allowed the kin what none of the others had: time to establish themselves. They laid the foundations of a trading empire, which came to be the most important in Orschild. Then, after the Second Elf War, dwarfish soldiers who had excelled in battle received the patronage of several powerful Lords and the popular support of the people. Foundations that had been laid decades ago bore fruit, and the dwarves gained power to compliment their wealth.

The Sau's position of power enabled them to think further than the pressing concerns of survival which preoccupied the other kin. Their thoughts turned to unification, they wanted to smooth over the split between their people, but the enmity ran to deep. They realized that they would never unite until the cause of their distrust was rediscovered.

Of course, a powerful kin like the Sau will always have enemies, and the fact that the dwarves were noticeably different only aggravated the insane jealousy that other members of the nobility felt towards them.

People who have lost jobs or power to the competition of the dwarves see an obvious target in the short people, and the memory of the dwarf persecutions seem to enforce the opinion that there is something evil about them. And so men, whose greed drives them to attempt to eradicate the kin, threaten the position of the Sau.

The Family of the Sau

More than anything else, the Sau are a kin, albeit a very large one. Family is of utmost importance, as with any of the dwarves, but it pales compared to the vital nature of the kin. Only members of the kin can come to retain positions in the trading houses, and there is intense distrust towards any outsiders, though humans can be made into blood brothers, and thus become members.

The kin is a hierarchical organization much as any other. Body jewlery, or the lack of it indicates a dwarf's position in the kin. The most prominent dwarves within the kin are bedecked with varying amounts of jewelry, formed into various snaking patterns of power. A dwarf may be awarded with jewelry for great skill, seniority and wisdom, or mighty deeds performed for the good of the kin. The most bejeweled dwarves are those responsible for making the decisions that affect the kin's future. The current head of the kin is Cenobius Sau, who led the dwarfen armies during the Second Elf War. These dwarves form the council of the kin and makes all decisions about its future. Recently Cenobius has created a small stir by seemingly failing to advise the kin properly of the quest of Celak Sau.

At the other end of the scale are the outcast dwarves, dwarves who have chosen to leave the kin rather than sully its good name. This is very rare; an accidental murder, or a heinous betrayal of unspeakable proportions are among the few events which might compel a dwarf to give up everything and to be shunned by his brethren. Outcasts may return if the dwarfen kin council decrees it, and among the tolerant Sau this has happened on a few occasions. Those dwarves who have been former outcasts are usually the most diligent and honorable of all their kin, as they have felt what it is like to be alone.

There is also a third party among the dwarves. They are those marked by the Curse, and among virtually any of the other kin they would be locked up in a dark cellar and hidden from the eyes of the world. But the Sau accepts them, as they are prepared to accept the other kin, and the Cursed have come to fit into this society. But the goodwill of the dwarves cannot prevent the distaste that a four-armed dwarf awakes in a human's eyes, and their open ideals may have caused them a lot of political damage. It is no secret that there are fewer senior members among the Cursed, and only one owner of land.

The remainder of the dwarves is comprised of craftsmen, traders, and miners. They work without pause for the good of their kin, creating the wealth that their power is founded upon. These dwarves are still able to make suggestions to the council, but they must abided by its decisions, virtually all of them do so happily, those that do not commonly become outcasts.

The Fight for Unity

The greatest dream for many of the Sau is that their people will be united once more. Ever since the Second Elf War, the Sau have been actively working to reopen communications with the other kin. But they have been met with a lot of resistance. For the other, oppressed kin, suspicions run as deep as ever. They will accept only a minimum of communication and trade with the "new kin" which accepts the cursed. Although their efforts have made up some of the ground that marks the rift between the kin, there are still many miles to go.

At present, the Sau have managed to make lasting contacts with only four of the other kin – Cenou Kin in Bervoche, Raeke Kin in Aretas, Tetlek Kin in Mordinan, and, perhaps their greatest triumph, Caun Kin in Ravarra. These four have come to agree to some extent with the Sau's vision of unity and have encouraged the others in their provinces. But these are only a few drops in the ocean, and though the five united kin have managed to greatly extend their influence and power, the others are not convinced. Out of the frustrations felt by Celak – the greatest dwarfen champion of current times – and Cenobius in dealing with the others, that the quest was born.

The Springs of Monesora

The mountains of Obserum are one of the main sources of the Monesora River, which flows through Orschild and Ravarra to the sea. Clear fresh water springs seep out and down the mountains all year round, but there is one particular spring that is fabled above all others. Its location is unknown but all have heard the name of the Spring of Monesora. Reputedly, this spring can cure whoever drinks from it of any disease. This has led to a number of fortune hunts over the centuries, and every year you can be sure that somebody can be up the mountain looking for the water that will make him rich.

The Quest

These two champions of unity came to the realization that the other kin would never accept the closure of the rift until the ancient dispute was settled. To work for the future they had to go back to the past. They had to learn more of the ancient bloodbath and the treachery of the three. A past that had been hidden for hundreds of years would have to be rediscovered.

So the two drew up plans to send an excursion back to their ancient homeland. A party of fervent unionists, led by Celak, would travel into the mountains, to the ancient halls, which they had once known as their home. Once there, they would investigate the origins of the betrayal, hopefully to find a clue as to why it happened, and how it could be refuted.

They searched among their memories, and consulted with the other kin, finding the locations of the ancestral halls. Preparations were made and they departed in the late autumn of 1291, planning to move through Cergovia and Mordinan to the mountains.

The First hall

In the summer the following year the party reached their destination – the first of the old settlements. They spent three days breaking through the rune seal on the door, but what they found hardly met the expectations of their dreams. The halls were stripped of everything. Cold and empty walls of rock pushed in on them, and there were no clues as to what had happened, just the dust of eons and the winds blowing along the corridors. The disappointment was immense, but no dwarf would have stopped there. They decided to dispatch a message back to Cenobius and push on to the second of their objectives. It was as they left that they were first rewarded for their efforts. They had learned that there was a back entrance to the settlement, and decided that the quickest way to the next hall was that way. But as they approached the door corridor they found water on the ground.

The door stood open, as if it had been left hurriedly or by an intruder.

The Second hall

They marched on through the harsh environment of the end of the world. Deep in a valley, and after dodging patrols supposedly sent out by Cyrus, Celak and the party reached the entrance to the place which was once home to Cenou Kin.

There was little need to break the still-visible seal on the door, as the mighty slab of rock had been rent by some great force and lay split in half. This time there were signs of life, but they were disorganized ones. Marble tables were scattered over the floor, and broken chairs rotted where they lay. They proceeded eagerly through the halls until they reached the room where the head of the kin had once spoken with his counselors. In this room lay the skeletons of several dwarves, marked out as special by only the fact that there were vast numbers of the Cursed among their ranks: a disproportionate number of horned, or many-limbed, or very large dwarves. It could only be guessed how many of the others had been allowed to shed their disfigurements through the rotting of the flesh.

They all wondered what might have befallen these tormented souls, whether might it be the disgust of their own kin, or some outside influence. It restored their hope in the quest – a solution would be found. And the next hall they reached would be of one clan of their lost brethren; they would arrive at the home of the Kathoe Kin.

Now

Before they left, they visited the hall with perhaps the greatest of treasures: a chamber of records was habitually included in these settlements, and there might be written accounts of the betrayal and the events leading up to it. Vast amounts of hide and paper were found, scattered by time, and though the writing was faded they could still be made out with some effort. One of the party – Cenobius' son, Darek – was sent back to bring these records to the dwarves in Orschild, in the hope that they would be able to decipher them. He would be the last messenger as they draw ever closer to the Iron Gate.

The Trading Empire

The Sau began in Orschild, and still remains, as a family of trade. Their power is founded upon wealth. The first dwarves who arrived in Orschild were craftsmen who sold their goods to rich merchants who appreciated their quality and durability. Eventually they grew tired of being exploited and sold the goods themselves at market places and from shops. People grew to recognize and trust that anything made by a dwarf would be of the utmost quality. It was a guarantee bought more cheaply than the guilds' seals, and soon they grew more and more wealthy. The patronage of the Lords stopped the jealous guilds from attempting to remove them, and they were unsure of how to stop the dwarfen merchants who grew to immense wealth. Eventually they founded trading houses like any other merchant organization, and the honesty of the dwarves made these places as popular as their pieces of craftsmanship.

The Trading houses

There are three main trading houses for the Dwarf Empire in Orschild, and there is a leader of each house. The three current trading leaders are Karged of the Scale, Hergin of the Moon,

and Troket of the Four-leaf Clover. All three of these sit on the kin council, and the most important of the three is the master of the house in Resna - the Moon. These three make most of the decisions regarding trade, where to sell this year's leather coats, who not to buy the leather from, and so on. They are all powerful lords in their own right, though they have no land to prove it for them.

THE SCALE – The Scale is the domain of Karged, who is related by marriage to Celak Sau. This house is located in north-eastern Orschild, in the county of Nordel. It is best known for its exquisite jewelry, and for the fact that the Master Goldsmith Gerni Sau lives here. His work has been known to fetch tenfold the price of his compatriots, and merchants come from all over the ancient realm to bargain for it. This trading house has been one of the focal points for the Sau's conflict with the Goldsmiths' Guild. One of the county's old governors, the head of this guild, started the dwarf persecutions here after the Second Eclipse.

THE MOON – The Moon is the trading house in the city of Resna, and as such it is the most important of the three. It is notable for the fact that it is not based upon any one craft, and because it always has something different to sell every week. This is caused by the fact that so many of the Sau practice their craft in Resna. It is virtually impossible for the trading house to accommodate them all, and so it has a system of rotation to make sure that no one craft is favored. The head of the kin has often controlled this house, although Cenobius decided long ago that he did not have time for it. Because of this it has sometimes served as a location for the kin council.

THE FOUR-LEAF CLOVER – The Four-leaf clover is known as the peasants' house. It is famed for producing ordinary everyday goods, such as horseshoes and workman's boots. This also means that it deals much more locally than the other two. You will seldom find Clover boots anywhere but in Orschild, unless they are worn by a travelling merchant. Gideon's army is mostly supplied with products from this house.

The Traders

Below them are the dwarfen traders, their equivalent to merchants. Unlike their human counterparts they do not act in their own interest, but mainly in the interest of the kin. A dwarfen trader sells only the items produced by his own kin. Either at a local market, in one of the great trading houses in Resna or around the world, or from the comfort of their own shop. Since a dwarfen trader does not have to concern himself with the strictures of the human trading houses or their craftsmen's guilds, he is at a considerable advantage, and can therefore make great profit. A dwarfen trader is bound only by the commands of his seniors within the kin, and since their interests are virtually exactly the same as his, he enjoys a considerable amount of freedom.

An ordinary village trader wakes early and makes his rounds; in other words, he travels to the mills, forges and workshops where the craftsman dwarves, who he buys his wares from, ply their trade. This done he will bring these back to his horse and ride to the market, where he will then set up a stall and sell his goods. When the market finishes he packs up, collects his earnings, and rides home. If he is lucky enough to own a shop this will usually be attached to the relevant workshop and his days will be far less hectic.

Of course, this all changes if you are one of the major traders. In this case you will spend your days at the trade house, haggling over contracts with other merchants, organizing wagons, and shipping goods around the world.

Whoever you are, you will always act in the interests of the kin, and you are always organized by your seniors. Thus the dwarfen trading empire is extremely well organized, and covers a very wide market at every level.

Cenobius Sau

"Only through unity can we be freed."
- Cenobius Sau

Cenobius Sau is one of the least traditional leaders of any of the dwarfen kin. He believes that the old fears about the Cursed and Betrayal are outdated and unnecessary. For a long time he has striven to unite the shattered kin, to break down the ancient boundaries and build a strong, newborn people.

As head of his kin he has had to meet the demands of a time when the freedom of the dwarves is once more under threat from the jealousy of mankind.

The Life of Cenobius Sau

Cenobius Sau was born the son of Jeriko Sau, governor of a small area of land in Berednia. A fighter since birth, and a captain in the dwarfish regiment of the Anvil. He was chosen to lead a large part of the dwarfen armies when the Second Elf War broke out and he led the charge that would eventually break the Church at the battle of Catament. His inspirational leadership meant that he was made head of the kin by the council, in place of Gregarus Sau, who had been slain in battle. In recent years he has commanded the council from the seat in his castle in Resna. It frustrates him to have to sit passive while others, such as Celak, act, and it may be that the head of the kin will soon be seen leading his brothers from the fore.

The hunters of Rumera

The hunters of Rumera have long had a reputation for being the best in the world. They are the quintessential men of the wild. Most of them livie all their days in hunting lodges within the boundaries of the Berrer Forest, growing up with the sounds and the smells of the forest always around them. More than anywhere else in Orschild, hunting is big business in Rumera. And the hunting tradition has grown and profited from its importance. It is said that a Rumerian hunter can speak to animals, and that he can follow tracks two years old. The truth is simply that centuries of hunting have honed their skills. The armies of Orschild have not been slow to realize this, and it is seldom that they leave for war without a Rumerian scout.

The Head of the Kin

Under Cenobius' command the kin has opened communication with many more of their estranged brothers, and he has dispatched an expedition to unite them in the present by discovering their past. He has also put more pressure on Gideon to extend their domains – a strategy he feels is vital to preserve the kin from attack. He knows full well of the resentment that many humans harbor towards the dwarves, and hopes that by increasing their power he will be able to hold off the threat until Celak returns from his quest.

Kerma – the Ring of the Sau

Kerma is a ring covered in ancient runes. It is the only treasure that remains from the time before the Exodus, and has always been borne by the head of the kin. It is passed from each generation to the next. It is said to bestow various powers to its carrier, and is the most valuable jewel to be carried by any Sau. Cenobius rescued it from the body of Gregarus during the Second Elf War.

Kerma has powers similar to the dwarfen body jewelry. It is inscribed with Healer, Guardian, and the Mountain's strength.

The Warriors

The Rebellion of Sovereigns and the Second Elf War saw the formations of a number of dwarfish regiments of soldiers, loosely based on the ancient armies from the time when they still lived in the mountains. They are commanded by the kin's council, and led by dwarfish heroes. The determination, ferocity, and endurance of the dwarves, make them excellent soldiers, and this has meant that there are also a number of humans who employ Sau warriors in their bodyguard.

The Regiments

There are four standing dwarfen regiments, and this number is doubled in times of need, when every dwarf who has ever trained in the use of a weapon is required to take up arms. Each regiment has its own coat of arms, and its own commander. The commander of a regiment is commonly known as its father, so that Reskat is the father of the Hammer regiment. Each company also has a commander known as its senior, and the leader of the dwarfen host is called the commander of the kin. The commander at the moment is



Telak Sau, who was a senior during the Second Elf War. He also sits on the kin council.

The regimental soldier is armed with a crossbow, and a weapon of their choice, usually supplied by the soldier himself. They wear hardened leather armor and are required to carry extremely heavy backpacks full of supplies.

DWARFEN REGIMENTAL SOLDIER
STR12 AGL 11 PHY 13
PER 10 MEN 11 CHR 7

The Guards

The noblemen who employ dwarves in their bodyguards find that there are some changes. For a start, dwarves do not feel comfortable being led by a human, nor do they fight well if they are the only dwarf in the guard. Thus, noblemen cannot employ merely one or two dwarves, they have to make it as near to an all dwarf guard as they can afford. At present, Lord Gideon and the governor of Nernes are the only two humans with all dwarf guards. With all these complications you could ask why anyone would want dwarves, but the advantages more than make up for these problems.

Dwarves are extremely devoted, they have been known to take arrows aimed at the person they are protecting, and they will not fall back until they are commanded to. A famous legend of recent times tells of when three dwarves fought back a regiment of a fifty warrior monks to protect their fallen master, and this may not be far from the truth. The bravery the dwarfen guards have shown in battles have earned them the gratitude of many powerful men, and it has won them a sizable amount of land, which they immediately give to the kin council.

DWARFEN BODYGUARD
STR 14 AGL 12 PHY 14
PER 11 MEN 14 CHR 7

The Fight for Survival

The Sau have been fairly untroubled throughout their history. The gratitude felt by the humans after first the Rebellion of the Sovereigns, and then the Second Elf War, has meant that there have been fewer problems with race in Orschild. Due to the pact, the Lord has always taken a very hard line when it comes to dwarf persecution, due to the pact. The only recorded time when a nobleman openly declared his enmity for the dwarves was during the dwarf persecutions, when the governor of Nordel, the head of the Goldsmiths' Guild, attacked the dwarfen Scale Trading House. There were no deaths, but three dwarfen smithies were burnt to the ground, and one of the cursed had his bones smashed to pieces. The governor was subsequently deposed, and sentenced to exile for his crimes. His descendant would later come to found the Freedomers.

The Freedomers

Hundreds of years later the kin has come to be threatened once again by the jealousy of petty minded noblemen, disgruntled craftsmen, and the fear of the guilds. Nobody really knows why these elements have managed to grow strong enough to defy the demands of the Lord, just as the Darkness has flown back into the world, but the terrifying truth of the matter is that the Sau are standing on the brink of destruction.

In several of the counties there have been reports of dwarfen dead, looted trade wagons, and smashed forges. There are very few doubts about who is responsible for these deeds, since the Freedomers have claimed responsibility for the actions, and this terrorist organization is as dangerous to the dwarves, as the Darkness is to the Church.

Cenobius has come to the realization that if he does not do something, his kin will be torn apart by the humans. To deal with this it is necessary for him to gather all the allies he can find. He has spoken to Lord Gideon, and several of the noblemen who have sworn that they will stand by the Sau. But this kind of need is dangerous, and the recent, more planned attacks by the Freedomers, have indicated that there is a traitor among the inner circles. Furthermore, the humans have their hands tied. Most of them have anti dwarf sympathizers within their counties, and if they do not fall into the line of the Freedomers, they might find that there is a revolution.

Unity or War

Cenobius is no fool, he understands about the position of his human friends, and hopes they will delay the inevitable, no more. His true prayers follow Celak. If the dwarfen kin can unite, they will prove too strong for the Freedomers. If he can buy enough time there may be no war. But that is an old dwarf's secret wish, not a young one's reality. The kin council is already making plans for a civil war. The bastions are being strengthened, the regiments are growing, and the swords are sharpened. If there is a war, the dwarves will be ready, and they will fight to the death.



Factions in Orschild

Germis walked calmly through the crowd of people heading up towards the ancient burial site. Keeping his head down, he crossed the line and walked away from the hill. Expectant eyes scanned his face, hoping to find some sign that the glorious history of their ancestors had given him some kind of enlightenment. They were awed by his deeply thoughtful gaze, and looked back to the front of the queue. Somebody touched his shoulder, and he was pleased to see that his brothers of the order had returned. Simple nods told him that they had accomplished their part of the operation. The sacks they carried contained the means with which they would strike a blow for their sect.

Evening fell, and still the crowds kept on coming, the site would be crowded until it got too dark to see. The three Brothers of the Rose in the wagon completed the last ritual, and waited for the concealing hand of the darkness.

The moon rose, and stars filled the sky, they seemed to glow especially brightly tonight. "A sign from the One," they said to themselves. The last of the people dispersed, and they leaped down with the bags. Wearing their ceremonial robes now, the three dragged their heavy load up to the stones. Taking out shovels, they began to dig, scattering heretic soil everywhere, and uncovering the foul bones of men who had known no glorious divine presence. Ancient gold was stolen, and the standing stones were toppled. The scene was ready for their great masterpiece.

Opening the sacks they rolled out the two dwarfen bodies, their throats slashed horribly. Heritis and Ceilt had done well. He laughed out loud now, how the heretics would be confused and outraged. Who had killed the dwarves, they would wonder, a Dark cult or the Freedomers? Who had desecrated the stones of their ancestors?

The governor of Nernes would be troubled indeed by the time the morning light hit the remains of what had once been a bastion of heresy.

Monny Sheep

Monny sheep are the only livestock that can survive the windswept, snow-covered wasteland of the Pendarens Mountains. Rumerian farmers let them graze on the plateau grasslands at the feet of the mountains.

The most special feature about the Monny sheep is their coat, which is extremely long and thick – not curly like other sheep. This coat keeps them warm in temperatures far below freezing, and can do the same for humans who don a Monny sheepskin coat. But Monny sheep are also famous for another feature. This is their horns, which grown immensely long and are shed every year during the winter. These make excellent musical horns, and Rumera has adopted their sound as its trademark.

Orschild is truly a province split into factions. There seems to be nobody left who does not belong to some cult or organization. In a land where individual freedom was once held as the greatest of rewards the people these days seem only to eager to choose sides, and those who do not do so freely are forced to by their enemies. Gideon sees how his power is bereft him more and more, as the populace is are called to take up arms for one cause or another. "Fight the dwarves", "Join the Darkness", "Seek enlightenment", these are the cries which divide his beloved Orschild. And how can you defend a province from itself?

The Freedomers

The Sau are the only dwarves in the ancient realm that have truly reached an equal footing with the humans. They have land, influence, power, and wealth, in the same amounts as the rest of the nobility in Orschild. Gideon's province had proven its tolerance and embraced the idea of freedom more completely than any of the other provinces, but this is not an achievement that everyone accepts. Where the dwarves have gained, someone must lose out, and so it has been. Wherever a dwarfen craftsman has set a standard of excellence, he has put human equivalents out of business. Whenever a senior dwarf has been granted land, another human nobleman has lost out, and the dwarfen traders have taken their share of the market out of the hand of mankind. This is inevitable, and as true for dwarves, humans, or elves.

But the fact that the original human settlers have lost out to easily recognizable newcomers has created a backlash. Resentment has grown among those who have missed out, and a movement against the dwarves has slowly grown ever since they first arrived in the province. Had it not been for the dwarfen warrior heroics during the Rebellion of the Sovereigns and the Second Elf War, the conflict would have erupted years ago. As it is, the idea of destroying the Sau has only festered and perverted a few minds, but it is perhaps fitting that it should suddenly grow so strong now, at the time of the final reckoning. Either the Freedomers or the Dwarves must fall.

The Birth of the Freedomers

The Freedomers, as they exist in their modern manifestation, have only been around for a few decades, but they are by no means the first anti-dwarf group. Jeris Grender, the governor of Nordel, led the first organized violence against dvarves during the Years of Silence. As well as being a governor, Grender was the head of the goldsmith's guild. Before the dwarves, this position had granted him a vast amount of money and influence. The clients of the guild were mostly extremely wealthy noblemen who competed with each other to see who could afford the most exquisite piece of Jeris' guild. He began to charge his members more and more, but in return guaranteed them that while he ran the guild, there would be an unprecedented demand for their goods. He delivered what he promised, and if circumstances had been different he would probably have become one of the wealthiest men in Orschild.

It was around this time that the Scale Trading House was built, and, thinking that the presence of a large trading house would only increase the prestige of his guild, Jeris agreed to let it be built on his land. What he did not know was that the Scale would bring with it an extremely skilled group of dwarfish gold and silver smiths. The council of the kin had decided that they would attempt to challenge the guild in what was a market without any serious competition. They set up and began to charge half the standard guild rate for all products. Working tirelessly, they produced a fabulous assortment of jewelry, cutlery, fittings and decorations. Soon, the nobles realized that the dwarfen goods were as well-crafted as the best of the human equivalents, and they turned to the Scale.

Jeris slowly began to lose money. He did not understand how to compete with another organization, and so the Goldsmith's Guild sank to a depth from which it would never recover. As Jeris saw it, the dwarves had paid back for his hospitality by stabbing him in the back, and his hatred grew day by day. Gathering the members of his guild about him he began a system of dwarf persecution which was being repeated all around the world. In the year 835, he publicly lynched innocent dwarfen goldsmiths, and the Lord of Orschild was forced to step in. The governor was deposed and replaced by a dwarf sympathizer. Jeris retreated to Bervoche and licked his wounds.

Sturm Grender

Hundreds of years later the descendant of Jeris, Sturm Grender, returned to Orschild. He harbored within him the deep resentment for the dwarves who had robbed him of his birthright, and quietly began to make contact with like-minded men. He would sit in seedy inns, and speak to the heads of the guilds which had been most damaged by the dwarfen competition. Slowly the seeds of an organization were sewn. Before long he was the leader of a group of over a hundred powerful men who all despised the dwarves and wanted them kicked out of Orschild. They called themselves the Freedomers and began to spread their ideas about Orschild, always seeking members to join them. Sturm felt that he would soon hold the key to the castle and the guild, which had always been meant for him.

The Prince

Gideon's son, Orwen, had also been robbed of his birthright. Due to the pact made with the dwarves several hundred

The Wolf's Teeth

The Wolf's Teeth are a rock formation outside Resna. They were created during a mighty storm after the Enlightenment when terrifying blasts of lightning split the cliffs apart. Somewhere, buried within that rubble, are the remains of what might have been one of the most important heathen monuments. It was the essence of everything that was practiced before the Enlightenment. Every year, several pilgrims still come to visit the gorge. They hope to find faith, some sort of salvation that will save them from the troubles of the world. Whether or not they find anything real does not matter; as long as they believe, they keep on coming, hunting a cause as lost as the quest for the old kings.

years ago, he had lost his chance to be governor of one of the most important counties in the province. Harboring deep hatred for both the Sau and his own father who obeyed them, he ran from his home.

In the Pigskin inn he made contact with the governor of Joermark, a man who had come to hate the presence of dwarfen governors in the counties all around him. After having heard Orwen's story the governor felt that he had found the key that the Freedomers had been looking for. Finally there was a man of the most noble of Orschilder families – the Bernons – who held a grudge against the dwarves as strong as any of them. With his story the Freedomers would gain supporters who had previously felt no enmity towards the dwarves.

Orwen was taken to meet Sturm who found that he liked the young prince instantly. He had many of the characteristics he himself lacked. A charismatic speaker and inspirational leader, he was perfect for their cause. Thus, Orwen was taken around the province and he told his story again and again to whoever would listen. Supporters flocked to their cause, and Sturm, realized that they had found the key to the liberation of Orschild. He immediately relinquished the position as leader to Orwen. Though he would continue to be the true commander of the organization, Orwen's attributes would be put to their full use if he could become a figurehead for the organization. Orwen personally resented this, as he wanted to be leader in reality as well as in name, but he accepted the experience and judgment of the older man.

The Elf

With the addition of Orwen the Freedomers grew in influence and power. They began to become more active, even going so far as to persecute dwarves in certain counties where they were strong, a grim parody of the Years of Silence echoed through the province sending tremors to the heart of the Sau and the council. They in turn went to Lord Gideon, who dispatched agents to ensure the protection of the dwarves.

Within the circles of the nobility this process was repeated. Slander and bullying tactics put pressure on the few dwarfen governors, and Lord Gideon was forced to step in and stop the dangerous chain of events that could have led to a civil war. Again and again the Freedomers attacked, and the Sau responded. It was then that Orwen came up with his plan of ultimate aggression.

He stormed in to Sturm's office and told him that it was time to eliminate their greatest enemy – Cenobius Sau. He argued that if they could kill the head of the kin it would throw the Sau into a state of confusion, which would make them ripe for destruction, furthermore it would prove their power to the supporters of their cause. Sturm agreed that with some modification the plan would work. But they could not risk the retribution of the dwarves or the dwarf-lovers by openly killing the most important member of the kin. They would need an outside agent to accomplish the deed.

This is when they first heard of Gemorion, the Gamiel elf. They had received reports of an elf who had reputedly killed several dwarves in a host of different provinces, and thought that he might support their cause. But he proved much more interesting than this. Inquiries made into his past eventually revealed that he had a personal grudge against a dwarf who could very well be Cenobius Sau.

The two leaders of the Freedomers understood the significance of this. If they could convince him that his enemy truly was Cenobius Sau, they could probably have him kill the dwarf for them, allowing them to crush the Sau. They quickly dispatched a messenger, Kelir Teress, to seek out the elf and invite him to a talk. He was found in Sein and eagerly agreed to meet with anyone who could tell him the name of the dwarf who had caused him so much pain and loss. Arriving in Orschild he killed three of the Sau before meeting the conspirators in an unknown inn. The direct result of the conference went exactly as the two humans had hoped. Gemorion proved only too eager to take the revenge he deserved, and if this helped to crush an entire kin of dwarves, so much the better.

Now

In the present situation the Freedomers expand their operations, seeking to apply yet greater pressure to the dwarves, rallying more and more members to their banner, and working behind the scenes to undermine the Sau. Gemorion seeks a way to get to Cenobius, and to kill him. Orwen travels the province and speaks against his father and the dwarves, and Sturm continues to plan the downfall of his hated enemies. As their activities increase they become more powerful, but also more obvious. If they do not manage to balance power and secrecy, they will be crushed by Gideon's troops.

The Darkness in Orschild

Marquis Lazarus has betrayed the Church and turned to the Darkness. Next to Orschild, over the Pendarens, lies the greatest threat to mankind since the raising of the Iron Gate. In Merodak the legions of Dark priests and Knights Templar revise their spell books and prepare for the invasion of the ancient realm. Only Orschild lies between them and their greatest enemy of Ravarra.

If they can take over the pathetic province they will have a platform from which to launch their assault whenever they choose. And if their dark cults can establish themselves in the Bernon's province, they can spread into the lands of the Church's three most powerful states. Thus, Lazarus turns has turned an extraordinary amount of his attention to spreading the teachings of the darkness into Orschild.



The Dark Cults

The dark cults are usually formed around one man - its dark priest. A dark priest will travel to Orschild from Merodak and set himself up in a small area, usually as a healer. When he has started to win the trust of the local inhabitants he will spread some of the milder teachings of the Darkness, the messages of freedom and individualism which the people of Orschild hold so dear. Gradually he will begin to speak of the Darkness as the way to reach these goals and ideals. He will show them magic to convince them of the power that is theirs for the taking, and slowly he will have started a loyal following of cultists. Often they will hold meetings and speak of the need to turn Orschild into a copy of Merodak.

The populations of these places become hostile and suspicious, strangers become hated and feared. A visitor to such a place would find a cool reception, even by the standards of the other local villages, and like a mist, the attitudes of Darkness spread, and promotes even greater sins, as suspicion and hatred leads to murder and blackmail. Once a cult has been established it will grow as newcomers arrive in town, and if it is big enough the priest will begin to teach them to use magic. A host of loyal and completely inconspicuous agents of darkness will have been born, and they will begin to create trouble for the local governor or the neighboring county. Indeed the cults are the foremost weapon of the Darkness because they take over the province from within. Undetectable to an outsider, these sorts of conversions are taking place in small villages all over Orschild.

The Infiltrators

Apart from setting up dark cults the dark priests have another important role, as spies and infiltrators. Usually a dark priest will approach one member of the organization he wants to infiltrate. He will speak to this man and become friendly with him, aid and advise him. Ultimately he will convince him that he needs and deserves to advance, and that the best way to do this is to do as the priest says. The man becomes the priest's pawn, and gradually he will become more and more convinced of the virtues of Darkness. Like a disease the influence of the priest spreads.

Alternatively, the priest himself will infiltrate the organization, and this is more likely in the cases when they are spying on an organization that is directly opposed to the Darkness. In such a case they will feign a true enthusiasm for the beliefs and ideals of the organization, and painstakingly they will move up the ranks, until they are in a position to actually control its actions. Always the way of the Darkness is to grow within like the tendrils of a plant, seizing control slowly, leading to a decay of principles and beliefs. The touch of Darkness is the touch of corruption and decay.

Who can say how many have been infiltrated, Gideon's court, the trading houses, the Freedomers? Only one thing is certain, and this is the fact that nothing is sacred or safe from the corrupting touch of Darkness.

The Darkness and the Brothers

The Brothers of the Rose comprise one organization that has been infiltrated by Darkness in the guise of the dark priests and the possessed. How long this has been true is difficult to say, but at some point during the awakening the agents of Darkness found their way into the ranks of the defenders of the One. One of the leaders of the organization is Kernus Theis, a man possessed by a Purgate. Under his influence the Brothers have undertaken a number of actions which show an obvious taint of darkness if viewed by an outsider. Murders and heresy have become commonplace, and there are rumors of a secret society within the Brothers, which has taken to the use of Magic in the name of the Church. His various interpretations have twisted the One's law to extraordinary extremes. Nonetheless, the brothers appear too caught up in the current successes of the campaign against Gideon and the authorities to understand that in truth: their actions have done far more to damage the Church than to help it.

The Three

Currently there are three dark cults that are dominating central Orschild. They are known in Merodak as the Key, the Sons, and the Crow. In a sense they are all unlike any of the other cults because they are not based in any one particular place. They have carried the conversion of a dark cult to its ultimate and inevitable last step, and turned themselves into organizations of dark priests, much like an extension of Merodak. These cults train dark priests, infiltrate various organizations, and serve as a safe haven for the agents of darkness. Controlling each is the dark priest which founded the original cult, secret and unknown men who lead very ordinary day to day lives, but work behind the scenes to spread their influence over Orschild. They have come to represent the different facets of Darkness, and serve different roles in the Conversion of Merodak.

The Key

The Key is the foremost center of Magic, and the place where all of the new dark priests are sent to complete their training. It then serves as the base of operations, and the priests will report back to the head of the Key at various times to receive further instructions. It is this cult which is responsible for infiltrating the important organizations of Orschild.

The Berrer Forest

The Berrer Forest is the largest and oldest one in all of Orschild. It has remained the domain of nature in the face of everything man has tried to do to tame it. Within the leafy boughs and shadows live a large number of bears, wolves, and wild dogs. It also protects a number of secrets.

It is impossible to say exactly what you might find if you were to examine the whole thing; the mold-ridden bones of previous explorers certainly, but maybe great treasure as well. It is true to say that many have found their fortune there, like Parek Wimder, who found the crown of King Laar, or Charl Jedner, who uncovered the grave of Archbishop Catbury. The Berrer Forest is a home of mystery, and for those who are lucky, it is also a home of treasure.

The Sons

The cult of the Sons, or the Sons of Darkness as they call themselves, is the school of the dark teachings. This is where people learn about the life of Cyrus and the Book of darkness, and this is where any children are taken to be brought up with the virtues of Darkness.

The Crow

The Crow supervises the growth of new dark cults. They will aid dark priests from Merodak who have come to spread the conversion. It is also the store of equipment. Copies of Cyrus' gospels and the writings of his disciples are kept together with dark relics and ancient books of magic.

The Activities of the Church

The Church has long been a major influence in Orschild. The fact that the Bernon family rules one free province surrounded by the three strongest bastions of the Church was always going to have an impact on the life and growth of their land and people. Two wars with their hated enemies have left the Lords of Orschild highly suspicious towards their neighbors, and so too with the people. The Church meanwhile, has always resented Orschild's freedom. If not for the fact of its existence the Church would have undivided control over the center of the World, and it would be able to move freely between its provinces, while also putting it in a position of immense trading power. Therefore the Church has been active in Orschild for centuries since the Rebellion of the Sovereigns.The Knights Templar have been sent over the borders to raid its villages or to escort pilgrims to see the holy sites, while other agents have been sent to infiltrate the courts of the governors.

Lately its actions have become increasingly urgent as it is forced to respond to the machinations of the darkness, lest it gain total control over the province. All of this has only increased the people's resentment of the power that they defeated so many centuries ago, and the Lord's position on the Church has become one of growing hostility.

The Secret Sects

Unlikely though it may seem, not everyone in Orschild is actually opposed to the Church. Many had come to believe wholeheartedly in the laws of the One and his servants, and so, after the rebellion, a number of secret sects were formed to keep the faith alive. At first they were just that, illegal societies which still practiced the teachings outlined in Nomen, which came to be the most important object in the lives of the cult's members as it offered an unbreakable connection with the Church.

However, as the Church grew strong again it sent inquisitors into Orschild to spy on the doings of the Bernons. These agents soon discovered the existence of the secret sects and realized their value to the Church. They came to act as foundations for the Church infiltration of Orschild and soon they were supported by agents from the cathedral in Ravarra. This relationship lasted roughly until the beginning of the Second Elf War. When, for a while, they became obsolete as the Church became legal, and were later crushed as the Lord tightened his grip on the province.

But after a hundred years of history they have reemerged. The Church has grown stronger than it has been since the Enlightenment and the subject of Orschild has begun to creep once more into the minds of the Marquis. With the conversion of Merodak and the heresy of Lazarus the province has become the single most important political barrier between the Darkness and the Church. If it should fall, war would be imminent. So it is the Church's desperate desire to know everything that goes on in the courts and villages of Orschild.

Once again the sects of the Church are their most important tool in accomplishing this goal. In recent years, several inquisitors, witch hunters, pilgrims, and Knights Templar, have sought protection and solace within the comforting ranks of the sects.

Within a Sect

A sect is based around one vital and overriding concern, that is, the maintenance of ancient Church practices, and most importantly the observance of Lex. A sect does not need to have any political concerns, nor does it have to aid the Church, though it would most likely do so regardless. The only requirement is that each sect should have a membership of people who still believe wholeheartedly in the One and his teachings. Indeed, at first there were very few sects that were recognized by the Church, and it is only a few years after the rebellion that the Marquis even became aware of their existence.

Normally, someone who has been to Ravarra or one of the other Church provinces will lead each sect. He would have received an amount of training in a monastery, or even a cathedral. They may even have the title of monk or priest, and as the old leader is about to die, his replacement sneaks across the border to repeat the process. In this way the Church is kept informed of the goings on within the sect, and the sect is kept aware of what it may do for the Church. Furthermore, it ensures that the religious developments of the Church do not pass the sects by, and in this way sees to it that the sect does not degenerate in its religious piety.

The Church and the Darkness

The Church is interested in Orschild for one main reason, which is the fact that it is the place where the Darkness has some of its greatest interests, and is also therefore one of the

The Seal of Orwen

One of Orwen's first contributions to the Freedomers was his signet ring. He deemed that it was necessary to establish a secret form of communication that only members of the organization would be able to understand. This emerged in the form of his signet ring. By subtly altering the patterns and design of it, they could convey a number of different messages, in a form that only they would understand. Nobody would realize that the true content of their messages lay in the seal, which would allow them to send Gideon and his men on wild goose chases all over the province, while they would never be caught. Currently there are sixty- seven copies of the ring that have been distributed among the more senior members of the group.

places where they are most active. Partly the Marquis deal with this by investigating the inhabitants of Orschild, but perhaps more importantly, they infiltrate the very heart of the Dark.

One of the most important jobs of the Inquisition is to plant its agents into the dark cults so that they can find out what is going on, and in this way move to prevent it. The Church has its agents in several places around Orschild, disguised as healers, traders, craftsmen, and other ordinary citizens. There are minor officials from the cathedrals and monasteries living out very ordinary lives in Orschild, most of these are members of the sects. Their work is quite boring most of the time, but every now and again they are able to assist the Church. If they notice that there are strange goings on in their village they will inform the nearest sect, which will pass the word onto one of the Church provinces, which will in turn send down an inquisitor to investigate. If there is signs of the Darkness the inquisitor will try to infiltrate the cult while it is still in its early life. They will act as members of the evil organization until such time as the Church deems it necessary to destroy it. At this stage action is swift, and before long, either through Gideon or directly using Knights Templar, the cult is eradicated. The Darkness suspects that there are at least seven members of the Church working in all of the big three cults, and of course, they in turn seek to lay traps for the agents of the Inquisition.

The Inquisitor Advisors

The inquisitors of the Church also seek to infiltrate the courts of Orschild. They choose to work unlike the Darkness, directly through their own agents. But getting a spy into the court of Lord Gideon is obviously harder than sneaking a monk into a village somewhere in the middle of nowhere, especially since the monk does not actually have to do much. The most popular disguise for a spy in one of the courts is as an advisor. In this position they will be able to examine political and trading developments extremely closely without attracting any attention, after all they are only doing their job as an advisor. Of course, this carries with it its own complications. Advisors have to train somewhere, but a member from the Church will not have trained anywhere in Orschild. They can only lie, claiming to have practiced either somewhere in Orschild, or more commonly, abroad, at the academy in Bervoche for example. But this can only hold true if nobody feels the need to check at the academy and finds out that somebody is being dishonest. In earlier years this was acceptable, but recently Gideon has made things more difficult. This problem has been alleviated somewhat by using the province of Aretas which is willing to lie for the Church. But this means other problems, and so the cycle continues. Only through the skill and determination of the inquisitors does the Church succeed, but if they do the value of the information they can get is inestimable. The cost of all this is of course the fact that occasionally an inquisitor gets caught and killed, but through the power of the One they have managed to continue.

The Raids

The Church acts in one more way in Orschild, and this last involvement is far more direct. Irregularly, now and again, it feels that the people of Orschild should be punished for their sins of heresy. Thus, Marquis Tarsus is often obliged to send bands of Knights Templar into Orschild, to raid and to destroy. So it has come to pass that the inhabitants on the borders of Orschild have become increasingly suspicious and frightened. In these places, hatred for the Church has grown immense, and there is the constant worry that the brilliant white robes of a raiding party will come billowing over the hills.

The Brothers of the Rose

The Brothers of the Rose are one of the most important forces acting in Orschild at the present moment. Their intent has always been to create enough confusion and disorder to topple the Bernons, ostensibly to allow the Church back into Orschild. They are the very first of the sects which were created when the Rebellion cut the people off from the teachings of the One, and in recent years they have been one of the most active.

However, there are various discrepancies that make them radically different from the others. Firstly, they do not deal with the Church as the others do. Nor do they need its encouragement to embark on a very deep scheme of confusion and undermining the rule of Gideon. It has even been theorized that they are behind the Freedomers and even certain dark cults. This sounds fairly wild but becomes less improbable when you look more closely at their history.

The history of the Brothers

According to official Church documents, the first event with connections to the Brothers of the Rose occurred in II A.E when a powerful Lord named Junerus Ithel aided the fledgling Church at the battle of Ravarra. He brought several knights with him, and was rewarded with lands in Orschild at his request after he had sworn the vows of priesthood. Several hundred years later, his descendant, Therles Itheler of Joermark, who had by now lost his land, but in the process had been able to join a long line of powerful Bishops within the Church, asked to form an order of Knights Templar in an unprecedented move. He was told that this would be granted if he could gather enough knights to fill its ranks. This was accomplished remarkably quickly, and some very influential men of the church joined him. Most noteworthy of these was Elias Bertrud, a descendant of Marquis Torques.



With such powerful men behind him, the Church could not turn down his request and the Order of the Rose was formed. They served with distinction and fought with considerable fervor during the Rebellion. They were crushed, but had anticipated this, and the leader of the organization formed the Brothers of the Rose, apparently dedicated to the Church's reclamation of Orschild through a scheme of chaos. Indeed they were much like any other Church sect except for the exceptions noted above.

The Secret of the Brothers

In truth, the Brothers of the Rose are far from the orthodox Church sect, and their beliefs are distinctly different from the orthodox teachings of the Church. This opposing view is pinned on the events surrounding the Enlightenment and is based on the writings of Marquis Attamens. They claim that the Marquis have for a long time lied or been misinformed about very basic facts concerning the One and his law. This is rooted in their claim that in fact, only one man was present when the One revealed himself and that this was Marquis Attamens, citing his gift of clairvoyance as proof. The other Marquis, they say, were merely his disciples and that he should have been the only leader of the One's Church.

According to their version of events, the other Marquis were made into his generals and champions, but that he never intended for them to rule the Church as they do today. Nor were they supposed to inhabit the Cathedral of Ravarra. The unhappy chance of Attamens' death as it is opened prevented him from turning the cathedral into the house of the One, where his chosen servant would live and rule by his word. This man, they say, would have been Attamens' son. However, the Church misinterpreted the often cryptic nature of his commands, and this enabled the jealous Marquis to take control over the Cathedral. Only Marquis Torques objected, and his brethren overruled him.

However, Attamens had told the truth about the revelation to his son, and he had told him that the word of the One could only be found within Divinatio if you used Illumino to guide you through this often obscure and ambiguous text. According to the Brothers, the other Marquis kept their plans from Attamens and he was never allowed to read their own scripts. Attamens' son is believed to have read Divinatio and Illumino, and to have found the key to the truth. But he did not dare to make his discovery public, for fear of reprisal from the Church. Instead he approached several members of the Church whose families were mentioned in Divinatio as vital to the survival of the true faith and revealed to them the secret of his father. Some rejected him, and these are the lost families, but many chose to follow him. He also stole a

number of artifacts listed in Divinatio as being true instruments of the One, although some did not exist yet, and some were closely guarded.

In the tradition of this secret sect, Divinatio included all the details of the betrayal of the Marquis within texts determined by the Church refer to the First Elf War. It also details the method by which this treachery was to be opposed. The rightful head of the Church was to make his kingdom in Orschild, surrounded by the all-vital families, in the place where the One had first shown himself to Attamens. If he could assemble all the families and all the artifacts mentioned in Divinatio, this would be where the One would once again manifest himself – after his incarnation had been taken to Ravarra. Once this had happened, the true defenders of the faith would be informed of the course of action that they needed to take.

The Brothers believe that when this happens they will be able to prove their right to the rule of the Church from Ravarra. However, before this can be done they must have found all the artifacts and the families, and they must have found the first copy of Divinatio secreted in the cathedral in Ravarra, where the whole unabridged truth lies. A number of relics – believed to have been lost by the Church – are in fact in the possession of the brothers. How close they are to achieving their goal is unknown, but they have been working at it for a period of hundreds of years, and the recent increase in the intensity of their activities indicates that they are getting closer to success.

The Degrees of the Brothers

The brothers believe that all men are equal except for the descendant of Attamens, man or woman, chosen by the One to lead the Church. Thus, all men have the possibility of advancement deep into the ranks of their organization. Furthermore, any man may join them as long as his claim is assessed by the highest among them. All new members of any age are initiated into their ranks as novices with knowledge of only the most basic of their beliefs, these are known as Apprentices. An apprentice will then advance through the organization by advancing its cause and the masters of the order trust them. Each advancement is marked by a ceremony which relates to the true history of the Church and which symbolizes the gain of knowledge. There are sixteen degrees in all, ranging from Apprentice to Sublime Grand Master. Only the Sublime Grand Master knows every secret of the Order, the others are taught by their seniors. The degrees are listed below, together with the knowledge they would reasonably be assumed to have:

1. Apprentice – An Apprentice would know only that the Order is dedicated to advancing the cause of the true message of the One. They would know that the Marquis are false and that there was only one true Marquis.

2. Fellow Brother – A Fellow Brother would know that it was Marquis Attamens who was the true Marquis and that the Grand Master is his descendant.

3. Master Brother – This is the level that most brothers attain unless they do something untoward. They know the whole story of how the other Marquis betrayed Attamens and usurped his place, and of how Torques objected. They also know Attamens' law and what he said.

4. Secret Brother – At this level the true secrets begin to be revealed. The Secret Brothers know of the existence of the True Word, though not that it is concealed within Divinatio. They also know of the families and artifacts that it details.

5. Perfect Brother – A Perfect Brother knows that the True Word is located in Divinatio but not how to find it. He also knows that they need the families and the artifacts to restore the truth. He is also aware of the members of the families within the order.

6. Provost and Judge – A Provost and Judge can teach the lower orders the story of Attamens. He is also allowed to decide whether or not someone should be allowed to advance up to level three, but has no control beyond that. He knows the identities of all the families, even the lost ones.

7. Sublime Elect – The Sublime Elects can only be chosen with the complete approval of all the Provosts and the Sublime Grand Master. The Sublime Elects control the teaching of all the minor orders. As such, they are informed of Attamens law as contained within Divinatio and know which quotes relate to what. They are also told the true interpretations of some of his visions. Finally they decide the advancement of members up to, but not beyond, degree ten.

8. Knight of Perfection – The Knights of Perfection are the foot soldiers responsible for the recovery of the artifacts. Though they are not literally knights, they are trained to fight. As such, they are told of the nature of the artifact they are hunting. They are not told why it is important, or about its true history.

9. Knight of the East and West – A Knight of the East and West is a commander of a regiment of Knights of Perfection. He or she will know the history and the importance of the artifact they are hunting.

10. Prince of Ravarra – One of the Princes of Ravarra – there can only ever be three at any one time – is one of the supreme commanders of the lower knightly degrees. They know the history and the significance of all the artifacts and they are also aware of most of their locations.

11. Knight of Therles – A Knight of Therles must be a member of one of the vital families, other men can advance higher, but none of them can ever be a Knight of Therles. These knights are responsible for winning the lost families back into the fold of the Brothers. They know the role each family must play in the final reckoning with the Church.

12. Knight of Junerus – The Knight of Junerus – for there can be



only one – knows the secret of using Illumino to read Divinatio, except for the interpretation of the prophecies. He is responsible for the actions of all the knightly degrees, including the Princes of Ravarra. He is the supreme commander of the foot troops.
13. Patriarch of Divinatio – The Patriarch of Divinatio – again there is only one – is the commander of all teaching. He is fully initiated into all the secrets of Divinatio, including the true interpretation of the prophecies. He can also veto the decision of the Sublime Elects if he chooses. He alone is responsible for initiating members beyond the tenth degree.
14. Venerable Grand Master – The Venerable Grand Master is second only to the Sublime Grand Master within the order. He is responsible for the actions of the Patriarch and the Knight of Junerus and reports to the Sublime commander as his eyes and ears.
15. The Sublime Grand Master – The Sublime Grand Master is the descendant of Marquis Attamens. According to legend, he possesses some of his ancestor's powers of clairvoyance. He alone knows where in Ravarra the first copy of Divinatio is located.

Brothers as Player Characters

If the characters choose to do so they can play as a Brother of the Rose. If they do, they should choose another career as well, exactly as if they were playing as a dwarf or elf, but should always remember that they are irrevocably tied to the order. The first thing to decide is what degree they have attained. No player character should start above degree five unless there is very good reason to do so. Then you have to decide what the character makes of everything they have been told, whether they accept it without question as the truth, or if they have doubts. In any case their beliefs are profoundly heretical and must be kept a secret. Furthermore, they can at any time be called upon to perform services for the order, and finally there is the prospect of advancing further through the ranks of the order. All this should be kept in mind but does not distract from the fact that playing a brother is demanding but rewarding.

Gemorion

"The dwarves are the plague of all people."
– Gemorion

Gemorion the Gamiel Elf is the very symbol of his kind. He is everything that you would expect from one of Gamiel's sons, wild and unpredictable, ambitious and ruthless, scruple less and arrogant. He had hoped to become one of the most prominent members of the court, but ended up cast aside. A man like him refused to admit any fault of his own in causing this, and so he lay the blame squarely on the shoulders of a dwarf who had defeated him in battle, and on all of his race.

The Grudge

Gemorion's plan to advance through the ranks would have worked as he saw it. If he had destroyed all who faced him, he felt sure that he would have been closer to his patron than any other had ever been. But he was defeated and almost killed by a dwarf, who he now knows was Cenobius Sau. Had it not been for him everything would have been different. Because of this, Gemorion wants more than anything to get his revenge by killing the dwarf. And after he has done that he wants to destroy every trace of him. He believes that if he can only eradicate the memory of his defeat he will be able to rectify it.

The Freedomers

Above all else, Gemorion is as self-obsessed as any being alive in the world. He feels nothing but contempt for any other elf, and how he feels about the other races is difficult to describe. He may despise the dwarves beyond all else, but this does not mean that he feels any love for humans. And so, he hates the arrogant humans who believe that they can manipulate one of the masters of intrigue with the simplest of tricks. He has his own schemes concerning his life after he has completed his revenge, and he does not intend to allow the Freedomers to oppose him in this venture. From behind the scenes, he is slowly sewing the seeds of dissent within their ranks, redirecting the true power to himself only.

The Snake

Like all of his kin, Gemorion has decorated his body with tattoos, which circle in outlandish patterns around his body. In particular there is one tattoo which has come to resemble the reason for his disgrace to him. When Cenobius Sau cut him down he received a cut which left a long and thick scar on the right cheek of his face. The first step in his quest to eradicate his defeat was to cover this scar with the design of a snake without a tongue. He left only a small pale tip to remind him that he must never tire in his revenge. When Cenobius Sau is lost from memory he will give the snake its tongue, and he will be a new man.



Adventure in Resna

'No. This will not be permitted to continue. For too long has our guild suffered under the weakness of the Lord. I say that no more will we be subject to the decisions of an old man dominated by a race of people with no rightful place in our society. I refuse to agree to these demands.' The guild master's words provoked a reaction of utter disbelief around the room. None of his associates had believed that he would go as far as this in his madness. Only two of the figures around the table seemed to have been expecting this: the man himself and the Lord's representative. He knew that this would happen, the self-satisfied smirk on his face showed that he had anticipated and prepared for this.

'You do realize, master guilder, that what you demand will mean a serious review of your guild's activities, which, if it finds them to be unsatisfactory, will allow me to dissolve the entire organization.' Everybody in the room was familiar with this threat of course. It was a safeguard designed when the first guilds were founded to prevent them from gaining too much power – a pointless and pathetic tool. It was common knowledge that such a review would take years, and that no Lord would ever dare to actually dissolve a guild for fear of reprisal. But the representative of Gideon knew this. He was known to be a brilliantly clever individual. It did not make sense for him to make such an empty promise.

'Yes, of course I realize this.' It was the only possible reply for the guilder. If he had been outmaneuvered, now there was nothing he could do about it.

'Then it is my duty to inform you that as from now your guild is under review. Do you accept these terms?'

'I do.'

'Then in addition I will use my right to impose one condition which I believe will make the review more reliable. It is my decision that the goldsmith guild should be prohibited from dealing in Resna. It may keep its office in the capital, but it may not have any dealing in the city, nor may it speak in the court of Lord Gideon, though it may keep its representative there as an observer.' It was an unexpected move, appraised by some remarks of exclamation, and involuntary gasps for breath. The smirk on the advisor's face grew at the same rate as the guild master's frown.

'My guild will give you no such pleasure. We officially quit our office in Resna as from tomorrow. Our representative will be withdrawn tonight. Good day to you gentlemen.' The guild master stormed out as the others whispered apprehensively among themselves. The Goldsmiths' Guild had been the first. Which of them would follow into exile from the seat of power?

If they could not have dealings in Resna, they might as well be dead.

The advisor basked in it all, as if enjoying the first warmth of the spring of a new era.

The Genius Earl of Berednia

The county of Berednia has long been called the 'new county'. It is the home of new ideas, new technologies, and newfound wealth. But this was not always the case. The revolution was started only two hundred years ago by the governor of that time, Earl Londer Galar. Londer was an extremely intelligent and ambitious man, and he wanted to turn his backwards county into something big. To achieve this, he built the county's system of roads and set up its complex lending guilds. But the true extent of his genius lay not in these material and practical inventions. After his death, his study was opened by his son, who was amazed to find fantastic diagrams of alien machines. These have now been put on display in the castle, and several of Gemini's greatest thinkers come every year to study them. They say that Londer was a genius who had ideas thatthey can not even begin to comprehend. However, most people are far more grateful for his roads, and it seems that the genius of Berednia will never truly be understood.

Adventure in Resna is an episode for Gemini which introduces the characters to the wealth of intrigue and mystery that is Orschild. This is accomplished by sticking them in the thick of the action in Resna. It ties up many of the elements of this supplement, developing a conflict that has its roots all the way back to the time of the first Gideon Bernon and the pact with the Sau.

Any number of characters of any race or career can play the adventure. If you intend to participate in this adventure as a player you should stop reading now. If, on the other hand, you intend to narrate this adventure you would do well to familiarize yourself with it quite extensively.

The Exile of the Goldsmiths' Guild

The Goldsmiths' Guild has had a long history of conflict with the dwarves. They were one of the first guilds who struggled with competition from dwarfen smiths, and especially with the dwarfen trading house of the Scale. A former guild master was the one who instigated the dwarf lynchings in 835, and his descendant founded the Freedomers. Even though the Grender family to which he belonged has not officially headed the Goldsmiths' Guild since 836 it has since felt a close affiliation to its former leaders, and developed a traditional hatred for the dwarves.

Since the establishment of the Scale as the greatest trading power in the county of Nordel the Goldsmiths' Guild has gradually lost more and more power. They have come to blame the Sau for their own inability to move with the times. Markets have changed, and the guild has grown poorer. More than anyone, they have lost out to the new era, and especially under the reign of Lord Gideon.

They had hoped that the new Lord would enable them to win back their own power, and when other guilds and even the noblemen began to speak out against the dwarves they began to imagine the destruction of the Scale. But it was not to be.

Lord Gideon refused to sully the honor of the Bernons by breaking the pact. Furthermore, he even brought his power to bear on those who were not so honorable, by promoting a new, dwarf-friendly, guild master. The guild hated him for this intrusion, and in secret they began to plot against Gideon. They met with their old master, the Grender family, and agreed to lend their aid to the Freedomers. They used their influence within the court and with the other guilds to block any new laws that might be seen as favorable to the dwarves. In time Gideon grew impatient with the rebellious guild, and employed one of his most skilful legal advisors, Baron Gregor, to put a stop to the guild's actions. Gregor realized that it would be too difficult to simply disband the guild, and instead exiled them from Resna, effectively taking them away from the seat of power where they had so much opportunity to create difficulties.

The guild could do little to block his move and they suddenly found themselves cut off from all their power, and doomed to extinction.

For this they vowed to take revenge

The Intrigue

There is one overriding intrigue in this adventure which manages to become quite complex as it ties together a substantial number of different elements as it develops into a plot of epic proportions. The main action involves the Freedomers' plan to reestablish the goldsmith guild at the court of Gideon so that they can further their cause. As they see it the only person standing in their way is Baron Gregor. He of course has realized that he might be slightly unpopular with the Freedomers after his part in decreasing their power. So he has employed a number of dwarfen bodyguards to look after him. The Freedomers on their part have decided that this gives them the perfect opportunity. Their intention is to have the Baron killed whilst trying to make it look like the dwarfen bodyguards committed the heinous crime. This, they believe, would force Gideon to reinstate the guild.

To achieve this they need to tie in with another element of the Sau, that is their quest to unite the kin. There are, of course, several dwarves who are not so eager to see them succeed – dwarves who believe that they cannot work together with the cursed and the other kin. Certain dwarves, mostly outcasts without the rigid sense of responsibility inherent in most dwarfs, are willing to go to great lengths to achieve this end, even if that means allying with the Freedomers and killing other members of their own race.

They also wish to try and change Gideon's own position on the dwarves – something which might seem like a fairly futile goal – and to this end they want to keep the whole event public.

The only people standing in their way are those few members of the Goldsmiths' Guild who have switched their loyalties in accordance with the views of their own guild master. It has been very difficult for the Freedomers to weed these people out, and thus it is that there is a small group of people who know about the plot and wish to prevent its completion. Their only problem is that the rest of the guild is aware of their existence.

The Action of the Adventure

When the characters arrive in Resna they will soon be sucked into the whole conflict. The loyal members of the guild are desperately trying to warn Baron Gregor of the plot to take his life. Meanwhile the Freedomers are desperately trying to stop them. The Goldsmiths' Guild is preparing the way for the plot to go ahead so that they can glean the maximum amount

Trial by Combat

Trial by combat has never officially been left out of Orschilder law, but it has been made practically null and void by the convention that the challenge is not counted if it is not accepted. However, there is still one county in Orschild that practices this rather crude method of law. Bonifat has refused to let go of the old custom, and trials have become a very public event, and a free entertainment. The accepted form dictates that the challenger decides the time and place, before both opponents choose their weapons. They are then pushed into an arena, surrounded by roaring spectators, and told to try to kill each other. How the governor can see this as a fair means of trial when he totally denies the possibility of divine intervention is a mystery.

of political advantage from it. Their dwarfen allies, meanwhile, are not quite sticking to the plan; instead they hope to confront the Sau. If they can find some evidence of the pact between the dwarves and Gideon Bernon they might be able to undermine the authority of the Sau. They are in fact being indirectly controlled by the Brothers of the Rose who want to undermine the Bernon family.

In the middle of all this confusion the characters will be pulled along on a wild chase to find out what is going on before it happens. As you can imagine it is quite important to keep track of what is going on through the adventure. When everything is said and done the political situation in Resna, and indeed in all of Orschild, will have been subtly altered in favor of one of the powerful factions. Which one of these factions it will be depends to a great extent on the actions of the characters. As the Narrator you will probably find it helpful to make use of the timetable included below. You can personally fill in any extra events you want to include. It will allow you to keep track of where the characters are at any one time.

DAY 1 - THE CHARACTERS ARRIVE IN RESNA. They spend the night at the Blue Bird Inn. Thet meet with Hernet, who is killed later in the night after hiring the characters. The letter is found.

DAY 2 - THE INVESTIGATIONS BEGIN. The characters spend the day trying to decipher the letter. Events from now on will depend greatly on where they go and what they do. The traitorous Larek dwarves make their way to the Moon Trading House and try to find anything about the pact.

DAY 3 - THE FREEDOMERS' MEETING. The characters are once more free to act as they wish. The Larek dwarves return to the Moon and find what they are looking for.

The Freedomers Jonan and Matil meet with Earl Grunder at the old Goldsmiths' Guild house.

DAY 4 - THE FEAST. This is the characters' last chance to find out what is going on. Later on that night, the party at Earl Grunder's castle will take place and the plot will be carried out.

The Actors

The most important element of the adventure is, as always, the different group of people who all scheme and intrigue to forward the various intrigues and subplots that the characters get mixed up in. They are described here, together with their motives. From this you should be able to get a feel for how they would act in any given situation that the characters might put them in.

Baron Gregor

Baron Gregor is more recognized for his skill as a diplomat and advisor than his name and title. He could have grown up to be one of the fops who inhabit the court of Lord Gideon, without a thought in their heads. Instead he chose to be ambitious, and learned all about law and politics, becoming one of the very brightest of young advisors. He could equally have grown up resenting the Sau. His grandfather had lost land that was to be given to the Sau before he was born – land that might have been his now, had it remained in the hands of his family. But his intense loyalty towards his sovereign prevents him from even raising his head in protest. He is still young, being just over thirty, and has an immensely well looked-after body. His balding head and beard make him look older than he really is – an effect that pleases him, as it means that other advisors take him more seriously.

He is a very focused man, and exceedingly ambitious, which has meant that he has refused to back down to the Freedomers. He even considers the dwarveen guards unnecessary but keeps them on as it increases his standing in the eyes of the Sau. If anyone finds him and reveals the plot, he will act quickly and decisively, but is likely to refuse to break off any engagements.

Hernet

Hernet is a middle-aged man who has become quite fat because of his skill with his craft. He looks considerably younger than he is and is very proud of his thick mane of brown hair. He is also one of the few members of the Goldsmiths' Guild who has welcomed the new times under the leadership of the new guild masters. He has never hated the dwarves – as many of his colleagues do – and in fact believes that an alliance between the guild and the Scale is the best way forward. He and his fellows were horrified when they discovered the plot, and Hernet quickly volunteered to try and deliver a message to Baron Gregor. At present he is quite frightened and paranoid, convinced that a traitor within the guild has found him and is about to have him killed, a fear that will prove justified. When he meets the characters he is worried that he will be unable to deliver the letter, and is therefore desperate to hire help. He promises them as much money as they want if they make sure his mission is fulfilled.

Jonan and Matil

Jonan and Matil are brothers. Both have fairly dark features and hair, which is unusual for Orschilders, leading to speculations that they are originally from further down south. This is true, they were brought to the province as young and brought up to be happy in a land that seemed very foreign to them. Their family was originally from Galatien but fled from the ravages of Malachdrim's elves. In their province, dwarves



were fairly unusual, and this may be the reason why they later turned to the Freedomers. Their father certainly found it hard to deal with cities overrun by powerful dwarves, and they choked under the rule of a dwarfen governor. When their father died, they were happy to blame their misfortunes on dwarfen leadership. They joined Orwen's organization and stood out because of their cold nature. They never shunned murder as a strategy and often performed the killings themselves. Nevertheless they achieved a great deal of success, and this is why they were eventually trusted to deal with baron Gregor. Most of the plot is their own plan and they assume total responsibility for it. They will not hesitate to simply have the characters eliminated if they find out about their involvement in the scheme of things.

Earl Grunder

Earl Grunder is also a member of the Freedomers, but not publicly so. He has been left in his position as a rather respected member of Resna's nobility in order that the group can use him to gain the utmost advantage. He is quite old – almost sixty now – but still powerfully built, with a coarse, brown beard. He represents the pioneering spirit of Orschild gone wrong. The man who in his youth was one of the province's foremost champions in their battle against the Church has become old and bitter. As his age has got the better of him, he has become increasingly bored and agitated. Not overly bright, it is unfortunate that he would come into contact with members of the Freedomers, who had no difficulty in persuading the man of the evil of the dwarves.

He has become a pawn of the Freedomers, but does find their crusade against Gideon a bit disturbing. It is not entirely impossible for a particularly persuasive character to convince him of the wrong in what he is planning.

Gerted, Renton and Fivial Larek

These three dwarves are outcasts from the Larek kin of Bervoche. They were involved in a brawl that resulted in the death of one of the Lord's messengers, and were thereafter shunned by their brethren. After a surprisingly long period of time they chose to leave their kin, carrying with them a deep resentment of the kin council and collective responsibility. In their minds it seemed that dwarves had to stand on their own two feet. More than anything they felt that no dwarf kin should involve itself in the affairs of the others, and this led to a deep resentment of the kin that so readily accepted those few dwarves who the three saw as the lowest form of life – the Cursed. They became desperate to oppose the Sau's quest of unity, and to discredit Celak Sau, but they were not sure of

how to do it. After spending a few months in Orschild they came across a man who seemed to have the answers they wanted. He claimed that there had been a pact made between Gideon Bernon and the Sau during the time of the Rebellion of the Sovereigns, and that this pact contained certain elements that could be damaging both to the hated Sau, and to the current Lord. While they digested this information they were presented with the perfect opportunity to make use of it. A member of the Freedomers approached them with a plan that would increase the power of the Sau's greatest opponents. They were to pose as Sau guards, and kill an enemy of the organization. Thinking that this would give them the perfect excuse to travel to Resna they readily accepted.

Thered

Thered seems to be a mild mannered gentleman in his early sixties, with a still-sharp sense of humor and a quick mind. In his youth he was a scholar and an advisor for one of the more minor noble families. His position was been demanding but it had given him the opportunity to pursue his greatest interest - the study of heraldry and the history of the many noble families that inhabit the world of Gemini. Under his bald dome and curvy spectacles resides a great spirit for adventure, and a distinct impression of right and wrong. If any of the characters approach him at the library that he now tends, and explains the situation, he will be quite happy to help in any way possible. If, however, he is given the feeling that they are up to no good, he will turn them away coldly.

Drobnak Sau

Drobnak Sau is one of the many scribes who are responsible for the running of the Moon Trading House in Resna. He is very formal and dedicated, almost to the point of being obsessive. That is exactly why he has currently been given the responsibility of dealing with any non-merchant visitors. The dwarves can be sure that he will be exceedingly thorough, and unwanted company will hopefully become frustrated before leaving in exasperation. If the characters come to the Moon he is the first person they will meet, and unless they can convince him that they are there on business he will deal with them personally.

Mentes

Mentes is the head of the guard at Earl Grunder's castle. He, unlike his master, has no inappropriate political affiliations. At the age of thirty, he considers himself too old to mess about with the Darkness, the Church, and even the Sau. On the other hand, he is totally loyal towards his master, and refuses to believe anything bad of him. Unless the characters can prove indisputably that Earl Grunder is a member of the Freedomers, he will refuse to help them.

Burgon Sau

Burgon Sau is responsible for the bodyguard assigned to protect Baron Gregor. He is seventy-eight years old, and full of worldly wisdom, having been through a great deal in his lifetime as a Sau soldier. Unusually, he has always had a great feeling of individuality, and is readier than many of his brothers to form close friendships. Among those humans he would consider a friend he lists Baron Gregor, who allowed his mother to keep her land free of charge for a short while when she was widowed. It became natural for him to volunteer to protect his friend therefore, when the Baron moved to protect the interests of the Sau. If the characters approach him with information about the plot he will readily help them in any way he can.

The Introduction

When the adventure starts the characters have – for some reason or other – made their way to Resna, the very heart of Orschild. It could even be used as a follow-up to the adventure found in the Gemini rulebook if the characters decide to leave the castle of Governor Lucero to continue their journey. It is early winter, and the snows have not yet begun to cover the land, but the frost certainly has, and it is not a good time of year to be out on the roads. So Resna has been emptied of most of its temporary visitors, and the streets are somewhat less crowded with merchants and markets than they would normally be. But in the greatest city of Orschild there will always be a lot going on, and though the season has slowed proceedings down it had by no means halted them entirely. The characters have just arrived in the city, mere minutes before the gates are closed for the night, and they desperately need a place to stay. It is late, and this could prove to be difficult, but after half an hour or so of trudging through the streets they see the welcoming glow on an open inn. If you wish you can read the following passage to the characters.

The guards look suspiciously at you as they step aside to allow you through the still-open gates. It is evident that they were just considering closing them and going home, but your arrival has made them delay this for another few minutes. It is lucky indeed that you managed to arrive when you did. Spending the night outside Resna in close proximity to the refugee camps is not always a pleasant experience. All you need now is a place to stay for the night where you can warm your hands and fight off the cold winds that have blasted through your travelling clothes all day. This is easier said than done at this time of night.

Most of the lights that earlier dazzled the streets are out now, and few innkeepers are prepared to take anyone else in after the gates are shut. So you find yourself having to force your feet, aching from cold, still further along the frosty streets. The gate behind you disappears round several corners

The Riverside Toll Gates

A large part of Berednia's revenue is gained directly from its roads. A well thought out system of toll gates ensure that the governor has his share of the profits. In recent years merchants have tried to get around this by shipping their goods down the Merloch River. In response to this, Governor Deren has attempted a new scheme. He has set up toll gates along the river, with carefully placed barriers and ditches to prevent adventurous captains from escaping the tax. While many merchants have resented the intrusion into what they feel is a sacred right, the toll guards have relished the opportunity. There is even talk of building a floating toll gate on Medias Lake.

as you turn away from the main road in hope that the back streets will hide some friendly place where you can ease the rigors of the road out of your bones. Impassive, faceless walls close around you, with the shutters now covering their eyes. Just as you are about to give up hope you fell a waft of heat, and rounding a corner you are overjoyed to see an open inn, which still boasts the sounds of merriment.

When the characters open the door to the free room they are heartily welcomed by the innkeeper, a hulking red bearded brute who pats them on the back and asks them about their journey. Once the characters have ordered food or a room he will leave them alone and waddle over to the bar where he is kept very busy pouring drinks and checking on the bar. The other characters of the inn include a large party of what looks like travelling jesters. Some of them are in costume and they are happily entertaining the other patrons. These are smaller party of regulars, and one or two merchants. Over in one corner, on their own, are a couple of shady characters who lean over their table and whisper in hushed voices.

A Desperate Proposition

Once the characters have dealt with the innkeeper one of the merchants will come up to them and invite them to sit at his table. If you wish you can read the following passage to the characters.

You turn back from the bar to take in the spectacular splendor that has become the free room. There is juggling and singing, and a space has been cleared in the middle of the room for some sort of display of acrobatics. The regular patrons are obviously enjoying themselves immensely, and this explains why the inn was open so late. There is much stamping and clapping of hands. The only people not joining in are the two figures in the corner of the room who seem to be discussing something extremely important, and one of the merchants who is coming towards you, looking rather agitated. Taking a quick look over his shoulder he forces himself to relax before speaking to you.

'Welcome to the Blue Bird Inn,' he says. 'My name is Hernet, and I would be honored if you would sit with me at my table."

This is Hernet, who has become quite nervous about being followed. He wants to hire the characters to make sure that his message to Baron Gregor is delivered. If the characters refuse his invitation he will become very tense again, and in a hushed voice he will confess that he has a business proposition for them, one that includes a great deal of money. He will keep insisting until they consent to listen to him, then he will take them away into a corner of the bar and speak quietly to them about his situation. If you wish you can continue by reading the following passage to the characters.

Hernet brings you over to the corner of the room previously occupied by the two whispering men who have left. He then checks around to make sure that nobody is listening before leaning forwards to talk to you.

'I need to ask for your help in a matter of the most grave importance. A man's life and even the security of the whole province may depend on your response.' He pauses to let you absorb the full drama of what he has just said before continuing in the same hushed voice.

'I have long now been a member of the Goldsmiths' Guild, and I have welcomed the rule of our new, more moderate master. But many of my fellow smiths have been unhappy about the exile of their former lord. They approved of his campaign against the dwarves. Now it is their wish that he be returned to power. The few loyal men left, like myself, have seen our once proud guild drift towards an unfortunate alliance with the Freedomers.'. He pauses again, but does not give you enough time to ask him anything before continuing his tale.

'Recently, strange men have been coming and going through the guild building in Nordel, with an unsavory intent. Then recently, we were made privy to a diabolical scheme. One of the most senior members of the guild recently called a secret meeting where the guild master did not feature. He told us that our enemies would soon fall, and then went on to describe his plan to overthrow one particular man of importance who had opposed us in the past. We loyal few were horrified by what he told us, and hastened to make sure that our guild would not be used so. I was chosen to carry a message to the endangered man, which would inform him of the plot. But I fear that I may fail. Our actions did not pass by unnoticed in the guild, and I believe that I may be followed by one of the traitors.', He looks quickly and then lowers his voice still further.

'That's why I need your help. If you can ensure that this message is duly delivered you will be generously rewarded.' At this point he sits back and stares at you intently. The fear and desperation in his eyes leaves you in no doubt as to the seriousness of his request.

If the characters ask any more questions about the plot, about who is following him, or about who the message is for, he will reply by telling them that he can say no more unless they promise to help, and that even this inn is not safe. (He is paranoid, but has reason to be.) If they ask him why he is so desperate to warn this man he will tell them that unless he does so, the guild will go under. Any questions about reward or payment will be met by eager assurances about the wealth and power of the man they are helping, and promises of vast sums of money. (These are totally unsubstantiated, Hernet in fact knows very little about Baron Gregor.) If the characters appear doubtful, he will inform them that they will be needed only for a day or two, telling them that the Baron lives in

The Statue of the King

On top of Lord Gideon's palace in Resna you can be found a statue standing in the main tower. This is the image of the first king of Resna, but he has not always stood on his lofty perch. During the reign of the Church, the king was taken out of his old home in the throne room and stored in the palace treasury. In the Rebellion, he would once more come to serve his kingdom. In the heat of the Battle of Resna, several freedom fighters managed to get into the treasury, and they immediately escaped with the statue. Carrying him before them as a banner, they fought their way to the top of the castle and held him in the air, high above the city. Seeing that their king was once more in his rightful place, the rebels took heart, and destroyed the last of the Church resistance.

The statue has been left at the top of the tower, to symbolize the freedom and the spirit of the people of Orschild, and one day he might be called into battle once more.

Resna somewhere, though he is not sure exactly where. If the characters accept, he will look extremely relieved, and will inform them that they are to meet him at this table early next morning, just after sunrise. Then he will thank them profusely for their kindness and help before going upstairs, although he does not trust them enough to let any of them into his room. If any of the characters ask to be allowed in, he tells them to keep guard outside. After he has gone upstairs, the characters are free to do what they want until the innkeeper himself goes to bed.

A Restless Night

During the night, Hernet will be murdered by Matil, who was informed of Hernet's location by the two men who sat in the corner. He climbs in through the window and stabs Hernet in his sleep. If any of the characters are keeping watch outside the door, and they make an average listening roll, they will hear the sound of Matil breaking the window. If they then rush into the room, they will see him jumping out of the window. They can give chase if they wish, but he has a horse waiting for him and will therefore soon disappear into the night. If one of the characters immediately rush over to Hernet, he will just be able to gasp out 'Warn Greg..' before dying in a pool of blood. The characters can then react as described below under 'An Unpleasant Discovery'. The innkeeper will have been awakened by the commotion and will soon come rushing up the stairs.

An Unpleasant Discovery

If the characters sleep blissfully through the events of the night they will awaken just before sunrise to find that Hernet is not yet waiting for them. They can wait for a couple of hours, but he will not show up. At this point it is natural for them to ask the innkeeper – who has been awake since long before the characters got up – if he has seen Hernet. He will reply that he has not seen him all day and will advise that they go and check in his room, escorting them upstairs and opening the door with his key. If the characters were keeping guard outside, the situation will be different but they should still find their way into Hernet's room eventually. At any rate, the innkeeper will tell them that his horse is still in the stables. Once they enter the room, they will find Hernet's body lying on the bed, which has a large red stain all over it. At this point you can read out the passage below if you wish.

The door creaks open ominously, and the scene it reveals justifies the sense of dread anticipation. The window leading into the room from outside has been smashed, and pieces of glass are all over the floor, reflecting the dim light of the eclipsed sun. Hernet is lying wrapped up in a violent mess of tangled and red-stained bed sheets. His head is lolling back, and his bedclothes are also covered in red.

The room is otherwise empty. The midnight assailant has left everything in perfect order. Hernet's other clothes are still stacked up beside the bed. Either the characters or the innkeeper will eventually break the silence by checking the body. If they do so they will find that he is definitely dead, and that he was carrying a letter. Relatively intelligent characters will soon guess that this is the message he was talking about. Eventually either they or the innkeeper will decide to read it, at which point you may read out the passage below.

The letter is carried within a brown paper envelope, which has been torn by the rigors of the road and weather. It is now also covered in a large red stain that is presumably blood. Opening it reveals a neatly folded up note of paled and fairly scruffy writing, made even less legible by the red stain. You can just make out the remains of the vital message. "My dear Baron _ your life is under a very serious _ guild and the _ They intend to have you killed by what will _ Sau dwarves _ who go by the name of Larek. The plan is that these murderers will kill you as you make your speech at Earl _ feast where there will be many who can verify the nature of _ This will then allow agents within the _ court to reestablish the _ guild in Resna. It is our wish that you _ action to prevent this.

Your loyal friends."

(The complete letter simply details the Freedomer's plot to have the Larek dwarves kill Baron Gregor at the feast of Earl Grunder so that it will look like the Sau have had him killed.)

The Investigations

The characters are left with this note which, if delivered, will supposedly fetch them a great reward. Hopefully, either for the money or for loyalty to Orschild, they will try to find out who the letter concerns and what else it says, using the clues provided in the letter and what they know already.

They have three days before the feast at Earl Grunder's estate when the plot will be carried out and Baron Gregor will be killed by the Larek dwarves. They will be able to keep their rooms at the Bluebird, which they can use as a base of operations. At this stage you will probably find it useful to keep track of how long the characters have spent each day and where they are, in relation to the time line. There are five main locations that the characters can visit to gather clues.

They can return to each of these as often as they like, though some of them will probably be closed during certain hours of the day. These are the 'Main Library', 'the Moon Trading House', the former goldsmiths' building, Baron Gregor's estate, and Earl Grunder's estate. These are described in greater detail



below, together with an explanation of the main events that occur at these places.

The characters can also go to several other places to receive information. A quick snoop around the Bernon district might turn up details of Earl Grunder's feast. If they can get into the court of Lord Gideon they might be able to gather a great deal of information. It is up to you as the narrator to decide what the characters can find out in other places, and what might happen to them when they get ther – possibly depending on how well they are doing already. At the end of each day, they will probably return to the Blue Bird Inn, but nothing much else happens there. Hopefully they will have a fair idea of what is happening by the time the Feast gets under way.

The Library

The library is a place that the character will probably not consider straight away. However, as you can see on the diagram, it is right next to the Moon, so they might decide to look in on it. If they do, it is possible to make some rather important discoveries about the plot and especially about the Larek dwarves. Larek is the only name that features in the letter and therefore it is one of the characters' most substantial leads. Unfortunately, not many people in Orschild will know who the Lareks are, but the librarian can in fact find out. If the characters decide to visit the library, you can read the passage below.

You walk through the grand and ornate doors of the library, and they lead you into a quite spectacular room. The first things you see are vast rows filled with books of every description. Above these the second floor curves around the main hall. This too is filled with books, but it also features doors leading, no doubt, to yet more musty knowledge. The stairs leading up to this are to your right, and they curve gracefully upward. The whole room is covered in a lush red carpet. It is an example of truly fabulous architecture. The crowning glory would be the fantastic chandelier, which seems to carry the weight of the room on its crystalline shoulders. Coming towards you is a sprightly, spectacled man, with a bald dome and a quick step.

The librarian is Thered, and he will graciously ask the characters what they want. He will try to answer their questions and will recommend books that offer even more information. The questions he will answer best are about either the Goldsmiths' Guild or the Larek dwarves. For the guild, he will quickly explain the situation whereby they were expelled from Orschild and about their past history of dwarfen rivalry. Then he will recommend several books on the subject. If any of

the characters ask about the Larek family, he will be truly delighted, saying that he has not heard the name before but that he will be happy to check up on it for them. He will tell them straight away that it is not an Orschilder name, and that it sounds Dwarfish in origin. If they return with their question, Thered will be able to tell them a lot about the family and their history, including details about their dislike of the Sau, although he will not know anything about the plot or the three outcasts. There is not much else he has to offer, but this should certainly be more than enough for the characters.

The Moon

The Moon Trading House is an important source of action and information for the characters. If the characters can get to see the Sau with any information about the Larek dwarves and their part in the plot they may even be able to get them to help actively. More importantly they may be able to expose the three outcasts searching for information about the pact. However, this will require them to get past Drobnak, who will not make that easy. On the other hand, he may be able to give them some valuable information about the Scale, which could further unravel the mysteries surrounding the letter. If the characters visit the Moon you can read the following passage to them.

The Moon is not as ostensibly magnificent as many of its less wealthy human counterparts. The windows are at least not made of sheet gold. The door is not as large and ornate either, although it would probably be so for a dwarf. There is a porter; he stands by the door and opens it as you approach, giving you a friendly smile behind his dwarfen beard.

The first thing you notice when you come is not the emerald-green carpet, the brass statues of various dwarves which surround the room, or the grand stairs that flank the main desk. Nor is it the collage of money, trade, and merchandise that hides behind the diamond and crystal chandelier; these are all secondary. The first thing you notice is a red faced and flustered dwarf, with spectacles shoved high up his nose, who is currently hurrying towards you.

Drobnak will immediately demand to know what the characters are doing in the house, and unless they can satisfy him that there is real need for them to visit the master merchants of the Moon, he will deal with them personally. One of the few things that will get the characters in to see the merchant masters of the house is any information about the three outcasts, which the Sau are currently only vaguely aware of. Otherwise they will need to make a convince roll with a difficulty of -6 (Drobnak is not easily convinced), as well as coming up with a good story. If they do get to meet the guild merchants, they will need to have something interesting to say to them as well. Otherwise they will be thrown out. If they mention anything about the outcasts, they will be eagerly questioned, and there will be a general search of the house. If this happens on Day Two or Three there will be a confrontation between the outcasts and the characters. See Confrontation 1. Otherwise the Sau will thank the characters for their help, urge them to the utmost discretion, and ask if there is anything they can do to help. (This section will require quite a bit of improvisation from you, the Narrator. If you keep in mind the chapter on the Sau you should be able to guess how the merchants will react and what they will tell or offer the characters.) If the characters do not get to see the merchants, Drobnak will happily answer their questions about the house or its operations, although he will not be overly informed. The characters should be able to get a few ideas about the Sau, and who their friends and enemies are. If the characters are specific, Drobnak will certainly know everything about the Goldsmiths' Guild and the Moon, including the more recent developments.

The Old Goldsmiths' Guild Building

This building used to be the headquarters of the Goldsmiths' Guild, and it is therefore suitably fabulous. The fittings, the gargoyles and the window frames are all solid gold – as is the door knocker and the handle. Apart from anything else, the building is locked. This makes it natural for the characters to visit at night, as the city guard would probably be called if people saw them breaking into houses during the daytime. A good thief could probably pick the lock (DL -6) but it would take him a while, and would look very odd. One way or another the characters will eventually gain access to the house. If this is on Day Three they will find the main conspirators in the middle of a meeting (See Confrontation 2), but even at other times the house provides some interesting clues to say the least.

It will be quite dark in there, even during the day, so the characters will need to light a torch or something. When they do, you can read the following description.

The room positively wakes up at the touch of your light, which instantly reflects off of a number of gold ornaments. There are inkwells and candelabras and chandeliers, all with lots of gold, but apart from what is stuck on walls or glued to the desk, there is not much else. The carpet is gone, and apart from the main desk – which seems to be only an extension of the wall – there is no furniture. However, the most interesting thing about it is the half-burnt candle that rests on the floor, and even more so the footprints which have displaced the fairly thick dust. Somebody has been here quite recently.

Apart from this basic fact there is not much information to be had. Certainly there are no documents detailing the conspirators' entire plan with a separate section for how to

The Badge of the Grand Master

The second Grand Master of the Brotherhood of the Rose is a mysterious and impassive figure. Not much is known about the man who was also the Sublime Grand Master of the order for forty years. It is said that he was gifted with the same talent of precognition as his illustrious forefather. Certainly he had an amazing talent for anticipating his enemies' moves. When heretics tried to assassinate him as he slept, he had oddly chosen to wear his armor to bed.

According to a fragment within Divinatio, he may have been possessed with the spirit of Attamens. When he died, he left behind a vital artifact: a badge with a symbol of a cup. It is said that when the One closes the Iron Gate, the possessor of this badge will become the true ruler of the Church. Naturally the Brothers are not especially keen to let it go.

foil it. But this will hopefully allow the characters to spring a trap on their enemies – unless, of course, they have arrived to late and the plot is already rolling.

The Estate of Earl Grunder

The characters could have heard about Earl Grunder's party from a variety of different people. If they do decide to pay the Earl a visit because of what the letter says about a party, they could come close to solving the mystery. His estate is located deep within the Bernon district, and is actually quite fabulous even by the standards of this illustrious quarter. For a start, the building is built mostly in marble and plain stone, a rather odd combination favored by its master. There are personal guards at the silver gates, dressed in his livery, and a number of servants buzz around the grounds. The Baron himself might very well be trotting around on his horse, or engaged in a private archery competition. It is surprisingly easy to get in to see him, considering the situation he is involved in. The guards will let the characters by with only the most basic of stories (a convince roll DL +2).

If the characters get to see the Baron, he will immediately become very angry at their intrusion, and will demand to know what they are doing. If any of the characters comes straight out and asks him about his involvement in the plot, he will call his guards to expel them all immediately. Far more information can be gained if they manage to gain his approval. This, however, is easier said than done. It is largely up to you as the Narrator to determine how well the characters do in placating the old man. It is worth bearing in mind the description of his character. Mentions of his former exploits, and invitation to a bit of friendly sport will go down well. Eventually he will suggest that they practice some archery. At this point the characters can quite easily milk him for information. If provoked, he is quite likely to make a highly inflammatory anti-dwarf speech, and if pushed might even hint at some plot that he is linked up in. If the characters win the competition (a series of opposed rolls, highest effect wins every time. The Earl has CS 17 with his long bow.) they will have won the respect of a highly powerful and influential man.

The Estate of Baron Gregor

If the characters get this far, they have solved half the mystery. It remains to be seen wether they can also work out the details of the plot. It is far more difficult to get to see the Baron than it is to get in with Earl Grunder. His estate is also much more restrained, even partisan by the standards of the Bernon district.

The walls are high and effective, but hardly luxurious, and the gate is merely solid. The guards are members of the dwarfen bodyguard that the Sau have dispatched to protect the Baron. Regardless of how good the characters' story is, they will follow them closely, search them, and strip them of their weapons before taking them to see the Baron. (A good word from the Moon is highly helpful at this point.)

Gregor is usually engaged in one form of study or another, and he will probably be found in his extensive library, poring over some tomes. When the characters approach, he will look up and greet them courteously before asking what he can help them with. At this point, the characters will either talk to him about the letter, or they will have specific details of the plot. In either case he will listen attentively to what they have to say. He will confirm involvement in the goldsmith issue, and will testify that it is very possible that there might be a plot to kill him. If the characters at this point do not know the specifics of the scheme, he will give them any support they might need and encourage them to continue their investigations, giving them a small reward (an amount of the Narrator's choice of gold coins). If the characters know that something is going to happen at Earl Grunder's feast, but not exactly what he will reply that the men who are planning to kill him must not be allowed to win and will refuse to change his engagement. If the characters do know of the plot, he will invite them to guard him at the party so that they can expose the scheme, but will simply refuse not to go.

The Confrontations

There are two planned confrontations that might occur before the finale at Earl Grunder's Feast. As Narrator, you are naturally free to add more of your own, and there might be many incidental meetings, but there are only two planned clashes.

The Larek Dwarves at the Moon

The first of the confrontations takes place at the Moon Trading House, if the characters reveal the existence of the Larek dwarves to its merchant masters either on day Two or Three. At this point a search will be called, and the characters will compose one element of this; they will be sent to look for the outcasts in the minor treasury. The characters will in fact catch the outcasts up there, preparing to escape through the window. If you wish, you can read the following passage to the characters.

You burst through the door, seemingly just in time. Three dwarves are standing by the small window at the back of the room. By them lie five sawn-of iron bars, and they have just managed to tie a rope to one of the stumps that still adorn the window. As you open the door, they turn to face you, and draw a grim assortment of weapons. They obviously intend to fight.

The characters are free to respond however they wish. The outcasts are most concerned with escaping, so they will allow them to run for help without problem. If they begin to lose the

advantage to the characters, they will attempt to escape through the window. The characters should attempt to capture one of them so that the Sau can question him. The profiles of the outcasts can be found in the Profiles section at the end of this episode. If the characters do manage to capture any of the dwarves they can interrogate him, or have the Sau do it. They will try to resist but with an successful interrogation roll they will admit all they know – which is that they have been hired by some human to assassinate a dignitary and to make it look like the Sau did it. They do not know the name of their employer, nor that of their target.

The Freedomers at the Guild

This second confrontation will occur if the characters go to the Goldsmiths' Guild house on the third night. In this case they will find Earl Grunder, Jonan, and Matil discussing the plot. If the characters remain hidden, they will be able to find out a great deal about the plot: that the assassination is to take place during Earl Grunder's feast, and that it is to be performed by secret dwarfen allies. They will also learn that the target is someone who has caused the Freedomers to be "expelled". They will not hear the name of the person, or the names of the attackers. If the characters reveal themselves, the three people will immediately rush up to kill them, making sure that the secret does not leak out. The characters can fight or flee. If they gain the upper hand, the Freedomers will attempt to flee. Jonan and Matil will kill themselves rather than be captured, and they will also attempt to kill Grunder if he is captured. If the characters do catch Grunder, they have managed to avert the plot, and Grunder will obligingly reveal all the details of the scheme to save his neck. If Grunder dies, the plot will still be pushed ahead by Jonan and Matil.

The Finale at Earl Grunder's Feast

Earl Grunder's feast takes place on the evening of the fourth day. The guests will arrive shortly before sunset. After dinner, Baron Gregor will be invited to make a speech. At this point the Larek dwarves, disguised as Gregor's personal Sau bodyguards, will leap up and kill him before being allowed to escape by the Earl's soldiers. The Baron will have been killed by the 'Sau' in front of many of Resna's most influential dignitaries. The Freedomers' sympathizers within the court will then use this to force Gideon to let the Goldsmiths' Guild back into the city, and may even make him obliged to adopt less friendly connections with the dwarves.

Preventing the Plot

That which is described above is the ideal, and it is what will happen if the characters do nothing to stop it. However, they have almost four whole days to try and alter the circumstances in favor of Baron Gregor. To fully prevent the scheme, the characters must be aware of its target, and of most of its details. This is quite difficult, but even with just a few details, the characters might be able to alter things slightly. The table below shows what the characters can do to prevent the plot and what effect this could have.

- If the Earl is captured before the feast the plot will not go ahead. In this case, the danger has been averted, as he will reveal all the details of the plot. Unless this has happened, the feast will go on regardless of what the characters know. They may, however, be able to prevent it.
- If Grunder or any of the other conspirators are killed, the others will continue with the plot, though obviously, the dead party will not be at the feast. If this is Grunder, it may look a little suspicious.
- Events at the feast will follow on as described above. If the characters know that Gregor is in danger, they may be able to prevent the assassination – though this is partly up to you as the Narrator. If Gregor has been warned, his bodyguards may also be more attentive.
- If the Sau have been notified of the plot and the Larek dwarves they might be persuaded to make their presence felt at the feast, in which case they will look for the outcasts before they can make their attempt.
- If both Gregor and the characters are aware of the full details of the plot, they will be able to expose the dwarves as they make their attempt.

The Conclusion

There are many possible endings to the adventure, depending on how much the characters were able to find out from their investigations. The Baron might escape with his life without revealing the conspirators, but then you must ask for how long? Or the plot might be exposed at the cost of his life. The following are examples of possible endings. The side that has won the episode is given in brackets ( ).

- The plot is carried out. The characters do not receive their payment and Orschild now has a powerful Freedomer body within the heart of the court. (The Freedomers)
- The plot is carried through but Baron Gregor escapes with his life. Jonan, Matil and Grunder are not caught. (Baron Gregor).
- The Larek dwarves are exposed before they can kill Gregor. The Freedomers are not caught. (Baron Gregor)
- The conspirators are exposed, but Baron Gregor is killed before this happens. (The Sau and Orschild)
- The plot is exposed, and the Baron is saved. (Not at all easy. Baron Gregor, the Sau and Orschild)

Divinatio

According to the Brothers of the Rose, Divinatio contains the only true words of the One, hidden in cryptic code. Illumino is the key to unlocking the secrets of this tome, and a member of the order who possesses the secret knowledge of both will be able to find true wisdom. However, only one copy of Divinatio is complete. This is the original work of Marquis Attamens and resides under heavy guard within the Cathedral of Ravarra. The Brothers believe that it includes the ceremony that will call Attamens back from the grave, so that he may crown his descendant as the One's true messenger. Only when they find this ceremony will they be able to establish the true domain of the One.

However, time is running out, and the Church will not let go of the book willingly. The current Grand Master fears that open rebellion and theft may be the only way to reach the truth – something that the order fears above all else.

Appendix

Narrator Characters

The most important narrator characters of the episode are described here together with their technical statistics and equipment. For a description of their motives and characters, see the Actors section at the beginning of this chapter.

BARON GREGOR

ATTRIBUTES

STR	PHY	AGL	PER	MEN	CHR
12	14	13	13	14	12

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE	LEVEL	SPECIALIZATIONS
Learning	4	Law, History, Etiquette
Close combat	2	One-handed swords, shield
Missile weapons	1	Bow
Communication	4	Convince
Awareness	3	Scrutinize

EQUIPMENT: As an advisor, Gregor dresses in durable and worthy – but not unnecessarily expensive – clothing of somber colors. He does not usually carry arms, but in dangerous situations he uses a broad sword and has a suit of chainmail armor. In his pocket he will usually have reading spectacles. He also has access to all the equipment at his estate.

EARL GRUNDER

ATTRIBUTES

STR	PHY	AGL	PER	MEN	CHR
14	14	15	13	11	12

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE	LEVEL	SPECIALIZATIONS
Learning	1	Heraldry
Close combat	4	Bastard Sword, Shield
Missile weapons	2	Long bow
Communication	2	Interrogate
Movement	2	Ride (2)
Awareness	2	Detect Danger

EQUIPMENT: Grunder wears bright and garish colors, and habitually has hardened leather underneath. He also carries his bastard sword. In dangerous situations he will wear full chainmail, unless on horseback, in which case he has plate back and breast plates. He also has access to all the equipment of his estate.

JONAN AND MATIL

ATTRIBUTES

STR	PHY	AGL	PER	MEN	CHR
14	14	14	12	13	13

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE	LEVEL	SPECIALIZATIONS
Learning	2	Law, Heraldry
Close combat	3	One-handed Swords, Shield
Missile weapons	3	Crossbow
Communication	3	Convince, Bluff, Etiquette
Awareness	1	Scrutinize

EQUIPMENT: Jonan and Matil wear identical black clothes. Unless they are attending some sort of formal occasion, they will have chainmail under this. Their broadswords hang ceremoniously to one side, whatever the event. They also have a signet ring bearing Orwen's official seal.

GERTED, RENTON, AND FIVIAL LAREK

ATTRIBUTES

STR	PHY	AGL	PER	MEN	CHR
14	13	12	12	11	10

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE	LEVEL	SPECIALIZATIONS
Close combat	3	One-handed Axes
Movement	2	
Awareness	2	

EQUIPMENT: Broad axe, studded leather armor, light helm. Possibly documents concerning the pact between the Sau and Gideon Bernon.

DROBNAK SAU

ATTRIBUTES

STR	PHY	AGL	PER	MEN	CHR
11	12	11	13	14	12

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE	LEVEL	SPECIALIZATIONS
Learning	3	History(2), Heraldry
Close combat	1	One-handed Axes
Communication	2	Etiquette
Awareness	2	Listen

EQUIPMENT: Drobnak wears proper and sturdy clothes in sensible colors. He keeps his broad-axe behind the desk at the Moon.

MENTES

ATTRIBUTES

STR	PHY	AGL	PER	MEN	CHR
14	14	11	11	11	10

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE	LEVEL	SPECIALIZATIONS
Learning	0	Heraldry
Close combat	3	One-handed Swords, Shield
Missile weapons	2	Crossbow
Movement	2	Ride

EQUIPMENT. Broadsword, chainmail armor, light helm, crossbow.

BURGON SAU

ATTRIBUTES

STR	PHY	AGL	PER	MEN	CHR
15	14	13	12	10	10

AREAS OF KNOWLEDGE	LEVEL	SPECIALIZATIONS
Learning	2	Heraldry
Close combat	3	One-handed Swords, Shield
Missile weapons	3	Crossbow
Communication	2	Etiquette
Awareness	2	Detect danger

EQUIPMENT. Burgon carries a bastard sword, a shield, and a crossbow. He wears hardened leather armor with a light helm.

What happens Next?

Depending on how the episode ends the story can continue in a number of different ways. Whether the characters succeed or not, they have become embroiled in a conflict with an almost limitless number of adventuring possibilities. The following are a few suggestions for how the story can continue.

The Second Attempt

If the characters save Baron Gregor without catching Jonan and Matil, he will certainly be very grateful and will probably invite them to stay with him for a while. The Freedomers, meanwhile, will probably be even more eager to kill him now. Perhaps they will use the characters to get to him. Jonan and Matil, meanwhile, will want to get rid of the meddling travelers who upset their plot.

Further Investigations

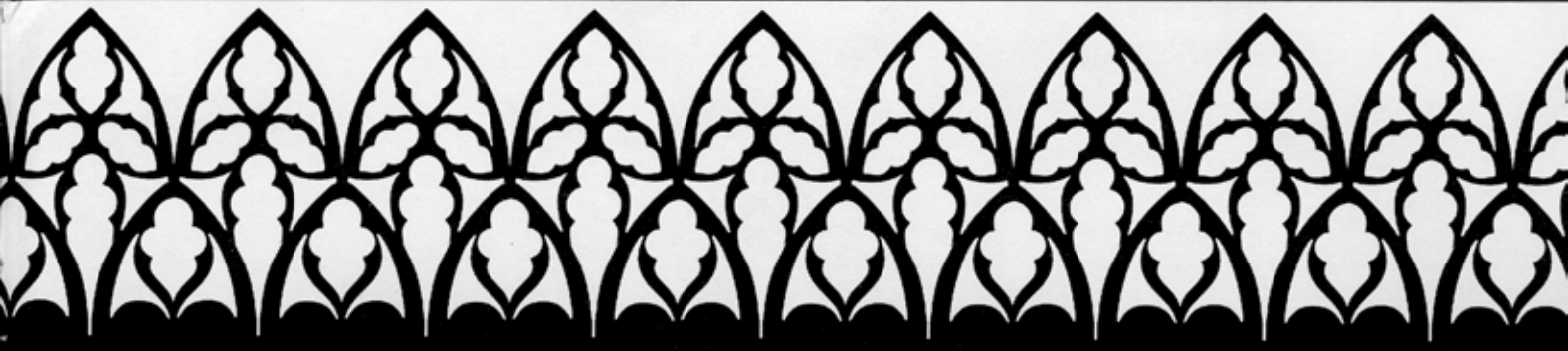
If the plot succeeds, somebody might employ the characters to find out who did it. The characters will be drawn in on a more personally perilous quest, deep into the heart of the shady world of Orschild politics, working their way through secret societies and hidden conspiracies. There is, of course, a wide network of Freedomer organizations in Resna, with close connections to the Underworld.

The Reckoning with the Goldsmiths

If the characters foil the plot perfectly, Lord Gideon will certainly want to deal with the traitors within the Goldsmiths' Guild. He will probably ask Gregor to do it, who in turn might decide to entrust the task to the reliable characters. Perhaps they will be told to infiltrate the guild to find out what they can. This might be extremely dangerous if Jonan or Matil are alive and familiar with the characters.

Staying in Resna

On the other hand, the characters might want nothing more to do with either Gregor or the guild. In that case they will probably resume whatever business they might have had in Resna. This is by no means a soft option, as the intrigue in the capital just keeps on thickening. Maybe they will run into a Church spy, or even the Brothers of the Rose. They might even get involved in the court of Lord Gideon.



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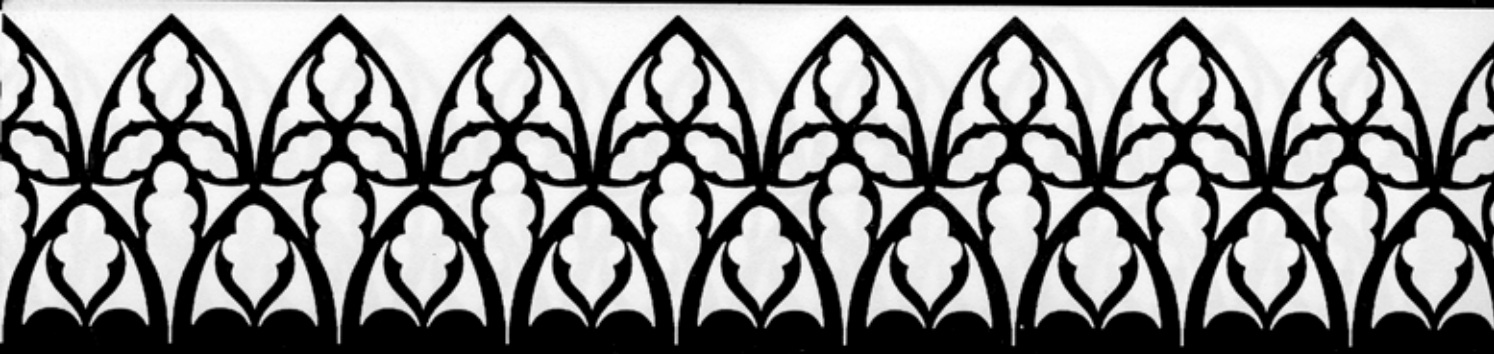
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ORSCHILD



WINDS OF WAR

Fall has come to Orschild.

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And of heroes who had the courage to defy destiny.

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