



# Everbane

The card game extended rule book







Rule book version: 0.1

**Disclaimer:**

This book is in a “work in progress” state. It is subject to change with the development of the project.

**Future updates:**

- Illustrations will be added.
- Existing lore will be revisited and redacted
- More lore and background for all the cards
- Rules section will be extended

Also visit our website for more info:

<https://everbane.ch/>

# Everbane rulebook

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## Introduction

Does the call to adventure sing loudly in your blood? Does your mind always whisper of the treasures to be found in old and ruined cities?

Does the need to do glorious battle with grotesque beasts & dark villains take an unbreakable grip of your soul?

Then you were born to travel the brutal, frozen roads of the new world of Everbane.

A world built on top of the shatter bones of the old and home to a people who refuse to submit to the horrors of the night.

Embark upon an epic adventure and compete with other heroes in a table-top card game for 2 to 6 players, in a awe inspiring apocalyptic, medieval fantasy world.

## The Rules

Everbane is a role playing card game where each player plays the role of an epic hero. Each of them is battling to be the most notorious hero on the land. Fulfill the most dangerous quests and be the first to get 10 prestige points and win the game. The base game for 3 players consist of 3 hero cards, 12 quest cards and 165 action cards and a d20 dice.

### Preparation

- Make 3 piles of cards, one with each type of cards and shuffle them: Hero/Quest/Action.
- Each player select 1 hero card (in any way possible) and put it on the table near him
- The players determine the first player that will start to play, after that the game goes clockwise.
- Each player draws 4 action cards and place it their hands.
- The first quest card is opened and placed on the table so everyone can see it.
- Graveyard: select a place where all discarded cards will be placed.

### Game process

Each player takes his turn before passing it to the next player. At the beginning of each turn a player will draw 1 action card. Certain types of cards will be played automatically as soon as they are drawn and will require some actions from the player, others will be putted into its owner hand. At this point the player will be have the possibility:

- To play one card from his hand.
- Or to fulfill the quest which is on the table. (more on that later)

Playing a card - depending on the type of cards the player has in his hand, he will be able to play it in different ways. For more information check the description of each action card type.

Fulfill a quest - The player will announce to the other players that he is fulfilling the quest. He then will proceed in doing the 3 tasks which are described on the quest card. If he is able to do all the necessary in his turn - he wins the quest card. (more on this in the quest card description down below).

If a quest card is fulfilled, another is put on the table. In any case the turn ends, to the next player to play.



## Game end

The first player who accomplishes quests for 10 prestige points wins the game. In case that all the quest cards are done and none of the players is able to acquire 10 prestige points, the player with the higher quantity wins.

## Card position

**Action card pile** – The place where all the action cards are located.

**Graveyard** – All the discarded action cards goes in that pile. If there are no more cards in the action card pile, all the cards in the graveyard are shuffled and placed back in the action card pile.

**Hand cards** – The cards which are located in a players hand. And quantity of cards can be located in a players hand at any given time.

**Cards in play** – The cards that belong to a player but are located in front of the player on the table.

## Card types

### Hero cards

A card representing the hero the player is playing. Each hero card will have a visual representation of the hero as his name. At the bottom of the card will be represented the 3 attributes of a hero. His Strength in red, his Agility in green and his Intellect in blue. This values will be used to combat with monsters & duel with other players. A hero card is a representation of the player in game, it cannot be taken from the player in any way possible.



### Loot cards

Some quests will require the player to acquire different kinds of loot. A loot card will have different values associated to it. Loot can have a monetary value in yellow, a specific rarity in cyan, and some magical power in purple. To be able to fulfill a quest a loot card should be in play (in front of the player, on the table), a card which is in its owner hand cannot be used to fulfill a quest.



### Deed card



On his journey a player will be able not only to acquire loot but also to fulfill some extraordinary deeds. Deeds will also be require to fulfill quests, and have also their own values. Honor will be represented in white, Glory in orange and Infamy in black. As with the loot cards, a deed card should be put into play to be usable for a quest.





Perk card

Perk card will give the player to upgrade the attribute value of his hero. They will all have an attribute bonus that would boost a hero attribute values. To take effect a perk card will need to be in play to take effect. A perk card in his owner hand has no effect. As perks cards are very powerful upgrades a hero can have, only a defined amount of perk cards will be able to player on a hero, and will depend of his actual prestige:

- 0-3 prestige: 1 perk cards
- 4-6 prestige: 2 perk cards
- 7-10 prestige: 3 perk cards

Trade cards

Trade cards will give the owner the right to force another player to trade with him a specific card. If a player plays a trade card on another player, the targeted player is forced to trade with him (only if he cannot bend the rules to his will in a very special way). The trade card will describe which card the player will need to trade for which one.



Duel card

By playing this card a player will challenge another player to duel with him. There are different kinds of duels possible; some of them will require making a specific attribute test (more on that later), where some will only require to make a single dice roll for the players. A duel card will specify what the gain from the duel is; it could be stealing a card from the player, or to draw an additional card from the action card pile.



Luck card

A luck card will give the player the ability to roll a 1020 dice and to see what the effect is. The description of the different effects depending on the dice roll will be described on the card.







Trick card

A trick card will have a very specific effect and could be played freely on any given time that feels appropriate to play it. A trick card can only be played (on himself or another player) if the player in question is involved in some sort (dueling, taking care of a monster, making a dice roll). It cannot be played on another player if you are not participating in the interaction yourself.

Instant card

An instant card will take effect as soon it is drawn at the begging of the turn. The player that draws an instant card is forced to instantly play it. If an instant card was drowned in any other way (at the begging of the game, or as an effect from another card.), the player can put it in his hand. At the very beginning of someone else's turn, while this player has not drawn a card, a player which have an instant card in his hand, can quickly announce that he is playing an instant card on that player. Only one instant card could be played this way on another player.



Creature card

A creature card will attack a player as soon as he has drawn it at the begging of his turn. A creature will have come with a value at the top left corner indicating how much cards a player can lose/win from this creature. The player will have to battle this creature and beat the attribute value it has on the bottom part of the card. As for the instant cards, if a creature card was obtained by any other special way (card effect) it will be placed in a player hand. The player will be able to play it on himself or another player as a regular action that he can do on his turn.



Fate card

The fate card is a very special and powerful one. It will give the ability for a player to bend the rules to his will. He will be able to automatically win an attribute test or to redirect the effect of a card on someone else or back at the caster. (More rules to be determined).





## Other mechanics

**Attribute test** - If a player need to make an attribute test vs a creature or with another player, the player will need to roll a 1d20 dice and sum the result with the attribute score it concern.

**Example:** hero with 4 strength which have a perk card for 2 strength and rolling a 1d20 dice for 15 will make a result of  $4+2+15=21$ .

In the case where luck is tested, only a 1d20 dice is rolled and the result is compared.

**Exchange mechanic** - When a card ask a player to exchange a card with another. The player playing this card will select which card is he willing to give to the other player, but also which card is he getting from the other player.

**Stealth mechanic** - While similar to the exchange mechanic, stealing is much easier. The player playing the card just need to select which card is he gonna steal from another player.

**Maximum cards in hand** - A player is required to have a maximum of 6 cards at the end of his turn. If he ends up with more cards, he will need to discard them in order to have 6 left.

**Tricks cards limit** - at any given time when trick cards could be played, any player is limited to play only one trick card. If the situation require the interaction of two player, then only two trick cards could be played, and order of playing them will matter. Cards will take effect one after the other in the order players have played them

Other game mechanics will be added later.....



## The Downfall

Many long years ago there was a mighty kingdom that dwarfed its neighbours in both power and beauty. Louris had a long and storied history reaching back thousands of years. Its cities were bustling hives of activity, vast and sprawling metropolises where art and culture blend with trade and learning. Yet no city was more beautiful or mighty than the capital city Paralia, grand spires of glistening marble and quartz touched the very clouds. Traders brought uncounted riches into the city's coffers and the warriors and knights promised protection and future prosperity to the people. The fields fell away like oceans of gold beneath the sun so plentiful was the crop. Across the whole kingdom famine or hunger was a distant memory, not felt let alone seen in generations. Indeed the king himself, Karl Rassenburg IV, was loved by his people as much for his mercy as for his strength and wisdom in politics and war.

Alas as no good thing can last forever.

The day was hotter than usual, even for the height of summer. The surfs and traders poured in and out of the city gates, the knights and warriors rode amongst the crowds. Many a high noble looked out over the city walls to observe the movements of the common folk. All was well when a thunderous sound rolled over the western horizon. The sound was deafening, shattering glass that rained down on the masses who began to feel the first touches of panic. That great noise sounded again, a great and terrible vibration rolled over the land. Shattered glass rattled, tiles from thousands of rooves slide loose and crashed to the city streets. The sound was soon responded too. Another thunderous boom came rolling from the east. Then another. The silence between each cataclysmic boom growing shorter and shorter with each beat. His Majesty Karl IV ran to what remained of the palace windows to look out at the scene and there from his high vantage saw a great black mass, beyond all proportion slowly rise from the west.

A great lumbering beast, in the shape of a man but beyond any sense of size strode out of the west, its vast body forming the centre of a swirling black cloud. So huge was this monstrosity that it blocked the late afternoon sun, plunging the people, high and low born alike, into darkness. The titan's body was edged in the fiery orange glow of an eclipse.

But the thunder from the east came still and soon there rose a second titanic form from the east. A beast of beauty if there could be such a thing. A crystal titan marched across the open plain before the capital. Its body, like a gorgeous work of spun glass and natural diamond, caught the ruddy light that seeped about its darker brother and seemed to purify the light itself, casting out glorious reflections of pure light that battled the darkness that had fallen over the city.

On the plains of Cosovia the two titans collided. Each landed catastrophic blows that would have levelled mountains and displaced seas. The people beyond the shelter of the castle walls soon perished from shock or the violent waves of energy that came with every titan's fist fall. Those within the city now fully fell into the grip of panic, throwing all caution to the wind and attempting to flee or find shelter among the half shattered buildings that made up the once proud and beautiful city.

For weeks the battling titans landed catastrophic blow after catastrophic blow upon each other. The dead whether surfs, knights, lords and ladies or the upper aristocracy were beyond count, the King himself, the much beloved Karl Rossenburg, was crushed beneath the city's southern gate after evacuating hundreds of survivors from the city. As the people ran they looked back to see the ruins of their beloved home and the colossi that had brought such misery upon them when they beheld an event the likes of which had never been seen before or since.

The titans, now grown noticeably sluggish in their fighting, each landed a final blow. A blow so immense that the air itself seemed to be



pushed away for a moment. The two titans punched out one final time. The dark titan seemed to burst into a hellish cloud of black dust that caught on the wind and spread across the land in whirling vortices while the crystal titan exploded in an eruption so immense that the shards of its form were flung across the kingdom, save for the greatest of all these shards that imbedded itself in the earth between the once grand city wall and the city's barracks that lay beyond it.

Though the battle was over there would be no respite. Those hopeful refugees soon felt the bitter snap of cold wind and a winter chill creep over the land. Many stood to watch the mighty clouds of black dust that rolled across the land, much of it spreading so fine as to be impossible to see.

Each of them, from the highest born noble to the lowest peasant knew one thing for certain; the world was forever changed and hardship was sure to follow.

## A new world

In the wake of the titans' fall the world was changed. Though it had been the height of summer there came vast storms that scourged the land. Flooding had drowned crops, livestock and men alike in minutes. Mighty lightning bolts splintered trees, split rock and set ablaze many a once beautiful building. Soon though these ravaging storms turned fouler still. In mere days the world was plunged into a terrible winter, worse than any had ever seen. The frightful rains that had scourged the land had turned to brutal snow storms. Blizzards, seemingly without end, blew a constant gale and crafted snow drifts so high many would think they had taken centuries to mould. Worse though than the snows was the terrible cold. Many of the refugees of Paralia succumbed to the cold long before they fell to hunger. The old, the young and the infirm perished in their multitudes around the once great capital as they did in cities and towns throughout the once glorious kingdom. It was at this time that The Lord Marshal, Christof Von Ottenfeld began to take matters in hand. The Lord Marshal had up until this point been caring for those he could, using his limited skills as a healer to aid his people, yet many noted his attachment to one woman. She had clearly lost her wits during the war of the titans and now gibbered and muttered almost all of the time. It was when the young began to perish from the cold that Christof came to his senses as he would tell others. It was no less than his duty as he saw it, to care for the people his beloved king Karl had valorously sacrificed himself to save. So it was that The Lord Marshal returned and made his first decree. All those of able body were to strike out once more for the walls of the city and the garrison beyond. There they might seek shelter, supplies and perhaps a few stray warriors if once they reached their goal.

In the endless grey twilight that now hungover the world, the desperate march for the city walls seemed equally endless, there was no sense of time or place and the days simply bled into each other. Their



hardship was only increased by the fact the ragged survivors could barely see the city through the ceaseless blizzard that engulfed them.

After two weeks of relentless marching, a task hard enough for civilians with no marshal training made more difficult by the knee deep snow, the survivors reached the city's southern wall. Though they had reached a great milestone Christof knew they could not rest, not even for a moment for if they stopped they would surely die. While Christof led his people about the city walls, marching west that they might reach the garrison, there came a constant howling and chattering from within the walls so loud it could be heard easily above the blizzard. Whatever remained within was restless.

In only three days the Marshal, his mad woman and his people had reached the western gate. From that vantage they could see the massive shard that had formed the majority of the crystal titan's great form and the city garrison beyond.

Many did not notice the gradual reduction in the bitter cold as the refugees marched ever closer to the shard and the garrison beyond it, but it was a detail that did not escape the notice of Marshal Christof. Soon the survivors stood before the crystal and all could feel the relief the shard brought. While the air about them was still cold, it was more like the cold of a late winter's morn rather than that of the hellish frozen desert they had escaped from. Still The Marshal would not rest. It was upon their arrival at the garrison that the Marshal and his people met their first turn of good luck. The garrison was housed with a vast Free Company of knights and warriors who had themselves sought shelter in the garrison.

While the garrison was large and could house many it could by no means house almost an entire city's worth of souls and so there soon came a vast and sprawling shanty town around the confines of the garrison. In time this would grow from a forest of tents to a sea of ramshackle huts and shacks that grew ever outwards.

Soon the blizzards subsided and left only the occasional snow storm and the horrible cold. But as the people of the garrison expanded their shanty town ever closer to the great shard they too began to notice the peculiar warmth that radiated from the shard. This was surely an avenue to survival, a refuge from the deathly cold beyond and so it was that Marshal Christof Von Ottofeld declared that the people of Paralia would build a new city about the shard. A new city that would never truly rival the majesty of Paralia that now lay shattered, but would surely be a marvel of this new world and act as a haven for all those who sought shelter and comfort from the cold.

And so the city grew, first cast in wood but soon in stone and brick salvaged from the remains of the city to their east. This new city, Paralith so named for the once great city beside it, became the greatest city of this new world. A city that encased the great shard that sat at its very centre in a great dome, studded with a few spires, the greatest of which housed the Lord Marshal and his seat of power and authority. Yet around the city there grew many powers that would in time rule the fates of many.



## The Church

It was truly only a matter of time before those who had begun to worship the shards and the titan they had once formed took a greater hold on the way of this new world. Soon the Cult of the Enlightened, a loose organization of those who revered the great shards and saw the smaller shards as artifacts of divine origin formed The Church of Holy Light and created a grand and beautiful cathedral about the shard at the very base and centre of Paralith. From there the new spiritual leader of the people, Ealherd Zhukov soon known as the Exalted High Lord of the Faith and Protector of the Righteous or simply as the High Lord of the Faith, would make his decrees in the name of the church. However there were some in the church who disagreed with the Church's approach. They would come to reject the idea that men should seek shelter and faith only in the shards and their light, arguing that there was faith and power to be found in the black dust that had come from the fall of the Darker Titan. This would in turn lead to a brutal schism in the Church, priests and bishops fighting among themselves to the point where open and bloody battle was done in the streets and gutters of Paralith. Thankfully for the people of the city the faithful would not allow the agents of the darkness to take hold of the church and its workings. They would not allow the rituals of the church to be twisted into unholy rites that would bring only devastation to the people, nor would they allow the smaller shards, holy relics, to be degraded, infused with the black dust.

After long and bloody struggle, the dust cultists were thrown down and expelled from the city, driven out into the frozen wastes that would soon become an even more dangerous domain.

After the bloody War of Schism was concluded the Church saw the need to increase the strength of the faith. As such all those in holy orders were gifted a small shard both as sign of their office and as a talisman of protection yet before long many of the priests would come to realise that the gift of slivers, as they came to be known, granted not only

protection and some small semblance of warmth but granted them an almost magical ability which they used in turn to reinforce the faith of the people. On the heels of this new discovery many a low born gutter rat of the city flocked to the cathedral, there to become penitents and pilgrims that would help to forge the roads through the outer lands and bring word of the church to other new cities that had grown out of the snows. Some of the many knights and warriors of the new city and the garrison also turned themselves over to the will of the church becoming The Knights of the Holy Ordo. The Holy Ordo would henceforth act as the mighty fist of the church striking down all enemies of the shard and of the light. Indeed the members of the Holy Ordo are known to take up crusade and even venture into the now darkened city of Paralia and face its horrors in search of Queen Rosalyn, vanished since the day of the titans' fall.



## The College

While the church held the monopoly on the soul it was the College of Architects that held the monopoly of the mind. Those wise and noted scholars from the fallen city, true to their nature would not allow the cataclysm that had befallen the world to impede the quest for knowledge.

Those who remained of Paralia's scholars named themselves architects for they had in their own right aided in the creation of their new city. Indeed within the steadfast walls of this new haven these high architects would found the College of Architects. Understanding that no man, especially in these new and difficult time could live forever, it was of the utmost importance that the High Architects pass on their knowledge lest it be lost.

So it was that Franz Kolvang, High Chancellor of the College went before the Lord Marshal to seek his support. He Beseached Marshal Ottofeld to allow the College to take in the most promising children and teach them not only what the Architects knew but gift them the tools to learn more in these troubling times. The Lord Marshal reluctantly agreed, for he dislike the method but understood that it was a necessity.

And so children of ten and upwards were taken, sometime by force into the dormitories and lecture halls of the College of Architects. This start, while entirely needed only served to sour the people's perception of the College, a perception that would only grow worse as the years rolled on and the secrecy of the Colleges' inner working became more secretive.

To the chagrin of many of the College's sceptics though, there came new learning from its halls and many new inventions derived from the power of the shards that served to not only improve the lives of those within the city but to also cut short the lives of those who would do harm to the city or its people.

## The Paralithian Guard

While the church had its own Holy Ordo of knights of devastating power and martial prowess, so too did The Lord Marshal have a force of war. The Paralithian Guard was comprised of those knights and warriors who did not lend their strength to the protection of the Church but instead remained wholly loyal to their Lord Marshal and the people he was sworn to protect.

As such the guard perform a variety of duties, from policing the city and protecting traders, merchants and supply lines that spider-web their way through the snows beyond the cities but more than anything else the men of the guard are sworn to protect the city and its people in times of war. Whether they must stand outside the city in the blistering cold to repel bands of starving and deranged cultists or if they must do battle with the army of some other city state or even the darker creatures, they do so without fear or hesitation. The zeal and dedication of the Guard rivals even the religious fervour of the men of the Holy Ordo. They live lives dedicated solely for the purpose of war and protection. They live within the garrison where they train and practice for hours on end when not on duty.

All this is seen over by Master Johan Karlzbat, the acting general and right hand man of the true commander of Paralith's martial might, the Lord Marshal himself.



And so it is that Lord Marshal Christof Von Ottofeld, High Lord of the Faith Galherd Zhukov, Chancellor Franz Kolvang and their retinues attempt to guide a people through a world where even the animals have grown larger and more aggressive, in what has come to be known as the High Council by its members and Karl's Men by the common folk. These men seek to protect and advance the city in spite of the hardship and horror of the new world they inhabit but even for them it is a dangerous game. All men have their secrets but most dangerous of all secrets is that held by the Lord Marshal himself. In an elaborate dungeon that is known only to himself, his closest advisors and his elite guard, the Order of the Golden Sun, Lord Marshal Christof keeps the queen in a gilded cage. All know that Queen Rosalyn has not been seen since the fall of the titans but all are wrong, many saw the Lord Marshal caring for a woman who had lost her mind before the survivors had found salvation at the side of the Great Shard. What none knew was that this mad woman was indeed the queen, driven mad by the sight of her husband and king's death. Since then the Marshal has tried to care for her and keep her safe yet secret, he and his agents seeking constantly to find some cure for her immense and violent madness.

## The Six shards

While Paralith is surely one of if not the greatest city of the new world it is by no means a lone bastion in the frozen wastes for the Paralith shard too is not alone in a once great kingdom. The Paralith shard is but one of six great shards and countless other smaller shards around which many a great city and lowly hamlet alike has grown.

It was on the night of a great storm that the High Lord of the Faith awoke from a vivid dream of prescient vision. He saw across the great expanses of the new world, across snow deserts and wild dark forests and beheld the distant cities and those settlements that would soon become cities that gathered close around five other great shards.

And so upon the breaking of the storm the Exalted High Lord of the Faith sent forth five great bands to bring the lost cities of a once great kingdom back into the fold and take to them the word of the Church.



## Almalev

After many weeks of struggle and strife all five holy hosts came to the island city of Almalev. Lead by the city's lord Pallec Osotiv, former lord of Krina, the city of Almalev had been founded twenty years before the arrival of the church and had subsisted on what little fruit was harvested by their fishing efforts. Yet after the return of the holy hosts on their way back to the holy city itself, the once starved and pallid city of Almalev became a bustling and sprawling trading hub through which all traders must travel.

No great trading city is without woe though. It is thought by some that amongst the scurrying water rates in the city's under-ways and sewers, bands of vile smugglers work to rot the splendid walls of Almalev from within.

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## Oreah

When the brothers under the guidance of Father Elacious reached the far distant mountains of Colochev, where nestled into the base of the mountain Yullke they found the swarming stone beehive of Oreah. The city had grown around a shard buried deep into the rocky crags of the mountain. The shard in its glory illuminated and heated a vast labyrinth of caves and caverns below the mountain allowing the men of the mountain to carve out a home and many fruitful mines.

The brothers marvelled at the splendour of the underground city, the light of the shard glinting reflected light from countless, minerals, water deposits, precious gems and vital metals. The crowning glory of this resourceful city, apart from the shard itself was the beautiful waterfall of Makea that both brought life and beauty to the world below and powered their many industries. Soon the city would become the spiritual home of the College of Architects just as Paralith was the home of the church.

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## Athebus

Alas the fourth shard landed in a deep and hateful swamp, almost impossible for the brothers under Father Dilak to reach. Upon their arrival though they found themselves embroiled in a tapestry of intrigue and peril. The Baroness Artulia of the city of Athebus told the brothers of her father the baron, who in an attempt to save his people brought them to this land and had the city built rock by rock and brick by brick. Many men were lost during just the laying of the city's foundation, dragged to the deeps of the murky water by the heavy stones. Soon though the city was built, a city that stood on broad plinths above the swamp land about it. It was in likeness of a colossal tortoise with many ramps running down from the city gates to the marshes below. Despite the safety and sanctuary of the new city the common folk, soured of the baron's rule since the creation of the city, were left with no option and toiled in the bogs and marshes the crowded around the city's stony plinths. It was then that the Baroness told the Father and his retinue of the death of her father. He had been found in his chambers, life driven from him in a way all knew was not natural but they could not explain how or why. And so the baroness spends her days in constant fear that a secret enemy walks the proud yet damp walkways of her father's house who intends to guide her to the same fate.

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## The Sky Bridge

Far to the south the brothers of Father Waldek's host found themselves faced by the all but insurmountable obstacle of Mount Faltheim, a great mountain situated in the heart of a range that dwarfed that even of the mountainous home of the industrious city of Oreah. Yet guided by the slivers of their holy order the brothers knew they must reach the peak of this mountain.

For many weeks the brothers climbed and many fell, dispatched by the cold and hunger that was the constant enemy of all but also by loose footing and thin air. However upon reaching the peak the brothers learned that their struggle had been worth all the pain they had experienced. Nestled on the peak of the mountain was the city known as the Sky Bridge for its people said they were so close that they might touch the sky. Unlike the men of Oreah who had found their home fabricated for them upon their arrival, the peoples of Sky's Bridge were not so fortunate and so had carved their city of vertical streets and building into the very rock about the shard at the very peak. The only thing that had clearly been crafted by the hand of man was the wide rock ring about the base of the shard, like a saucer of immense size upon which many buildings of great import stood. After the brothers had recovered from their journey the lord of the city, Lord Balfug Hilro, took the brothers to the great ring and showed them the grey and stormy expanse of the freezing southern sea. There they talked for many hours until the falling of night revealed to them the glow from the ocean depths where another great shard, woefully lost to man, lay in rest and illuminated the seas.

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## Sloisa

In the forests of the western marches Father Elcart and his brothers came upon at last a squalid city, full of degeneracy and squalor. A filthy city made entirely of wood in many concentric rings around the divine shard at its centre. The beastly baron who ruled over the city told the brothers who had come to his gates of how many long years ago he had once led a band of notorious brigands and had built himself up to his current high position thanks to the shard. He had begun building the now deplorable city of Sloisa with his band of outlaws and had taken in refugees and those seeking shelter at a price. Even now the iniquity of the foul city continues to grate against the souls of the virtuous, for the citizens spend their days in drink and debauchery. All in the city who cling to the way of the righteous are constantly imperilled by corruption and a swift fall into debased experiences along with the rest. It is known by all those beyond its walls that Sloisa is a city on the edge of collapse.

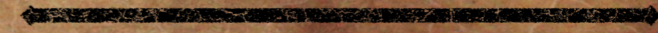
Although only these cities have risen from the dower snows that cover the land and shelter their shards, it is said that there are scrolls within the archives beneath Paralith's cathedral that speak of more than just the one lost shard.

It is said that one shard lies deep beneath the earth, so far buried was it by the cataclysmic eruption of the crystal titan that while the ravine that still exists, created by its passage can be seen the shard itself is lost to the darkness below the surface and its light can no longer be seen.

However there are darker records housed within the archives. One scroll speaks of a darkened shard, corrupted by men of good intent but lacking in knowledge.

Far to the south west, further even than Oreak, sits that fair city's dark twin. The men there are supposed to have dragged the shard within their mountain holdfast where at first illuminated their cavern homes but a darkness crept into the mountain men. Believing that the shard

could not last indefinitely unless fuelled the men of the mountain began to make sacrifice to the shard. Men, women, children, none were spared the club that smashed the skulls and sprayed the blood upon the shard. Soon though the shard's light began to fade, steadily plunging the men of the mountain back into darkness and cold were after many long years all would perish. Now in the depths of the dead mountain the undead roam the halls of a darkened shard and it remains to be seen if the Church will seek to reclaim a holy relic of such great import.





## Other villages & towns

Parlta - A fat, broad and squat township crowded by edifices of mottled grey stone work and bricks. The town consists mostly of mid-level merchants and farmers of livestock and grain.

Karl's Rest - A small farming village that tends the glass long halls to produce wheat, potatoes and other crops.

Troik - Another small farming village, producing more of the much demanded staples while also cultivating pale, delicate and expensive real flowers often purchased by the high born in the city.

Old Hay Field - A proud village that breeds livestock for the slaughter but takes great pride in horses they rear and boast that their stables have often been called upon by knights of the Holy Ordo in the Holy City.

Heinbeck - Located to the North East, equal distance from the ruins of Paralia and Paralith's majestic domes sits Heinbeck. A town that serves as the organisational hub of the mining villages that fall under its jurisdiction. While the centre of the town is wrought in stone and brick, the outer reaches of the town are still predominantly wood.

Mine Top - The unimaginatively named Mine Top half humble dwellings and half refinery for the Faulheim Mine just east of them and their sister village. The village mostly produces ores and metals

Krak - The sister village of Mine Top, Krak is mostly involved in the expansion of the mine and utilising the rock and stone displaced, supplying much of building materials required by the local towns and cities.

Dram - is the smallest town in Paralith's orbit but is also the most squalid. The town is still mostly made of wood, including the town defensive wall. Dram is a production town and mostly distils vodka and brews potent beer, bought in bulk by Paralith residents and merchants for sale in other great cities or towns.

Mudbank - a robust stony town that sits on the northern edge of the great lake. Rarely serving as a way station for those seeking entrance to Almalev except for those on pilgrimage, the town mostly serves to use the water currents to power their mills and in turn mill the grain they use to bake a great deal of bread.

Rat Nest - The small fishing village of Rat Nest is so called as there are rumours it is the only town or village on the lake shore that will allow the passage of smugglers.

Arbithe - Another small fishing village that mostly trawls for crabs in the frigid waters and produces a great deal of coin and economy for the town and the city beyond.

Port Holdeski - Sat on the south eastern shore, Port Holdeski serves as one of the two major ports into Almalev and as such is thick with traders, merchants and smugglers trying to get rich off the goods in transit.



**Drukburg** - The second of the two port towns that operate the ferries to the Island City at the heart of the lake. Much like Port Holdeski this is the main economy of the town however the town elders ensure that the glass houses are always growing vital crop for the town's folk if none else.

**Stoneford** - North West of Drukburg. Stoneford sits next to a ford of huge stepping stone across the Amlat River that flows into the great lake. The village works mostly in crop production to feed itself and also to trade in Drukburg.

**Gerwent** - The town of Gerwent houses many of the miners, engineers and general labourers that toil in the city yet seldom have the coin to live there. Much like its parent city, the town is made mostly of hewn rock and nestled amid mountains.

**Oric Pass** - The small village of Oric Pass is dedicated to the production of crops, most of which are traded immediately with Gerwent.

**Greenhill** - The village of Greenhill is small but hearty, its folk dedicated to the tasks of crop production and livestock breeding. The folk of Greenhill are much like their main export, the great and shaggy Buffalo-kolrine, a strange subspecies of buffalo that are both larger and stronger than their more domestic cousins. They are often used as work animals by miners, architects and farmers as they are notorious hears.

**Henningvehr** - One of the many wooden towns around Sloisa, Henningvehr is mostly a logging town, using giant college wrought machines to help to gather further resources to aid not only the college but l a strange way, all.

**Balka** - The folk of Balka predominantly work as farmers and a few work as lumberjacks and maintenance of the through ways and roads.

**Molgot** - Folk from Molgot are much the same as from their sister villages, most produce grain in their glass houses while others depart for logging work. However Molgot also works to produce some of the strongest cider available from the trees in their glass gardens.

**Kordelf** - The surprisingly well reinforced town of Kordelf plays home to a great many mercenaries due to the fact there are a great deal of wolf sightings. The town boasts a high stone wall and a more intensive guard regiment. Due to the high numbers of mercenaries the main economy is taverns, alcohol and violence. Its orbit of four unnamed villages keep the town stocked with food and supplies.

**Siechev** - The town of Siechev is barely large enough to be called a town, consisting of wooden buildings with steady rock foundations and populated by a society of vehemently individualist folk. The main trade being hunting and travel guiding through the wilderness or snow clogged roads. This Town too is orbited by several unnamed villages, though due to the dense forest none can say for certain how many or where.

**Vinteboğ** - The unusually named town of Vinterboğ began its long and rocky history when one man on his way to Althebus on pilgrimage happened to call and unfortunate scrap of land Winter's bog, due to the fact it was so poorly placed as to acquire all the worst elements of the swamp further to the north east and the frozen wilderness across the rest of this new world. The scrap of land was harrowed by the gaseous and noxious fumes and fetid stinks that waft constantly



through the swamp's air but also wracked by the constant freezing winds and blinding snows. Unfortunately for all this detestable scrap of land was home to a shard and so it was that it became one of the many towns of the new world.

**Maglaslev** - A small oasis of warmth in a vast sea of snow. The town and folk of Maglaslev are so remote and removed from the rest of civilisation they simply seek to provide for themselves and prosper enough to continue. Many who have accidentally come across Maglaslev marvel that it has not been befouled either by corruption or plague.

**Shulldorf** - A large coastal town on the edge of the frozen southern sea whose population of fishermen will often brave the cold and the unknowable beasts that lurk beneath the waves in search of fish to feed their families. The fish they do not need or occasionally a much larger beast is packed in ice and dragged to the Sky Bridge for trading of resources.

**Nifleburg** - The town of Nifleburg sits upon the tiny island of Yol, just off the southern coast. For many years none knew the town even existed due to its far removed nature, until the college researchers noticed the strange lights that pierced the night sky above the island. Upon making contact the brothers of the church and architects of the college met with the town's leader, the man who filled the role of Thodann or chieftain, named Brant Sarvourn who revealed a great many things about the town.

**Voltdorf** - Nestled in the arms of the south western most peak in the great mountain range known as the Altest Mountains, is the most precarious town in the new world. For while the people of Voltdorf are hardworking and righteous, their church being one of the most decorated and revered, they sit closer than any other to an unseen danger. Voltdorf is unknowingly found a short stint south east from that dreaded Witch City, Ghulbaad. As such the town is constantly on the verge of suffocation by the choking hands of cultists or worse still

the more subtle and insidious fall to corruption that will surely see many turn to the cult and few even more unlucky folks become the most hated plague bearers.

**Tolguard** - On the edge of the eastern wildlands, half buried in the earth, in emulation of the shard it surrounds, is the bustling town of Tolguard. What started as an attempt to repel the snows, wind and devious agents of the outer darkness soon became a strange custom among the inhabitants who dwelt there in the early days of Tolguard. Once known for their odd habits, the town of Tolguard is now only known for its unsurpassed crop yield. There are many scholars within the college's hallowed halls who have posited that the only reason that the ingenious town of Tolguard has not become a marvellous seventh great city is due only to the save of their shard that cannot support any more expansion efforts.

**Lasandorf** - Wedged between the great forest that wherein sits Sloisa to the east and the mighty mountain range upon whose peak rests the Sky Bride is the sprawling town of Lasandorf. Once the town was established and the days seemed less brutal, the people of Lasandorf soon turned to fat and greediness, content to wallow in their own vices and all but encouraged by the ruling council of the time, who learned to love their excesses in the contemptable drinking pits of Sloisa. Until there came home a knight of the Holy Ordo. As a boy he recalled the persistence and nobility of his fellow town's folk and disgusted by what he now saw he took the sword to the ruling council and saw to the restoration of his home. Now Lasandorf is the greatest provider of aspirants for the Holy Ordo in the entire new world.



## —The curses and the other places—

While life for those who took shelter about the shards was by no means easy or pleasurable, they would consider themselves lucky beyond measure that they had the sense to seek comfort in the warmth and the arms of the church for those beyond the light were truly lost.

Four curses befell those in the outer wastes. Dire and terrifying curses that would see even the strongest of men buckle and bring up his rations in the face of such horror.

### The Mind Plague

While many of those who survive the devastation of the Titans' fall, there were those among them who refuse to seek the shelter and protection of the shards and instead decided to make their way in the frozen wilds. At first these small bands stayed in their towns and villages reasoning that such were the halls where their fathers had lived and died and so they would follow suit but soon a darkness began to creep in. Their minds grew dark, beast like strength and violence becoming more and more common place. Soon their food ran out and many turned to cannibalism first in the unthinking desperation of animals but soon these low men began to take a perverse satisfaction in the practice and what was once only a dire need to an end became a disgusting ritual practice among their numbers, wherever they might be. Before long, the darkness that had wrought the change on their minds began its dark workings on their physical forms. Foul mutations corrupted the flesh of these now feral men, some sprouting evil looking curling horns, others growing vile and wriggling tentacles of all colours and hues and before long even fouler, darker and more disgusting practices became common place among their number.

These beast men soon started to fight amongst themselves, vying for dominance and power in the likeness of animals, yet even if a dominant

beast-man won out and control his vile herd this would not quench the need for violence in him and so it was that the Mind Plague began to take its toll on those beyond its physical and mental degradations. Smaller towns that crowded around smaller shards and caravans of traders and merchants were inevitably attacked by the vile beast-men, that would strike out of at them from the now darkened forests, slaughter all they could and drag their pray back to their unholy townships to consume their flesh.

Reports quickly began to flood the offices of the major cities and most importantly of all these reports of beast-men reached the ears of the High Lord of the Faith himself. He in his wisdom decreed that even the mere forms of these beast-men was an insult to the faith, displaying a contempt and a scourge for the form of man in what could only be considered heresy. And so it was that the Exalted High Lord of the Faith and Protector of the Righteous declared the Third Holy Crusade to drive the beast-men from their homes and lairs and put them to the torch, not to rest until these unclean monstrosities were purged from the lands and man could once more move without fear.

Without delay the knights of the Holy Ordo struck out, putting countless towns to the torch, purging the unclean in holy fire leaving the beast-men with no sanctuary. The beast-men that were cleansed were staked out by the sides of major roads between the major cities, they disgusting form on show for all to see, most of all though their stench seemingly deterred others from entering the area.

But as with all the creatures of the wilds the beast-men found a way. These beasts now skulk in caves and underground nests in huge herds that buck and fight amongst themselves until the opportunity arises for them to take their violent needs to the Manlings they despise and whose meat they love so much.



## The Soul Plague

Though many survived the cataclysm that had plunged the world into endless winter, many countless more fell. Unsurprisingly there was no time or safety enough for the living to properly lay to rest the dead. Worse still was that in the wake of the Titans' fall, such immense magical energies had been unleashed that the nature of life and death had been disturbed. The dead, denied the proper burial rites could not release their souls into the realm of the dead, instead their souls were caught in perpetual burning agony and trapped within the rotting corpses of their once strong bodies. And so the bodies of the dead rose, the old great cities that had become little more than over filled graveyards now played home to a newer and fouler form of life making the old cities the most dangerous of places to venture. Worst of all of these forbidden places is without doubt or surprise Paralia. The Capital city held more souls than all others combined and as such it now holds the greatest numbers of the undead that constantly threaten the holy city of Paralith and its people.

There are however many more of the undead out in the frozen wilds and while there are truly more disgusting and powerful beasts in the outer wastes, none should underestimate the threat the undead pose, for if an undead with sufficient strength rises they can bend lesser undead to what little remains of their will, creating vast hordes of undead thralls whose numbers grow with ever body not given it's the correct rites and laid to rest.

## The Flesh Plague

While it is known throughout the world that the mutations of both mind and body of those afflicted by the Mind Plague are beyond disgusting and unbearable, there is another plague, one more far more brutal and all-consuming in its perversion of the human form.

It is rumoured that in the first days after the titans' fall one man was overcome by the new magical forces that swept over the land, addling his mind. As a wondering madman, acting more like a beast than a person, the fiend began to hunt what wildlife remained in the forests around his village. It is thought that through his beast like actions the fiend did fall in with a pack of wolves, corrupted by the black dust of the Dark titan. The man ran as a wolf, ate like as a wolf, fought like a wolf and many say even bred like as a wolf.

It was from the unholy union of man and beast that the first werewolves were spawned. The beasts grew fast, soon standing at twice the height of any man and coated in thick shaggy fur in various shades of grey and white. They have no teeth but only fangs, longer and sharper than any dagger that smiths can craft and their claws are razors that can split the belly of anything they set their sights upon.

While if this plague had been confined to only these few yet disgusting beasts it is entirely possible they would have remained secret and safe for possibly hundreds of years but unfortunately for both beast and man this was no so. The story is told among the smaller towns and villages of a man, who while on his duties as a woodsman, ventured too far from his village shard and was fallen upon by a most vile and hideous creature. Using his axe the man managed to fend off the beast but had not come away from the encounter unscathed. His leg burned and throbbed for the beast had bitten him but the man limped back to his village, even bring what wood he had gathered in spite of the beast that had attacked him. Soon though the man fell prey to a violent fever. He was drenched in sweat, complained he could not sleep, that he could smell rank stench all about and that he could feel his very bones breaking and shifting. After three days, the village's medicine woman



came to the man's rooms to assess his fever when she encounter a horrifying beast where once the man had been. The beast utterly destroyed the woman and rampaged about the shelter it was trapped in before it was finally driven out into the woods beyond. IT is widely rumoured that this is how the people came to learn of the new Plague that haunted the forests and wild places of the world.

Whether the story is true or not is inconsequential for it is known to be true by both the people and more importantly the Church, declaring that these werewolves too must not be allowed to spread their hideous plague to the people of the faith. It was with a new enemy of the Church exposed that the High Lord of the Faith disbanded the third crusade and instead announced the Righteous Crusade, a battle that would never cease until all the foul beasts of the outer places that haunted the righteous man's footsteps were driven out or slaughtered.

Yet this task would prove difficult in regards to the werewolves for they are solitary creatures by nature. They are supposed by certain Architects to in fact be the new dominant predator in this new land given their size, strength and in many cases intelligence. It is thought by some students of the college that these beast may even possess the ability to speak and that there is a great stone amphitheatre out in the unknown territories known as the Cauldron where the wolves meet to breed but maybe more.

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## The Blood Plague

All known that the other three plagues are disgusting and horrifying in their own right but even now there are few who known of the existence of the most insidious plague-bearers of all. Creeping villains that must consume the blood if they are to live and attempt to quell their insatiable thirst. Yet these plagued men and women do not possess the same bodily mutations and ailments of the other three plagues, instead it is true to its name as a plague of the blood and since they look no different from any man they have been known, by a few, that these depraved monsters will hide themselves in the crowds of healthy men.

It is said that there are many scrolls in the Churches archives beneath the grand cathedral in Paralith yet even among the clergy there are those who do not know of the most secretive library, the Vault of Aminio. Held within the vault there is a most hideous scroll that recounts the birth of what only the highest of those in the Church call the Vampyr. The black scroll of brother Aminio, he who first made and filled the vault that is his namesake, tells of the first of their wretched kind.

A simple and humble man was making his way to the capital in search of medicines for his ailing child when the titans began their battle. Right beneath their feet he lay, bloodied and broken, feeling his life's blood run out of his battered limbs and feeling his end about to come. But fate had other plans for this man. Just as he began to feel the cold grip of the grave about his body he looked up and saw the final shattering blows the titans dealt one another. It was he was buried alive in a mountain of the black dust. The black dust mixed and infused itself into the man's blood turning it into a dark and evil thing. He felt his blood flow back into him from a thousand gashes and cuts, felt new strength invigorate his once torn muscles. His once broken bones knitted themselves back together with a new resilience he had never dreamed possible and the wounds to his flesh sealed themselves with frightful speed. The man was reborn as the first Vampyr. He dug



himself free of the grave he lay in and disappeared into the blizzards that now battered the plains of Cosovia.

While the blood plague may have started with one damned soul it soon spread, condemning thousands of others to a life of thirst and rage and endless want. It is only by the workings of the Church's most secretive martial branch, the Inquisia that these deplorable monsters are kept in check in absolute secrecy, lest the people learn of the danger that lurks among them.

All of these beasts and plagues only strive to make the world beyond the safety of the shards that much more dangerous and horrifying. All of this is only compounded by the fact that the black dust cultist, now referring to themselves as the Esoteric Order of Dust are constantly striving to inflict ever more harm and suffering on those who bask in the holy light of the shards.

### Cities of the past & other vile places

While the fall of Paralia was truly a tragedy beyond all measure, it was only made worse by the fact that the capital was only one of six great cities across the old kingdom of Louris to fall after the Titans' devastating battle. Six cities, now ancient before their time, once vibrant and teeming with life now lie silent in the snow. Now the ruined cities of the Old World moulder and skulk amid the piling snow drifts with their throngs of undead wanders and dark, harmful secrets. Some heroes are brave or stupid enough to venture within and walk about the slowly crumbling bones of these ancient, dead cities but many are content to let them rest and sink slowly beneath the snow.

#### Krazagrad

Once a beautiful but cold city, where the masterfully crafted walls of alabaster and dark granite had long since learned to resist the freezing winds that came rushing out of the northern wildlands every

winter. A city known for its hearty and resilient folk but who, like all others, departed during the great migration so as to live a little longer.

#### Maldolev

Much like the lost city of Kazagrad, Maldolev was a city that knew how to bear the brunt of winter even before the Titan's fall. A city full of hard folk, who crafted and battered and shaped metal, wood and stone into any form raised their walls around themselves from the stone of the mountains to their east. Now the forges, once famed even beyond old Louris, sit cold and empty, though thankfully their wisdom lives on in the shelter of the Shards.

#### Brukkenheim

Old Brukkenheim was once a proud and beautiful city where the people would rejoice in their labours for their work was its own reward, where there grew a fine taste for art and sophistication. There cropped up a great many theatres within the city and a great many mummers troops just outside the city walls, who would often take the latest plays written by the magisterial poets of the city and perform them across the land. Though now the boards are empty and bare, and only the most foolish dare to enter that city that sits so close to the forest beyond its crumbling walls.

#### Hurtenburg

AS with all cities by water, old Hurtenburg relied upon the river, the almost rhythmical, tidal nature of the river was almost like the heartbeat of the city itself. Once rich, prosperous and well fed thanks to trade and crop irrigation that came with the river, Hurtenburg had one of most shocking falls of all the cities after the Titans' fall. The coming of the snows not only froze the people of the city but also the river, leaving the city's life-blood cold and unmoving. Soon those within the city who had lived in abject poverty began rebellions against those born with plenty and as the city devoured itself from within many departed upon the great migration.



## Volmar

Volmar was of all the olden cities the one most at odds with itself. Simultaneously nestled in the low mountains and hills while also being almost upon the very coast itself. However the hard and persistent folk of old Volmar were not disturbed or disorientated by the nature of their city. On the contrary, the town's folk were thrilled to have the bounties of the sea and the harvest of the land in equal, abundant measure. Soon though the Titans fell and the seas refused to offer up their bounties to those who would work hard to receive them and the low hills, once known for centuries as the home of rare vineyards from whence came the most glorious wines, the hills, valleys and low mountain peaks were soon covered in frost and snow.

## Cultists' Temple City of Ghulbaad

After the cultists were driven from the cities of the pure they travelled in ragged bands of violent and paranoid bands that would sulk in the shadows of the road side forests rather than be seen. But all these deranged, deplorable and brutal bands began to hear the calling with a sense deeper than hearing. Hundreds, possibly thousands of these small tribes began to migrate to the far west in search of a nameless, unknowable goal. It was a cultist named Turzat Krut, known in another life as Klaus Minhelm, who stumbled into the great cavern once frequented by a madman's tribe of freaks. It was there that Turzat and his followers found the Dark Shard and felt the pull at its strongest. This was their goal and now their greatest monument. As time marched ever onwards more and more of the wandering cultists trickled into the cavern and its connected caves until the newly crowned High Priest, a nameless witch of immense power, deemed that something must be done.

For years the thunderous sound of thousands of chisels echoed off the walls of the fledgling city, known in the foul cult language as Ghulbaad, translated as the Witch city, as its residents carved their city from the very rock. Soon the city was completed. A vast labyrinth of dank black rock that spirals down from a colossal viewing

platform about the Dark Shard itself to the squalid lowest level known as the pit. All the path ways that run through the city like a gigantic stony spider web are lit by noxious green flamed torches and lanterns that are rarely used against the "Shard-Sheep" but instil madness inducing fear in the simple folk. These lights are fuelled by some black magic heresy that few within the city understand. While the common rabble squabbled and raged against one another at the lower levels, carved deep into the earth, those who were higher in the cult or of greater importance lived lives of relative comfort on the higher levels in sight of the Dark Shard.

While the Witch City is predominantly a secure and secret home to the most devout of cultists it is also their greatest and only permanent temple. The entire city is blessed by the black dust and guided by the Dark Shard whose great viewing platform oft times runs red with rivers of innocent blood, offered in sacrifice and steaming in the constant chill air. Those bloody rivers almost ceaselessly cascade over the platforms edge creating a grotesque waterfall of blood almost constantly flowing and spraying the entire devilish city in a fine blood mist. The only thing worse is the great trough carved into the stone with the intention of funnelling the blood into a great blood lake where all those who dwell within the city can parch their thirst.

As the city grew and developed it began its own twisted and sickening political games, often hosting emissaries from the savage beast-men herds that would pay homage to the monument and rarely a higher vampyr or one of their even rarer counts or barons, though there are hundreds of lower vampyrs openly milling about the streets of the dark city, feeding on those loyal to the cult and those innocents dragged into the pit kicking and screaming. In fact there are more than those plague-bearers that still have some of their wits remaining that frequent the depraved depths of the Witch City, there are countless swarms of undead that roam the narrow walkways behind iron barring and stone walls that encompass the city. None known quite what the purpose of these shuffling, underground city



guard is, even many of the higher cult members, the only man who truly knows is the High Priest who does not debase himself enough to answer these queries. However there has never been a werewolf in the unholy halls though there are whispered rumours that in the Kazna-Burda-Rak vaults, hidden somewhere in the city, houses the only known wolf to maintain a human mind.

There are suspicions of both cultists and those who know of their deeds and conspiracies that Ghulbaad may not be alone. There are those who whisper of other vile and dark cities that lurk in the northern wildlands, some that might even rival the horror of Ghulbaad itself. No matter if these vile cities exist or if they might rival the great dark city, there are many who believe, some who dwell in the shadows and some who dwell in light, there will soon come a day when the Ghar-Hud, the final terrible horde that will unite all those beyond the light, will be assembled in the torturous caverns of Ghulbaad. There to go forth and set the world ablaze until only ashes and dust remain. Only time will tell if those prophecies hold true.

#### The Great Rift

"I walk in the eternal light of the great shards. It is I who bask in their warming glow and feel a tender kiss of spring upon my cheek and though the night comes, and the many adversaries cloaked within it, I will fear neither, for it is I who will remain when the dawn comes back at last" – Brother Aminio before the battle of Wotchaslev's Field, east of Shultdorf.

After the Titans' fall the shards were flung across the land and while many now stand at the hearts of the cities and towns there are two lost great shards. In the far north east there lies the Great Rift, a colossal tear in the earth, carved through the very rock, so deep that none can see the bottom and the pale light of the shard below can hardly pierce the darkness. Although there are many who see nothing more than a great rend in the fabric of the earth, there are those who say that there are strange happenings at the rift.

When the enigmatic currents of magic are aligned it is said that there erupts a great aurora of pale blue lights from deep within the rift. There are many who claim to have witnessed this phenomenon and speak of its beauty but also of the profound unease that hangs in the air around it like smoke. Many a tavern brawl was started by a man who claims the Great Rift throws the light attempting to silence his critics. However the truth is only know to a very small few.

Deep within the secret prison vaults of the Inquisia's already secretive home sits a man half gone to madness. The man, once known as novice Franceno, was once the acolyte of the famed Brother Aminio.

Aminio and his novice had been gone many long months, out in the frozen wilds, when entirely without forewarning or expectation Franceno half ran, half stumbled into the great cathedral of Paralith. The novice was bloody and wounded, clearly set upon by animals, his robes stained with mud and blood in equal measure. He bore the marks of frost bite on his fingers and toes, losing three fingers at the hands of the doctors tasked with returning him to health. Upon his recovery the novice was questioned at great length by the Fathers and Patriarchs of the great cathedral as to the fate of brother Aminio, even drawing scrutiny from the mysterious Lord Kryptheim, the Shade Lord and commander of the Inquisia and the High Lord of the Faith himself. The novice had lost his satchel and supplies somewhere out in the frozen tundra but had held tight to a single missive, placed in his hand by Aminio himself. He handed the scroll over willingly to the Shade Lord and the High Lord beneath the flickering torch light of an interrogation cell. The missive was written in Brother Aminio's hand and spoke of how his retinue had been sundered by a Vampyr assault leaving none but himself, Franceno and his other novice, Lawrenca, alive. They had continued on their quest and had climbed to the very deepest depths of the great rift itself where they made a discovery of cataclysmic importance. The Great Shard at the bottom of the trench was embedded in a crust of the heinous black dust, solidified by heat and pressure. There, in the depths of the great rift,



did the black dust spill its malign influence and unholy power, showing clearly it a thousand spindling tendrils squirming deep within the Shards inner light. While taking sketches of the newly discovered Turning Shard, the Brother watched as Lawrenca place a hand upon it. Upon chiding the novice for his blasphemy there came a deep and savage rumbling. Dislodged rocks and clods of dirt rattled down the cavernous walls of the great trench. The brother sensing imminent danger order his novices to make all haste and retreat to safety beyond the rift. No sooner had he told given this order than there was another rumbling. This time larger and heavier stones were flung down, one pinning the brother's leg while another shattered Lawrenca's skull. The Brother hurriedly scribbled the missive and put it in the hands of Franceno with instruction to take it directly to the church. Upon reaching the safety of the surface, the novice kept running and only turned around when the final rumble was accompanied by a bright sheer of light. He turned and witnessed the aurora.

The Shade Lord and High Lord both went over the missive many times and listened to the recitation of the novice. They discussed in private the course of action that should be taken. So it was that two Inquisia agents travelled into the Rift themselves. There they found the Turning Shard and Aminio's writings but no sign of either the brother himself or his fallen novice.

Now Franceno spends his days in an Inquisia prison chamber to safe guard his knowledge and make sure none know or learn of the true power at the Great Rift. Lost to both thought and memory the aging novice no longer recalls his own name, no longer resembles a once civilised man beneath a beard and hair many years without attention. While once he knew that his suffering was surely for a purpose, greater than himself his mind frays more at the edges with every passing day.

### The Last Stand

While the entire world has been changed by the epic battle and even more catastrophic fall of the Titans, there is a place where even the fabric of reality and nature is bent almost to breaking point. The crater known across the new world as The Last Stand was once a pleasant and verdant place, on the borders of the Ardentev Forest. It was there that the final devastating blows were dealt by those colossal warriors and there that strange things are known to occur. The same force that flung the shards of the Crystal Titan's form and reduced the Dark Titan to so much black dust also blasted a hole larger than any city or even the Cauldron to the south east. From the very first the Last Stand was known to be extremely strange. There were reports of a vast whirling vortex of black dust within the depths of the crater before dispersing and spreading out across the land to spread its vile taint and influence. There are those in the taverns of Almalev and Paralith that tell the old tale of the shepherd whose lost flock were all horribly mutated into vile monsters as they traversed some unseen boundary about the last stand. It is also known as fact by those who work beneath the sigil of the Inquisia or have read the illuminating texts of Brother Aminio that the last stand is the place where man was reborn into the grips of the foul Blood Plague, the very place where the first of the race of Vampyr was born amid splintered shard and whirling dust.

There are many tales and rumours about that hub of oddities but there is none who can confirm or deny those tales outside of those with great power in the church and the brothers of the Inquisia. Only they know the truth of that strange place and its immediate and persistent oozing sensation of otherworldliness and unease. The existence of magic in this new world is often overlooked by the common folk, so distracted are they by the impressive nature of magic itself and the constant struggle of their day to day lives but the scrolls of the old world and long memories of the Patriarchs, Hierophants and even the High Lord are not so clouded. They can recall that before the Titans' fall and the blasting of the Last Stand magic



was absent from the world. It is with this knowledge in hand that they church deployed its agents to investigate.

The brothers and fathers who studied the last stand returned to the great cathedral with strange reports. The clergymen spoke of the immediate change in the air which took on a thick, greasy feel that was charged with crackling static. One of the younger brothers, brother Klistmann, was supposed immediately to vomit due solely to the instant change in the air. The clergymen also spoke in their reports that there came also a dread sense of unease that chilled and gnawed at the very bones of the brothers and fathers. A cold and ceaseless discomfort that could not be fully explained, the source of this unease was explained however. Through a series of experiments and long hours of observation the clergymen were able to discover the reason why the Last Stand was a location of great strangeness. The nature of the Titan's themselves was one of extremely potent magic, shown by the magical ability provided by the holy amulets and the black dust magic of the cultists, but this magical potential was held in check by the forms of the Titans. Upon destroying each other with a final deathblow, the power that held the magical potential in check was dispelled, unleashing magic upon the world. The explosion that formed the crater of the Last Stand was formed not only by sheer physical force but also by the shock wave of magical release and while the former left a scar upon the earth, the latter left a scar on the fabric of reality itself.

The mingling of such potent magic, both light and dark combined with the scar upon the face of reality makes the Last Stand an area of magical convergence and transcendence where the boundaries of reality have become fray and none know what might happen.

## Heroes of Everbane







Elathon von Ubenwald

On the day of the titans' coming Lord Ellias Von Ubenwald travelled to the capital of Paralia to seek the wisdom of King Karl in a minor land dispute with his neighbour, Baron Klisten. Lord Von Ubenwald was a strong leader to his peoples and could be counted upon to do the hard tasks his station required of him but he was also a devoted husband and father to be and so he brought his lovely wife, Lady Malba who was heavy with child.

After being rescued and saved from the city by the King himself, Lord and Lady Ubenwald were flung out into the world beyond the city walls. It was during the brutal raging blizzards in the aftermath of the titans' fall, a child was born to Lord Ellias and Lady Malba Von Ubenwald.

Many children fell to the freezing winds and so none expected the babe in arms to survive more than a week but Elathon, as his parents named him, would prove to be more resilient than any had thought. The healthy babe weathered the storms along with all the others in the vast refugee band and was there when the city of Paralith took root around the glorious shard.

For fifteen years Elathon grew in the upper levels of Paralith's mighty dome in the relative luxury that came with his parents' station. He was tutored in both the art of statesmanship and martial tactics as was the way with all young men who would become lords in their time. Indeed his education was going much quicker and better than most of the other boys around him until the Schism in the Church. During the violent clashes of between the men of the church and the vile cultist that would soon be driven from the city, Ellias and Malba Von Ubenwald would begin to question their faith and vocally supported the cultists who raged through the city's walkways and ghettos. However, Elathon would never renounce his faith.

In due time the cultist were defeated and driven from the city and the Lord Marshal in alliance with the Exalted High Lord of the Faith exiled the cult's more vocal supporters to the outer cold in their wake. Among



the disgraced hordes was Lord and Lady Von Ubenwald, stripped of title and station for both themselves are their once noble line. Elathon watched his parents driven from the city from the halls of the church where now he intended to complete his martial training.

It took long years for Elathon to grow into his exquisitely forged long sword and his pitch black armour with the golden shard and light beam motif upon the breast that is the right of all knights in the Holy Ordo, yet he chaffs at the insult to his pride and honour that came with the fall of his house and has been known to let his arrogance overwhelm his sense, so adept was he at his studies and training regiments, being known at times to batter down the opinions of his compatriots. Yet the young knight knows his short comings and is constantly seeking to improve upon them as he carries out the Righteous Crusade in the name of his holy and beloved Church.



Albut Krawis



Mercenary and leader of the company of the Fists of Dawn.

In the town of Crow's Perch, south west of Almalev, a young boy discovered a talent for violence. This boy was a kind and dutiful son to his father, a humble carpenter who saw to the Count of the town's household, yet this kind boy would come to learn that the lessons of this new world are often brutal and hard. The boy was tricked into the forests on the edge of the town and stripped of his clothes and as he stood there shivering he watched the children run with his clothes snapping in the wind as they thrust their hands above their heads in raucous laughter. It was then that the boy took up the gauntlet of violence from the snow. Upon his return to the town square, naked and cold, his skin coloured a pale blue from the chill, the boy battered and broke those who had tricked him and found that more than the satisfaction of revenge, he enjoyed the violence.

In the coming years the boy grew to manhood and the people of his town came to know and some fear the name Albut Krauws. As he grew, Albut's hunger and passion for fighting and violence grew with him. He spent many drunken nights in the dungeon cells in the town's jail sleeping off strong drink and strong fights. While many who have such passions are soon dispatched, Albut found that he was if anything to be rewarded for his actions. The Judges of Crow's Perch passed sentence on Albut after one brutal fight that he was to be sent as part of a man power tithe to serve in the Water's Fist, the army of Almalev, seat of the Liege lord of Crow's Perch.

While an enlisted man, Albut would face many enemies whether mortal or unclean filth, and took revel in every battle into which they sent him charging. The battle being won, Albut and his companions would drink long into the night and soon both he and his closest companions were exiled from the Water's Fist.

In the wake of their exile Albut and his companions would wander from town to town, often camping out in the cold wilds when they could not reach the safety of city walls. It was on one such fateful night that the

course of Albut's life and those of his companions would be changed forever. In the deep of a frozen night the company slept in their collection of ragged and patched tents when they were stole upon by a fiendish creature. A vampyr, starved of blood and driven half mad by the hunger tore through a tent and slaughtered two of the company. Rather than running blindly into the night in hope of finding safety as so many others would Albut lead a mad dog charge against the monster and laid it low with seven brutal strikes with his savage war hammer.

As morning came Albut and his men dragged the bodies of their companions and the vampyr into the town of Kromski's Cradle, to give their friends a proper burial and see the vampyr into the hands of the church. To their surprise the people of the town flocked to them, many pushing coinage and food into their hands for the vampyr had long plagued their small corner of the world, dragging men, women and children from their homes and from the streets when and where it could until the coming of Albut and his men.

Seeing a vital opportunity, Albut declared that he and his companions were mercenaries who would destroy any vampyr or beast-man that plagued a town or village, for the right price of course. So it was that Albut Krauws founded and led the Fists of Dawn mercenary company and now roams from town to town in search of work and drink.





Wilhelmina Hursch

At the age of seven a young girl was dragged from her bed by faceless strangers in the city of Oeah. The Girl Wilhelmina Hursch had for better or worse been selected for enrolment in the College of Architects in that glorious mining city, the spiritual home of the College.

The girl child had always been clever beyond her peers and often even adults could not rival her intellect and so it came as no surprise to her that she had been caught up in the forced enrolment that came with the founding of an arm of the College but even knowing and understanding could not suppress the emotions of fear and sadness that came with it.

Despite the hurt, Wilhelmina would soon rise to the top of her class and devour knowledge with the same ferocious appetite that many say the beast-men would devour the weak amongst themselves. Indeed she had been known to spend hours in the college's archives, even beyond the students' curfew, requiring for the one of the heavy handed custodians to discipline her and bring her back to her dormitory. Yet she could not be dissuaded from her course and even before the age of fourteen had become the youngest ever student to graduate and be granted the title of architect.

But one should never dismiss the impact of fear and sadness on a growing child, for it has been known for those children to harbour an inner darkness that could spell the ruin for themselves and those around them. Wilhelmina is one such woman. While she grew to enjoy and even adore the college into which she had been thrust it cannot be denied that she has a darker passion within. A curiosity broils in her belly that verges on heresy.

While she has crafted many inventions and devices and even studied many great mysteries, Wilhelmina seeks to study the Black Dust for she thinks that such a source of power cannot be overlooked. She often scolds herself for the desire for she knows that the path she wishes to walk down is fraught with danger, corruption and possibly even damnation.



It was over the course of her second year of being an architect that she knew she could no longer learn and create while being confined within the city and so on the eve of her sixteenth birthday she petitioned the chancellor of her college arm for the right to go forth from the city to learn more from the wilds. Either fully in the knowledge of her secret desire or entirely ignorant of it, the chancellor agree to her passage and so in the morning she passed beyond the city gates.

Now Wilhelmina spends her time in either a collection of research outposts scattered throughout the outer wilds or in colleges in the closest city to utilise their libraries or report her findings. But always she feels the dark pull and cannot yet tell if she will allow it to overcome her.



Father Domalou



In the dark and dingy stilted streets of Athemanus, a small village on the edge of Athebus' walls, life can be even harder and more brutal than most places a person could be exposed to. In those winding narrow streets, Pitar Domalov scurried and rushed as a young boy searching for even a meagre morsel of food. While it was true that all in the village were desperately poor and desolate, the family Domalov were particularly afflicted by both poverty and the unshakable grip of the bottle.

Pitar's father, Solamek, had gone off to defend the city walls in a time of great need and was gone for nigh on a year before his return, alas Solamek returned without his left leg. The man never recovered from the grievous loss and never shied away from laying the blame for the amputation on his wife and child. He was in a constant state of rage, soon boiling over into violence and drink. And so young Pitar quickly learned to stay beyond the reach of his father where possible but running can only work for so long.

From the age of ten to seventeen Pitar weathered the violent hammer blows from his father's fist and his barbed, hurtful words but soon the young man could stand the ceaseless and unwarranted punishment no longer. One night, an evening of great significance, Pitar confronted his father in a tavern of foul reputation. Words were said in anger that could not be retracted and soon Pitar and Solamek were trading blows in the street. Knuckles were blooded on jaw bones, eyes were blackened and ribs were cracked under the vicious fist falls. Pitar swung a blow filled with all his rage, loathing, hatred and sadness that struck the man he no longer thought of as father in the temple. A muffled cracking sounded from beneath the thin layer of meat about Solamek's head and he collapsed to the foul and slimy clapboard walkway. Blood trickled from the man's ears and the boy who had been his son looked down upon him with contempt and disgust before he felt the boy's boot in his guts. Pitar kicked Solamek in the stomach with enough force to roll him over the edge of the walk and into the fetid swamp water bellow and watched as he slip below the surface, never to come back up again.

Pitar walked back towards his hovel of a home and his half man money when he was grabbed by the agents of the Baroness, charged with keeping the law. It mattered not to him for his life was now free of a colossal weight that had laid on him since Solamek's return. In less than three days Pitar was stewing in a stinking jail cell in the damp and squalid dungeons built into the foundation of the city of Athebus. Murder the guards told him was a capital crime and was statutorily punished by death.

The young man waited in his cell, resigned to his fate and seeking not to change it when he was visited by the priest who sought to give him his final rites. Father Nomchesky stood in the cell of a young man, bloodied and bruised but not panicked. He saw great potential in this boy and so invoked a tradition seldom used since the great schism and took the young man from his jail cell and placed him instead in a seminary cell.

On the many occasions when Pitar asked his mentor why he had been plucked from the jaws of death his teacher would only ever reply that he had a great destiny within the church and that in time he would become an important figure to the Holy Ordo for the church had much need for a man who could embrace violence yet not break with his inner solemnity. Soon Brother Domalov became Father Domalov, a man in holy orders but before he could take up his role promised him, he must take pilgrimage to the glorious cathedral at Paralith.





Antev Scholsou

While for many the idea that there are smugglers beneath the streets of noble city of Almalev is little more than rumour and urban legend it is an unfortunately a reality of all major trading hubs. The sewers and under-ways beneath the paved and cobbled streets of proud Almalev are full almost to bursting with the criminal smuggling network.

Much like gangs in any city though there is a great deal of fighting between factions. In the under-ways, the Rat Boys hate and will often spill the blood of the North Side Traders. The Boltmen despise the Cardinal Coats and their battles have been known to spill out of the under-ways and into the city streets, bring possible destruction on all the smugglers. However there is always infighting too, men who live beyond the law are often more vicious and care little for others. Such is the story of Antev Scholsou, a master smuggler whose fame and infamy are known across the wide expanse of the underway. He had smuggled crops into the hands of corrupt officials. He had smuggled holy artefacts under the nose of the church and had even on one occasion smuggled experimental college weapons into the hands of gangs in the middle of territory wars. Yet his downfall would be swift and brutal.

It was known throughout the city that the penalty for smuggling was harsh but none knew what the punishment for smuggling people would entail, yet the Rat Boys did not care. They were blinded by the coinage of such a transaction. There came a bloody mutiny as the Rat Boys over threw Antev. The long and bloody battle saw long dagger blades flashing in ruddy orange light. After the fight, much blood was shed and two lay dead, riddled with stab holes and slashed throats. It was then they declared they would never let the man have a moment's peace for he could and surely would expose what they had done, regardless of what would happen to himself.

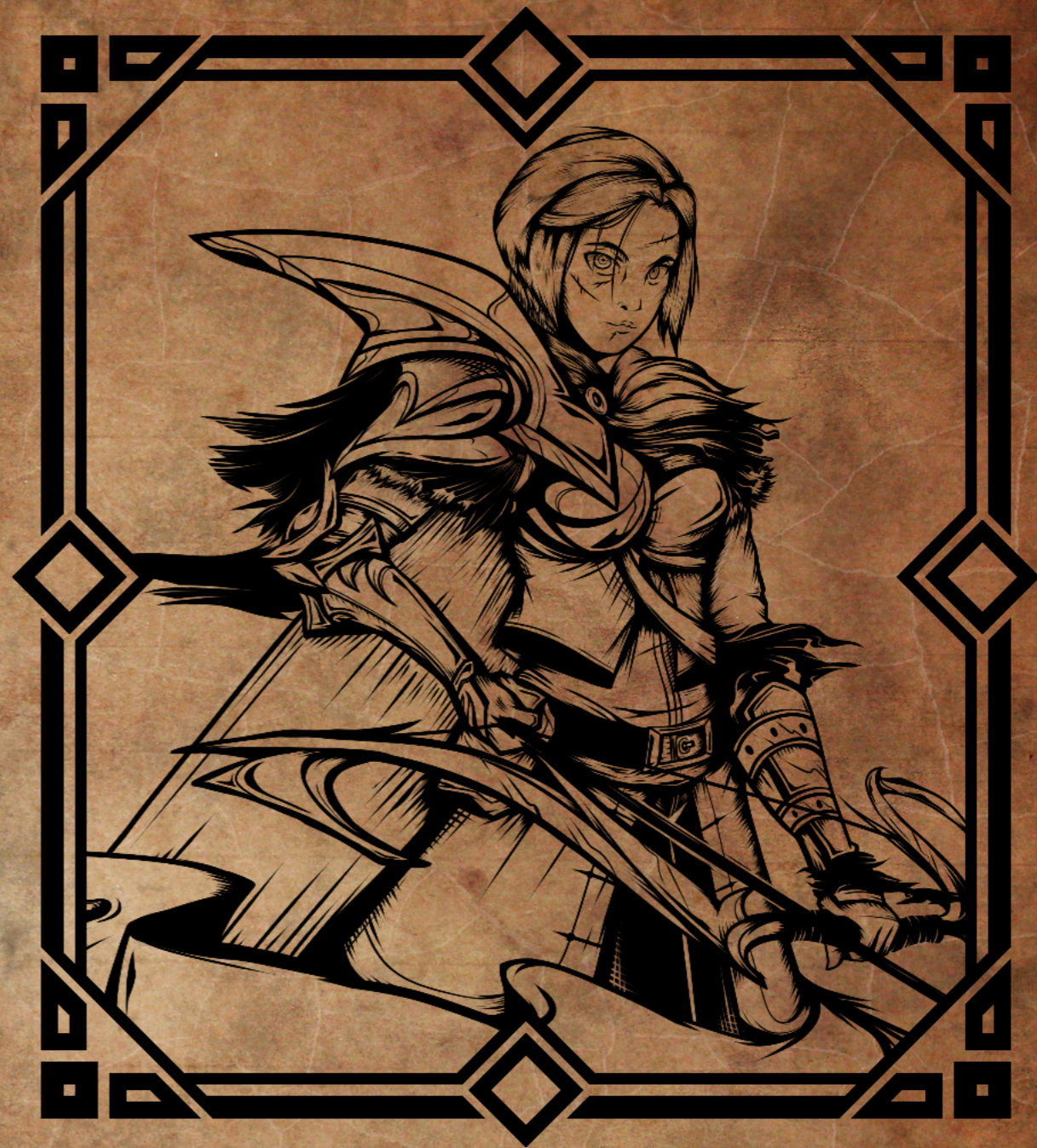
It was known throughout the city that the penalty for smuggling was harsh but none knew what the punishment for smuggling people would entail, yet the Rat Boys did not care. They were blinded by the coinage of such a transaction and drove out Antev after long and



bloody battle after which two lay dead. It was then they declared they would never let the man have a moment's peace for he could and surely would expose what they had done, regardless of what would happen to himself.

So it was that Antev Scholsov ran through the under-ways. Crawled through sewerage tunnels and ran through the surface streets of Almalev until he burst out of the city gates and into the howling winds and blistering cold of the storm beyond. He stole a boat docked in one of the outer city's quays and escaped across the great lake.

And so now Antev runs from town to town and city to city forever trying to stay one step ahead of those who would see his mouldering bones lay at the bottom an under-way water lock.



Francille Malcheu



## Francille Malchev

While life in this new world can be relatively prosperous and normal for those within the walls of the great cities, life for those in the smaller towns and even smaller villages is fraught with strife and peril. People are born and live and die knowing only harsh cold without end. People going for days and sometimes weeks with the ever present threat of starvation gnawing at their bellies. And beyond all of these is the ever present fear of the monsters in the darkness outside.

But there was one village, Hilwent's Pass that was no so badly off than many of its neighbours and friends. There they still suffered the constant biting cold and its people seldom slept long restful sleeps for fear of the beasts that lurked in the woods that encompassed their village but they seldom went more than a day or two without food.

Francille Malchev had been born in that village, born to Gilten Friheim and his wife, but when the child was no more than fourteen months, Francille's parents were lost to the cold. Despite the whole village's grief at the passing of the girl's parents, none could afford another mouth to feed, none save the woodsman. Soven Malchev was a brilliant hunter and woodsman, even before the titans' fall but he had taken to the challenges presented by this new world and its forests and woods with extreme fervour. He accepted the child, for he had lost his own long ago it seemed to him, and he would not only have the opportunity to raise a daughter but to teach a pupil and with the grace of the Shard's light, would ensure the safety and future of his village.

As Francille grew, she learned the ways of the woods and soon she was an even better hunter than her adoptive father. She had an almost unnatural sense for the prey she stalked, an almost unnatural ferocity in the strike that laid it low and seemed almost impervious to the cold. Yet despite her curious nature she provided plentiful food and supplies to the village who now rarely went hungry.

On the eve of her sixteenth birthday, Francille was approached by the one man in the village everyone knew to be crazy and hurled jibes and

ridicule at him as he passed. He spoke to her of her parents in hushed tones, saying it was no accident or foul turn of fate that had seen her parents lost to the cold, that instead Francille's mother had mated with one of the vile werewolves that roamed the forests beyond the safety of the village. That the girl's parents had been secret dark cultists that sought to mingle the blood of man and beast and that they had been driven from the village and destroyed for their abhorrent practices. Francille, disgusted, saddened and appalled named the man a liar and fled for the safety of her home and her father. There she screamed and raged at him for answers. Was there any truth to the words the crazed man had said, was it true that she herself was a half wolf and maybe the only one. With a heart heavier than a thousand great boulders, Soven told his adopted daughter that it was possibly true, what the old man said, he could not say for sure.

In the wake of such a world shattering revelation, Francille ran headlong into the night and into the forest. She could not stay in that village any longer, she could not continue to live in the company of those who had spent her whole life lying to her and possibly sneered in contempt and disgust behind her back if there was any truth to the story of her origin. She must seek answers.

After long months in the forests and woods around the city of Sloisa, the now wild looking and unkempt young woman marched through the wooden gates of the hedonistic city. Still seeking answers and solitude but also money and the means to make a living the girl began to offer her services as a pathfinder for those who sought passage to the other cities or towns but were not in the retinue of churchmen. This in turn would allow her to stay in the wilds and find the answers she seeks.



## Treasures of the wilds

### Holy amulets:

Even the simplest and unlearned of children of the great cities and even those of the smaller towns and villages can explain the nature of the holy amulets. The amulets are fashioned from a sanctified golden chain with a sliver of shard hanging about the front most link and is the identifier of any man in the clergy. Even amongst the men of the church the amulet is considered a symbol of their rank and power within the ranks of the clergy. Brothers do not wear the amulet and fathers wear the simplest and humblest of the holy amulets, though those who climb higher through the ranks will gain new amulets that reflect their new status. As well as a status symbol though the holy amulets offer very real practicalities as they offer navigation, some semblance of warmth and even a certain degree of magical ability. The purer and larger the sliver held by the amulet, the more potent the wearer's magical powers.

### Vial of First Vampyr's Blood:

Blood is often considered to be extremely powerful in both symbolism and in the very fact that it is the life force of man but seldom is the blood as powerful as the treasure retrieved by Brother Aminio in the long years of his travels. Beneath the great cathedral, the scroll of Brother Aminio is secreted away in the vault that is his namesake, but few people know of the artefact that came with it. A vial of black liquid, swirling with vibrant red highlights that glow with unnatural light; blood. Foul and unholy blood extracted from the first vampyr, taken by brother Aminio even though none truly know how save the fabled brother himself and since his disappearance, even he cannot tell the tale.



## Crown of the High Priest:

While those of the villages, towns and cities that seek the comfort and warmth of the shards would think that only their own church is capable of pageantry and beauty they are greatly mistaken for he who leads the Esoteric Order also has his ornamentation. A crown made from chiseled pieces of the dark shard and set in a band of blackened iron sits upon the brow of the High Priest of the Black Dust cult in a sight that is both disgusting yet darkly beautiful. Although the crown itself stirs a deep and primal sense of revulsion in the stomachs of any who touch the cursed object it is still at large in the world since the assassination of Kilmek Prethaar, the previous High Priest of the Esoteric Order.

## The Saint's Bone:

Within the church there are two orders of saints both viewed with equal adoration, the Battle Saints, glorious and righteous warriors whose grace in the light of the shards is only matched by their prowess in battle and the Saints of the Faithful, the men of the cloth who are devoted to the shards and the church that reveres and protects them as the shards protect the people. While Saint Barthem may have been the first of the Battle Saints, who was delivered bodily to the Crypt of the Glorious Dead, it was Saint Gilmert of Paralith that was the first Saint of the Faithful. After his passing at the hands of the faithless the saint was wrapped in the banner he had held before him and his retinue and returned to the great cathedral. Before his internment in the vaults of the great cathedral, the High Lord of the Faith took several of the saint's bones and sent them out to the other branches of the church as holy relicts, but the clavicle never reached its destination and is lost somewhere in the world.

## Divine Blade:

A blade has always been an extremely powerful tool and has only become more powerful and necessary since the dawning of the new world in which all men find themselves, but some blades are more powerful and useful than others. The arcane forge-masters that work upon the ring of The Sky Bridge are revered almost as highly as the technical smiths in the employ of the college in Oreak, for it was they who perfected the crafting of the divine blades. The shining and faultless steel is embedded with smaller shards in the hilt and blade, some even having a carved and polished shard as an ornamental pommel. However there are rumors of even more powerful divine blades at loose in the world. Rumor has it that some divine blades may not be studded with shards but are in fact forged with pure shard dust woven into the very steel. Further there is the Legend of the Crys-Blade, a sword whose blade is a pure shard fragment.

## Banner of the Martyr:

Saint Gilmert, the first Saint of the Faithful in part gained his posthumous position thanks to his sacrifice and status of the first martyr. During the great expansion of the church to reach all the peoples of the once mighty kingdom, Father Gilmert was marching south west with his retinue and met a small band of semi-feral common folk. Guided by the wisdom of the shards and the titan who came before them, Gilmert attempted to help these poor wretches who huddled about a tiny shard half buried in a snow drift. However when Father Gilmert began to speak of the blessings and comforts to be found in the arms of the faith and the church, these savages lost what little remained of their minds and fell upon the father, bludgeoning and tearing at the robes and flesh beneath. These were men soon to be in the full grasp of the Mind Plague who devoured the flesh of the holy man, who laid down his life in service of the faith. What remained of his body was wrapped in the noble banner his party had carried before them and returned to Paralith. The Banner, now sanctified in a saint's blood, is said to be a highly valued artefact that will one day be of great importance, in the end times.



## The Black Compass

While the fathers of the church and their superiors are able to navigate the world with the help of their holy amulets, which can guide the wearer in terms of the nearest shard, the despicable outcasts who toil in the esoteric cult must rely on more insidious and more occult means to move through the frozen wastes. The Black Compass is the best means the cultists have of navigating but it is an accursed tool. Though the Black Compass works in the same manner as the compasses of old this black rock orb is covered in hundreds of occult symbols, many only understood by the highest echelons of the cult. The symbol for north is forever aglow with a repugnant orange light and when used the compass floats above the palm of the user. Although these tools are abhorrent they are easily made. A black rock must be carved into shape, soaked in the blood of babes and then fired in a Black Dust Kiln, where the fires are fueled in part with the imperishable black dust.

## Madman's Torch:

Since the even the early days of the college, even so far back as its founding the new world has seen a steady stream of bizarre inventions and mad experiments and are suspicious that even more occur behind the closed doors of the colleges. There are many who are suspicious of the College, some even believe that the architects themselves will bring new ruin down upon the head of all but none can refute the practicality and the necessity of the most popular and most reproduced invention the college has ever developed. The Madman's Torch was first crafted by the Mad Architect Sagan Dramezov, who even as a child was known as a lover of the flame. The Madman's Torch is a surprisingly lightweight contraption made mostly of steel pipe work overlaid over the frame of a crossbow but instead of bolts, the Torch belches gouts of pale blue fire that burns everything in its path.

## Helm of the First

While the armor of Saint Barthem was truly a study in master craftsmanship it is only improved when paired with Barthem's helm. The helm was fashioned in the same manner as the rest of Barthem's armor, a deep black edged and scrolled in sliver. However unlike the rank and file of the Holy Ordo who wear great helms if at all, Barthem's helm was crafted in the bascinet style but this was a trifle compared to the true glory of the magnificent armor piece. A crown of jagged, raw and unshaped shards ringed the head of the helm forming a crown, that much like the silver work of the Saint's armor glowed a radiant pale blue. Alas the Saint threw aside his helmet during his final battle, a bloody struggle against a greater War-Vampyr, and while he was successful in striking down the fiend he perished in the attempt. The helm however vanished, whether taken by the fleeing vampyr scum, stolen by battlefield scavengers or even secreted away by some shadowy member of the Inquisia, none can say.

## Hallowed Censer:

The agents of the church have many tools at their disposal, some that guide, some that maintain spiritual purity, some that can be used to destroy the enemies of the light but some that protect. It is standard practice in these new dark days for fathers of the church, attended by their apprentices and brothers to accompany and form an important part of all Holy Ordo battle groups. These fathers are often armed with swords or an iron battle staff called a Redemia, but those with more experience and insight can play a defensive role as well as offensive and are fashioned with a Hallowed Censer. A censor of polished brass, studded with shard fragments and precious gems that burns sweet scented flowers nourished with water purified by the light of the holy shards. This censor can cast a pall of protective and healing smoke about the father's charges.



## Aminio's Incantation:

Deep in the Vault of Aminio, among the hundreds of scrolls and dusty leather bound tomes there is one scroll that has extended its reach far beyond the hallowed walls of that treasure trove. One brave father defied the decrees of the church and created a copy of the famed incantations before travelling the wilds with a company of crusaders. Soon the company was beset by a herd of beast-men that were steadily driving back the knights and so the father recited Aminio's incantation. The father threw great lances of lightning that illuminated the night as bright as day and struck down the foul savages. In the wake of the battle the father resolved to spread the knowledge of the genius spell brother Aminio had created and soon the brothers and fathers and more discovered that all agents of the darkness were destroyed by the work of Aminio.

## The Crown:

The day the Titans fell was also the day King Karl Rassenburg met his untimely end while sheparding his people to safety alas no deed goes unpunished. Before departing with his queen and his subjects, Karl left his ancestral crown upon the thrown of the royal palace proclaiming in that moment he was not a king but another man duty bound to see to the safety of his brother man. Now in the new world there are many brave but foolish young knights and warriors either not yet enrolled in the guard or yet to prove themselves worthy of the Ordo or possibly seeking one more adventure before embarking on a long and fruitful career as a mercenary, who in search of adventure and glory will brave the dangers of the cold, the undead and whatever other dark forces wander the streets of Paralia, that they might reclaim the crown of Karl Rassenburg IV.

## Shard Dagger

The shards have granted protection to the people who dwell in their light in many ways but none are simpler and necessary than the shard daggers. Long daggers whose blade is fashioned from a holy shard that has been salvaged from the outer wilds. Unlike most daggers which have a two sided blade a shard dagger has but one cutting edge, sharpened to razor fineness by the most talented of arcane smiths and with a thrusting point that will never splinter or shatter. Lucky is he who holds a Shard dagger for he has the means to push the assault on all the agents of the dark and those who wander the snows with no alignment, though he best know how to use the blade for they are much sought after.

## Dark Shard Dagger

While the Shard Dagger is an item of exquisite beauty and craftsmanship, its counterpart is a brutish and ugly blade. Napped from the Dark shard, itself now battered and ugly with a face of a thousand unnatural scars, the Dark Shard Dagger is just as sharp as any ordinary Shard Dagger but it is rough, unpolished and raw, little better or more sophisticated than the primitives that travelled south out of the far north to do long and bloody war in the ancient days of the world. Although these blades are exceedingly rare there is little demand for them, even among the half insane throngs of the cultists, for the matter of the dark Shard has been known to warp the mind, body and soul, sometimes even worse, to those who lack the strength to wield the blade.



## Wolf's Tooth

Many talismans in this new world are imbued with many strange yet helpful power but for every one with power over the agents of the darkness, there are a hundred more that are entirely useless and are used more for ornamentation than anything else. A wolf's tooth is one such example. The Wolf's Tooth, while having been pulled from the still bleeding maw of a werewolf has no magical properties and is usually only used by wolf slayers as trophies on their arms, armour and robes. The only power these trophies have is they might encourage a local to buy the wearer an ale at the local tavern. Though lacking in any real value or magical properties, there are many who still desire a Wolf's Tooth, for if nothing else they can steal the glory of those true wolf slayers and make life a little bit easier for themselves.

## Gauntlets of Righteous Flame

There are many ways that a man might harness the power of fire in this new world, he might join the church and grasp the haft of the Sanctifier's Torch, he might become a mercenary or architect and utilize the Madman's Torch or he might even happen upon a pair of Gauntlets Of Righteous Flame and manipulate fire with his own hand. These gauntlets are all over the world and can be purchased from any first rate smuggler but even then they are considered a relative rarity and come with two great risks. The first being that any pair of gauntlets are considered holy relics by the church and the second is that while the gauntlets are extremely powerful, wrapping the users hands in lithe and dancing flames that will not sputter or go out, the magic that keep them ablaze is temperamental and unstable at best, often putting the wearer at as much risk as his opponent.

## Vial of Holy Oil:

Oil of any kind has many uses, some humble, some grand and even some brutal but some oils can be utilized for all three of these uses. The holy oil dispensed by the church can be used to heal and sooth the mind body and soul of those wounded, shaken or lost. It can be used to anoint those in the service of the church or those who seek comfort in the light of the Shards, but it can also be used in the crafting of a Sanctifier's Torch which is a bane to the agents of darkness. But more than any of these things, even a small vial of this holy oil can bring great comfort to the weary traveler and those long in the frozen wilds and so it is not just fathers and brothers of the church who carry such vials, but any who can lay their hands on the oil that was purified in the light of the Shard in the great cathedral.

## The Assassin's Cowl

It is not only the church that has secretive agents that work in the shadows and darker places of the world in their Inquisia. So too does the Esoteric Order have agents that cannot be distinguished from the shadows. The assassins of the cult are somewhere between the Inquisia and the Holy Ordo in their function and practice but first and foremost they are the death dealers of the cult who dispense swift and ominous death to those that the Esoteric Order decrees must be expunged. The black clothing and long tunics of the assassins are supposed by some to have magical properties that allow for those skillful death dealers to more easily blend with the shadows. There are many thieves and smugglers who go to great lengths to acquire an assassin's cowl, in part for it has a half face cover, an undeniable boon in such trades, but also for the supposed aid it lends to sneaking.



## Aminio's Ring

The new world, mostly the Vault of Aminio, is crowded with the creations of that remarkable man and he is praised for his part in humanity's continued survival but only one treasure left behind by Brother Aminio is shrouded in mystery. All of Aminio's creations, records and discoveries were left behind by design but there is still debate about Aminio's ring. The ring which the brother wore at all times was found in a pristine snow drift in a stand of burnt trees, there was no sign of the brother. The ring of polished iron bears a symbol unique to the genius brother and so was instantly recognized. It is said that any who wear the ring gain strange powers and abilities that might be one of the roots of Aminio's disappearance and only adds fuel to the fires of rumor and speculation about what became of the brother.

## Cultists' Dark Amulets

Much like how fathers and those above them in the church wear the holy amulets, those high members of the cult wear the profane dark amulets. Where the amulets of the fathers of the church are made from slivers of shards the dark amulets are much more complicated and much more despicable. They are similar in design but the chain is rough and unpolished iron that has a tendency to snag and tear at the skin of the wearer. Worse than this however, is the fact there is no sliver but a mass of compacted black dust encased in clear glass. These amulets do not offer warmth or guidance but do offer power in the arts of black magic similar in potency to their luminous counterparts.

## Cultists' Fire

Many of those who have faced the vile agents of the Esoteric Order and lived to tell the tale talk of how some of these disgusting cultists have the ability to produce a storm of black flames about their naked fists. Flames that are beyond black and instead seem to strangle any light and kill it off, these flames are truly unholy and wholly defy the light. Many architects have pondered about how the cultists have managed this impressive feat and currently Karline Polskov awaits a freshly slain cultist in her chambers in Oreah's college that she might discover the root of this power. However every cultist knows the source of this power, a pair of small black dust holding glass plates that are sown into the forearms of cultist berserkers.

## Saint's Hammer

Likely few ever discuss or even think about the beautiful and nigh divine armor of Saint Barthem, every child who has been raised in the light and comfort of the church knows of the Saint's Hammer. A cruel yet well-crafted battle hammer forged from glimmering steel and blackened steel that both entrances the faithful and repulses the faithless. The First Battle Saint carried this weapon into many battles, wars and crusades. The saint even wielded the mighty hammer against the colossal army of vampyrs and undead led by the greater War-Vampyr Ulak Milveer. The hearty steel was strong but only made the stronger when combined with the power of the countless blessing bestowed upon the piece and the power infused into Barthem's very being as he carried the Titan's sigil. The Saint's hammer now rests on the devotional before the saint's casket in the Crypt of the Glorious Dead, waiting only for one of strength of will to claim it.



## The Horn That Calls:

A war horn is more than simply the hollowed horn of a mighty beast, it is a symbol of strength for those who bear them, they are a call to arms and a means to put steel back into the bones of those weary or fatigued by war. And as with many things the most famous and mightiest of war horns of the old world did not transition in to the new without first changing. Whatever its true name is has been long forgotten for the horn was old even the early days of the previous life now it is simply known as The Horn That Calls, for it can be heard from many miles away. It rallies the weary, mends the souls of the broken and calls to arms those who would do service in the name of the righteous. This horn then, is an asset of incalculable value.

## Savage's Deformed Skull:

There are many talismans in the new world, some made of stone and string, others of wood and hair but these are seldom more powerful than the talismans created from bone. Bone makes for the most powerful of talismans because bones are made of the very stuff of life, the man cannot survive without his bones and his bones will wither and decay without the vitality of the man, as one noted architect once put it. Most powerful of all bone talismans though are skulls but few are as repugnant as the Savages' deformed skull. These skulls, warped by the influence of the Mind Plague are often unrecognizable as once human but they are unfailingly effective at driving back and causing pain to the hated beast-men that would prey upon any man foolish enough to wander into their perceived territory.

## Well of the Unclean

Though they are in part nourished by the power of the darkness the cultists are ever the less human and so need the same sustenance as normal men. They need food, often tearing at raw animal meat and they need water but unlike the pure and righteous man, the cultists drink from the Well of the unclean. An accursed and vile occult object, a

dirty water-skin, often made from human skin. The dark magic of the black dust means that the Well of the Unclean never runs dry of its contents of befouled black water that is surely infused with an essence of the black dust.

## Torch of the Sanctifier:

There are many ways to illuminate a dark place and drive out the shadows and the fear. One could use a midnight candle. One could gather the holy amulets of a dozen fathers, or one could both drive back the darkness and dispatch the creatures who dwell there with a Torch of the Sanctifier. None know who the first sanctifier was or why he created the famous torch but all know they are grateful he did. The Torch is made of blessed wood and the rags are soaked in holy oil giving the fire the power of the light of the shards. Like the shards though this torch will never burn out for it is linked to the same power as they and as such is a destroyer of all those agents that lurk in the shadows beyond the reach of the light.

## Vampyr's Jawbone:

Vampyr's whether they choose to accept the Blood Plague or not are vile creatures, rats skulking in the darkness ever ready to strike against the innocent and uncorrupted to satiate their never ending thirst. And while they are truly creatures of the dark they are also creatures spawned of the dark magic of the Dark Titan and as such are subject to the laws of magic that govern many things in this new world. As such there are many of those who will not travel the frigid stretches between cities, even those that are well trodden, without one of the greatest weapons against the vampyr, a part of themselves. The jawbone of a slain vampyr is a powerful talisman and one that repels many vampyrs save for those who are either very old or very strong. As if instinctually all know to grasp the jaw by the teeth and face down the vampyr assault with the hinge of the jaw outstretched.



## Staff of the Protector

Similar to how there are myriad symbols of rank and authority in the common and higher echelons of the priesthood, there are many elaborate and prestigious symbols of status within the Inquisia. While none of the members of the Inquisia wear a holy amulet there are many symbols of their status and one such symbol is the Staff of the Protector. A tall staff carved of iron wood and bounded with rings of silver, brass and iron about its haft and based with a dark steel. Only those who have gained the rank of Inquis Protectoria are fashioned with the Staff of the protector. Although few members of the Inquisia achieve this rank those who have a highly regarded and would be almost revered by the common folk if they knew of their existence.

## Undead Ash

While by no means the fastest, strongest or most brutal of man's enemies, the undead are no less deadly in their own right. If one was to be swarmed by the undead escape is unlikely though not impossible for those who have a Torch of the Sanctifier who will also receive a small boon from the escape. The ashes of the undead, through holy fire, have been purified and as such act as a powerful talisman against the undead that remain to threaten the living. Any traveler who is in possession of a portion of undead ash can make an escape from the undead by spraying the ashes in their presence since the undead are repelled by the ash, many a wise traveler too has used the ash to ring their camp and protect themselves while they sleep.

## Blessed ring:

In the dark chambers beneath the great cathedral, the Tesera, largest of those sub halls, houses the Inquisia. At the heart of the Tesera is the Brazier Eterna in which all the blessed rings are forged. The blessed rings are crafted of a dark steel, coloured a blue black that always stands out against the often pale skin of all Inquisia members, the only people permitted to wear them. For them it is a symbol of their power and their sacred duty in the church's name, and each of them could tell you in detail how each of them is forged. While these items have no magical potency, they are incredibly useful for opening any barred door, for while the common folk of the world may not know of the existence of the Inquisia, they certainly know the fate of those who stand in the way of anyone who bears one of those dark rings.

## Chalice of the Communion:

These holy chalices are humble in design, carved from the wood of the Gealhare trees whose roots are only ever nourished by sanctified water, by carpenters whose hands have been washed in the holy oils and whose hearts burn with the divine light of the shards. Though these carved wooden cups may seem of little importance if stumbled across in truth they have the noble power of maintaining life. These chalices, when held in the hands of the righteous, will fill themselves with pure and revitalizing water and never run dry for so long as the user requires. There are many who do not return from the frozen wilds of the new world for want of a Chalice of the Communion...



### Midnight Candle:

In the new world there are many dark places where the light itself seems to be strangled and ever on the edge of giving out but there are those who can hold the darkness at bay, at least for a little while. Those who possess a Midnight Candle can illuminate even the darkest of places with its small and humble flame that cannot be blown out by anyone but the user.

It is said that these black candles are made from the vampyr tallow, which gives the wax its unnaturally black colour and the fur of a werewolf is plaited into a thin braid and used as the wick. However the Midnight Candles are fashioned, only the shadowy architects that craft them in the lower dungeons of the Orea College could say for certain and they are not likely to tell any time soon.

### Armor of the First

After the fall of Saint Barthem the masters of the church took from his body his magnificent armor. No longer would it glow with the pale blue light of the Titan's Sigil but that made it no less impressive.

The black armor with its delicate silver scroll work and edging was not as was tradition gifted to his first born son, a strange boy whose very skin seemed to faintly glow but was first housed in the vaults of the great cathedral, there to remain until the end of days. However it was soon gifted to the First Saint's successor Battle Saint Eltain. Soon though Battle Saint Eltain entered into Barthem's Crypt, The Crypt of the Glorious Dead, which would be the resting place of all fallen Battle Saints. And now the strong and beautiful armor of the first saint is granted to all who prove themselves worthy.

### Sigil of the Titan's Fury:

In the scripture of the Church it is said that there will be an almighty battle where the light will at last push back the darkness for all eternity. Those scriptures also speak of the great hero who will land the final blow, Alcathion bearer of the spear of Ulthilian and final battle saint.

It was the first Battle Saint, Sir Barthem, and first Grand Master of the Holy Ordo, who was originally the bearer of the Titan's Sigil. An ink was fashioned from the powdered shard fragments that laid about the great Shard of Paralith. That ink was tattooed into Barthem by the blind brothers of the church who are granted the power of prophecy. Into his back they tattooed the image of the spear of Ulthilian and his arms legs and chest they tattooed thousands of runes that none could read. This process made him the first living extension of the crystal Titan and as such the tattoos glowed with a pale blue luminescence. After the fall of Sir Barthem the ink was extracted from his body but not all of it could be retrieved. And so all bearers of the sigil are not only imbued with some semblance of the Titan's power but the power and ghosts of the battle saints before them.



## Heroic deeds

### Wolf Flayer:

All know that the forests and frozen wilds are dark and dangerous places but alas often necessity drives men into those foreboding places. While the Hero travels the forest they hear the snapping of twigs and scent death on the air. The werewolf charges at the Hero from the midst of a dead and gnarled stand of trees. Lesser folk would tuck tail, try to run and die in the attempt but their story does not end here. They meet the Wolf with weapon in hand and strike it down with furious anger. The Wolf is slain and the Hero's journey continues.

### Savage Slayer

The scourge of the beast-men has long been a pestilence on the righteous and the untainted. Those who have not fallen to the corruption of the mind plague have no sympathy for those who have and seek to emulate Patriarch Volfheim, the only known Patriarch of the church to go into battle. He was renowned for driving the savages from their underground burrows and purging them with only a Sanctifier's Torch. While journeying ever onwards the Hero hears faint rumblings from below the crust of snow and permafrost. A savage beast-man bursts from a hidden burrow entrance to do bloody murder. The Hero has no fear of those who have succumbed to the Mind Plague and meets the mutant head on. The Hero pants, watching their breath clouding on the air and reviews the shattered savage at their feet

### Vampyr Hunter

It is usually only members of the Inquisia that hunt and kill those tainted by the Blood Plague but it is not unheard of for a hero outside of that dark and shadowy cabal to destroy the hated Vampyr, though none can say how long it will be before the Inquisia come looking for them. While marching onward, the Hero meets a stranger on a bitter night. The scent of a giant ice storm is on the wind and threatens all with its malignant presence. While the stranger at first is an enjoyable companion they soon reveal their true nature. The translucent fangs of the Vampyr are unsheathed as they leap for the Hero's throat, desperate to quench the ceaseless thirst that drives them. But this hero is no coward to break and run or so meek that they would lie down and accept their fate, instead the Hero fights and stains their weapon with the black blood of the Vampyr scum.

### Quiet the Undead

The undead are a constant threat in a new world where so many have perished without their death rites completed. There have been many who sought to remedy this tragedy although none went so far as Father Rictof and Sir Trileheim, who embarked on their own crusade, not sanctioned by the church. The two were last seen entering the great forest wherein lurks Sloisa, yet none know what became of them. While on their travels the Hero comes across a forsaken and forgotten hamlet, once besieged by famine and frost before the great migrations. The revenants of this old hamlet shuffle among low stone huts and houses until they notice the Hero. Their shuffling gate is not taken lightly, the Hero who knows that the Undead are as deadly as they are cold. With weapon raised the Hero charges the small horde and lays them low. The undead are now quieted, the hamlet stands in silence.



## Purge the Unholy

The depraved minds of those following the teachings of the Esoteric Order are never satisfied. Always they seek to spread their sickness to the righteous and faithful, hoping to drag them into the darkness. Indeed there was a cultist who corrupted many with poisoned whispers, promising power, riches and comfort to those who would only leave the righteous path. The Priest known only as Valtek was supposedly slain by an anonymous knight of the Holy Ordo during the scouring of a sprawling spider-web of caves in the south west. Although none can be sure of such claims and so it is possible that the cultist that befalls the Hero on their journey could be that very same, vile spider. The Priest whirls and whips with occult magic, but the Hero is wise in the ways of this new world and quickly dispatches the fiend with ease.

## Defend the Church

While most who dwell within the light of the Shards are faithful and true to the church there are those beyond the light and indeed a small few within it, that seek to have it pulled down brick by holy brick.

There have been several assaults on the church by the agents of darkness, the greatest of which was the Great Covenant, a massive force of beast-men, cultists and even a host of enslaved undead. The Great Covenant laid waste and trampled many towns on their long march towards Athebus, the first city on their path to the great cathedral. Fortunately there was assembled a great host of the Holy Ordo and warriors of the city guard and even shadowy agents of the Inquisia. This great host formed the rock upon which the Great Covenant smashed itself. While on their journey, the Hero must recall the bravery of those warriors by gathering the common folk to repel a horde of unholy agents, intent on destroying a branch of the church. The death toll is high and many are wounded, the snow comes alive with vibrant crimson, the life force of the righteous and the unholy alike. The Hero, victorious in defending the church.

## Church's Blessing

There are many in the cities, towns and villages in the church's embracing arms, living in the warmth of the Shards but there are few who receive the church's full blessing beyond those who embark upon the honourable and glorious path of the knights of the Holy Ordo. Those who are to receive the church's blessing are brought, in pristine white robes of spun wool, before a father or patriarch, where they kneel upon the steps leading to the Alter. This entire ritual culminates in a mild incantation and those who are blessed are anointed with the holy oil of the church. The Hero has travelled many long miles already and has performed many great feats and at last the church has seen fit to bestow its blessings upon them. The Hero travels to the nearest church and kneels before the father and recites the words. Upon anointment the Hero feels the instant revitalisation and renewed strength granted by the backing of the church.

## Protect the Innocent Traveller

In the dark days of the great migration there were many thousands of travellers upon the roads, all seeking succour and shelter from the relentless cold. Alas where there are travellers there are bandits, beast-men, cultists and worse secreted amongst the long lines of evergreens and dead wood waiting to prey upon the innocent. Even in the days of the great cities' guards, the Holy Ordo and mercenaries who offer their services of protection there are many who are still set upon by the agents of the dark. The Hero while on their travels encounters a band of would-be pilgrims seeking passage to one of the great cities. The Hero willingly agrees to protect the travellers on their journey.



## Shepard the Survivors

Many of those who are beset while on the road or whose towns are destroyed by the agents of the dark join the endless hordes of the Undead with no one to give them their last rites and see them buried in the proper way. But there are those who are lucky and survive the aggressors that have attacked but are stranded in the midst of the shambling Undead that once were their loved ones. The Hero come across the smouldering ruins of just such a massacre and begins purging the Undead. However once the task is done, the Hero is beseeched by the survivors, now come out of their hiding places, to see them to safety and where they might bring word to those who might avenge them whether it be church, mercenary, college or city ruler. The Hero agrees and sees their new charges safely into the warm and comforting arms of the nearest town or city before continuing on.

## Repel the Bandits

In the dark days of the great migration there were many who, with the ending of the old world, saw an opportunity to grow rich. So it was that the roads and channels carved from snow dunes were soon plagued by bandits, highway men and brigands. Even in the days where the common folk found shelter around the Shards there are still untold numbers of scoundrels that haunt the roads in search of vulnerable prey. While on their journey the Hero discovers the remains of a number of wagons. Smouldering wood and clothe thicken the air with pungent smoke. The Hero follows clues found at the site further up the road and comes upon a bandit raid. A few small wagons are sheltering the travellers from the ceaseless volleys of the bandits. The Hero takes up their weapon and begins to cut down the bandits at the rear. Heartened by the aid of a valiant hero, the travellers take up arms against the bandits. Those brigands who are not slain soon turn tail and run. The Hero sees the travellers on their way before following the path that leads them to their own quest.

## Excise the Lair

There are many perilous missions departed upon by the warriors of the new world, many the common folk name a suicide mission. One such task is driving out the beast-men before they take root but a more arduous and brutal task requires warriors to delve into the deep, dank burrow or cave a herd of beast-men have secreted themselves in. The warriors must destroy what savages they can while driving out survivors, reducing the risk of them establishing another den, before they set the burrow or cave aflame with the Sanctifier's Torch. In emulation of the great Count Philmar Kilstein, a knight of the Holy Ordo and first to excise the lair of beast-men, the Hero joins a company to drive out the beast-men from their squalid roost and follows them into the darkness. There comes a fetid breeze from a blind curve in the tunnel and a savage roars about the bend, vile killer's eyes rolling in its deformed head, intent on demolishing the Hero. The Hero lays the savage low with their skilful weapon work and carries on. Soon a mound of foul and deformed carcasses lay at the mouth of the roost and the Hero is offered the opportunity to use the Sanctifier's Torch to purify the roost and the corpses of the beast-men.



## Enrol in the College

There are many common folk and high born alike who have been heard in the high halls and the lowly taverns saying they would surely do terrible things that they might know what transpires behind the impregnable walls of the colleges. While most of the college's students are forcibly taken as children so that the collective knowledge of humanity does not perish from the earth but there are some who enrol in the college if their talent is sufficient. Most notable of all these late enrollers is Sagan Dramezov, the mad architect who first created the Madman's Torch. In the course of their journey the Hero meets an architect seeking knowledge in the wider world. In the course of conversation the architect tells the Hero he would make an excellent addition to the college's ranks. The following morning the Hero journey's to the nearest college and seeks enrolment, there to learn and discover the secrets held behind tight lips and steadfast walls.

## Join the Crusade

After the declaration of the first crusade to drive the enemies of the Shards back into the darkness from whence they came, there came increased fervour and devotion for the church and its warriors. There was an incredible rise in aspirants kneeling before the doors of the church to prove themselves worthy of donning the black and gold of the Holy Ordo. So it was that the ranks of the Holy Ordo swelled to a size that could dwarf the forces of any of the city guards. The Hero finds a great crusade camp nestled in the snow, accepts the invitation of the crusaders and camps with them for the night. The Hero plans to travel with them as they march to their next destination. However the plans of the Hero to merely journey with the crusade melt away after the first battle. A host of cultists clash with the Holy Ordo. The Hero stands panting and chest heaving at the close of the battle, thrilling in the sensation. So it is that the Hero devotes themselves to the crusade and the achievement of its goals.

## Defend the City

After the great migration came the Days of Struggle when the cities sought to grow and put down stronger, more permanent roots. This cost much in resources difficult to source since the Titans' fall, as such tensions grew between cities and settlements. Soon violence erupted and huge martial bands that would become the city guards marched forcibly take the resources they needed. As there were soldiers on the march to plunder the resources of others there were also soldiers, knights and warriors who guarded the walls of their cities to repel the raiders. During their long and arduous quest the Hero is asked by a city guard if they would assist in the defence of the city from a vast horde of cultists and their undead fodder. The Hero agrees, stands watch and awaits for battle to be enjoined. Soon the Hero is thrown into battle beyond the city gates and uses their skill and mastery to mow down the vile cultists and their undead slaves. Before dawn the enemy is broken and scattered leaving the city's defenders and the brave hero upon the field to revel in their victory.

## Depart on Pilgrimage

There are many hundreds of common folk and high born alike who have gone in search of reinvigorated faith or a greater understanding. The faithful depart on pilgrimage for many reasons and many come back with frost burn and greater strength in their faith but there are also those who simply vanish into the snowy wastes never to return. It is said that the great works of Brother Aminio began when he embarked upon pilgrimage to Paralith's great cathedral. The Hero journeys hard on the many winding roads of the new world, battering their way through snow drifts taller than a man and suffering the sprawling labyrinths that make up the great cities. They have seen many dark and terrible things while on their quest and they are weak of spirit and on the verge of breaking but they instead decide to embark upon pilgrimage that they might renew their strength and realign their humours.



## Purge the Profane Temple

It is well-known that while those who follow the path of the Esoteric Order are determined, reckless and insane but more than anything it is known that the cult is extremely secretive and reclusive. There are those who toil in the church's inner workings gathering whispers and documents, some even wandering the roads and joining battles in search for information. When the church learns enough they deploy a battalion of Holy Ordo knights to destroy the cultists and eradicate their profane temples wherever they might be found. While journeying the Hero seeks shelter from a coming storm and hears the deep and malevolent tom-toms that indicate a temple. After the storms passing, the Hero goes before the church and tells them of the Profane Temple. The Hero guides the Holy Ordo and joins them in slaughtering the cultists in their squalor, sundering the Orders relics and putting the temple to the torch. The Hero marches out of the hidden temple and takes in a deep breath of pure cold air. They receive their thanks from the church and a possible reward.

## Excommunicated

There are few deeds so heinous that would result in excommunication from the church but those that commit those few atrocities are universally reviled and branded with the black mark of shame. The Hero returns to civilisation after long days spent in the wild, alas words of the Hero's actions have spread like wild fire in dry brush and reached the ears of the church. The Hero is dragged by warriors of the Holy Ordo before the Hierophant of the local church. The Hierophant declares the Hero excommunicated and marks the Hero with the brand so that all might now their shame.

## Mercenary's Affiliate

There many hundreds of bandit gangs that prey upon those travelling between the great cities but there are those who will oppose them many of them mercenaries, often former warriors of the city guard or in the case of Hilfred Mannguard, the Holy Ordo from which he was expelled in disgrace. The various mercenary bands wander from town to town and city to city seeking their fortune, offering their martial talents, many specialising in destroying of the various plague bearers and other vile beasts. While travelling ever onwards with their quest the Hero encounters a band of mercenaries fresh from their latest victory. The Hero accompanies the mercenaries for their paths are intertwined. The Hero still travels with the band when they receive their next contract from a village of fearful low folk who are attacked by a herd of beast-men. The Hero is invited to accompany the band on their mission. The Hero accepts and helps the band hunt down and destroy the savages. When the bloody struggle against the beast-men is won the Hero considers the passage of events. They greatly enjoy the life offered in the band and so join the mercenaries.

## Bloody Hands

In this new world life is considered to be an immensely precious thing. It is argued that because life is so easily lost it must be protected where possible. It is for that reason murder of the innocent is considered to be a great sin in the eyes of the church. While on their quest the Hero happens upon a fellow traveller upon the road. In the dark of the night a more insidious darkness creeps into the heart of the Hero. Whether due to an imagined slight or they have developed a taste for the violence of the world, hero slaughters the stranger in their sleep and flees into the night, hands still bloody with shame.



## Suffer Not the Witch

The Esoteric Order has many varied warrior castes ranging from the lowly novices to the destructive and powerful Bersekers but one of the rarest and most deadly weapons the cult might deploy is their Witches. Those whose minds have been touched in some ineffable way by the black dust and are naturally more magically potent even than the higher echelons of the cult. Cult members whisper and speak in hushed voices that the witches in fact have black dust lining their very brains, placed there in a brutal ritual in which a priest will crack open the skull of those who are to become witches. Wherever these witches gather their power it matters not, the righteous, unclean and plague-bearers alike know not to underestimate these fiends. While on the road, the Hero encounters a stand of dead trees, where waits a witch. The Hero cannot allow this witch to pollute the world with its foul menace, so draws their weapon and does bloody battle with the witch. With the fiend lying dead at their feet the Hero reflects on the nature of the deed just done. They, like all those who walk the path of righteousness, suffered not the witch to live.

## Upon the Road

In the new world there is no denying that life is hard. Starvation is an ever present threat, the bitter cold constantly threatens the high born and common folk alike with a freezing death and opportunities for livelihood are sparse. With such brutal conditions it is no wonder that folk will turn to a life of crime and violence. The Hero tired of long days spent in endless journey grows disillusioned with the rigors of the common life and so strikes out into crime. The Hero begins to rob wayward travellers, soon being accompanied by other ruffians. The Hero has become the leader of a bandit gang.

## Shady Acquaintances

There are many unfortunate truths including where there are goods and profit there will always be smugglers. While there are many different smuggler gangs in the shadowy places of the cities, they are most concentrated in the under-ways of Almalev where secretive dealings and bloody skirmishes rage on constantly. While taking a reprieve from their journey the Hero meets a stranger on the road. The two share a shelter for the night and agree to travel on together. The Hero learns the stranger carries an item of immense value in their pack, an item that has shady origins. While on the move the Hero and their companion are accosted by brigands. With the aid of the Hero the stranger shatters the efforts of the brigands to take their pack and make off with its contents. It is then the stranger suggests that the Hero and they should team up on a more permanent basis and so takes the Hero to the dank under-ways of Almalev to be inducted into one of the many brutal gangs of smugglers.

## Into the Darkness

It could be said that any person who dares to delve into the Cauldron must either be mad or wish to die. There is only one man who claims to have entered the Cauldron and lived to speak of it. Alfreid Kliest now he wanders the taverns of towns around the city of Sloisa, rambling and muttering of the things he saw. He claims that one night he wandered far from the village in a drunken stupor and pushed through a stand of ancient evergreens emerging at the top of a vast stone amphitheatre. Hundreds of concentric rings of grey rock, themselves instilling an odd fear housed werewolves beyond count. The Hero meets Old Alfreid as he is known and listens to his tale. The Hero journeys strikes south east to where the old man claimed the Cauldron stands. Upon arrival the Hero is astonished for what the old man said is true. A huge stone amphitheatre of cold grey rock, greater than any quarry lays beneath them. The Hero ventures in and explores the empty Cauldron but decides to leave before night fall.



## A Darkness in the Blood

All know of the plague bearers but most only know of three. Only the Vampyr remain hidden to most but they do stalk and creep about the world. They are a constant threat and only they pose a true threat of spreading their plague to infect the blood of the innocent. The Hero retires for the night to a small camp just beyond the road. While they rest they hear suspicious creaks and cracks from the line of dead trees ahead. The Hero draws a weapon as the Vampyr flings itself from the tree line, its gaping maw frothing with its own blood and spittle for clearly it is on the brink of starvation. The two scuffle in the snow drifts until there is a huge spraying gout of blood. The Vampyr flees into the dark screeching in an inhuman whine. The Hero has dealt them a mortal blow but they look to themselves and find the bite mark upon their wrist. They too are now Vampyr, cursed to consume the blood of the untainted.

## Work Done in Shadows

Word of the Hero's deeds in the wider world have been carried from person to person and finally reach a member of the Inquisia. The Hero arrives in a large town but is met by a hooded stranger as soon as they pass through the gates. The stranger insists the Hero go with them and gives no offer of refusal. The two travel to Paralith and the secret halls of the Inquisia. The Hero is inducted into the secret order and begins to work in the shadows against the enemies of the light.

## The Arsonist

While on the road, the Hero arrives at a shabby and freakish backwater town. The residents have become strange and mistrustful of any outsiders and seem to wish great harm upon the Hero. The Hero believes this town will either fall prey to the mind plague or worse still is a breeding ground for some potential new plague. The Hero waits until night fall and sneaks into the towns stores and sets light to the oil barrels before escaping. The town is soon ablaze, lighting up the

night and visible for miles around. Convinced their duty is done the Hero leaves the town to burn and departs into the night.

## Gaze into the Abyss

While seeking passage through the great rift of the north east the Hero seeks shelter from a colossal storm in a deep cave. While searching the caves to make sure there are no threats present, the Hero stumbles into a large cavern. The cavern is dark but lit by some strange black light that instil a sense of dread. In the centre of the cavern is a small dark shard that seems to ooze a malignant sense of unease. The Hero refuses to succumb and approaches the Dark Shard. While stood directly before the Dark Shard, the Hero stares deep into the crystal, convinced they can see horrifying swirling shapes in the darkness. The Hero does not know for how long they have stared into the deep blackness of this shard but they know that things will never be the same.

## Iron & Blood

The Hero travels to a great city where they are met by the city's ruler. The ruler has heard of the Hero's legend worthy exploits and requests their assistance in determining how best to handle a great cultist army that is gaining momentum in his lands. In the ruler's chambers the Hero discusses with the ruler and those responsible for the city's governance. Angry words are thrown and arguments rage through the chambers until the Hero intervenes declaring that the best solution is to mobilise the city guard and attack. The ruler and his council agree and begin the march of war against their enemies.



## The Hand that Feeds

The Hero arrives at a small town that stands at the centre of a network of villages. Upon arrival the Hero learns that the town and its orbiting villages are on the verge of famine and starvation. Refusing to allow the innocent to suffer and perish the Hero travels to another nearby town with great haste. There the Hero buys a great deal of grain and food supplies. The Hero has help returning to the starved town to deliver the food. While there the delegates negotiate a trade deal with the starved town and its local villages that will prevent the advent of another famine.

## The Fist that Takes

The Hero arrives at a town that has become fat and spoiled by the rarity of plenty. After walking amongst the town's people and finding them to be a hateful breed of undeserving parasites the Hero breaks into the town's food stores and sets them ablaze and reduces the town's giant greenhouses to little more than charred and twisted metal and the heart of an ash cloud. The Hero believes that the balance has been redressed and leaves the town to learn its lesson.

## Ignite the Powder-keg

The Hero arrives at one of the great cities and takes rest at a tavern. While they rest and sup from their ale, the Hero overhears a band of conspirators discussing how best to overthrow the corrupt officials that govern the city and brutalise the people. The Hero outraged by the moral degeneracy of the city's rulers vows to aid the conspirators. Soon the Hero has organised mass gatherings where they stoke the fires of revolution and as is always the case words soon turn to action. The small folk of the city take up their arms, most being pitch forks and knives, in order to depose the guilty and burn away the corruption.

## The Path Less Travelled

While camped for the night the Hero begins to hear vile whispers in their head that seem to come from nowhere. At first afraid that they might be about to fall prey to one of the plagues the Hero struggles to drown out the words by sheer force of will and succeeds in quieting them for a while. The Hero tosses and turns while in the throes of sleep for the whispers have returned, telling them of the power, riches and spoils that could be theirs if only they will do as the voices insist. The Hero awakes abruptly in the middle of the night and decides to heed the words of the voices. Leaving their belongings behind the Hero journeys into a deep forest and soon hears the hellish tom-toms that beat in the darkness. Following the sound the Hero comes across a profane temple and is greeted with reverence by the cultists gathered there. The Hero kneels before the high priest who douses their head with water mixed with the black dust. The Hero has turned their back on the church and works now in the interests of the Esoteric Order.

## Extinguish the Flames

Upon arrival to a great city the Hero makes his way to the church for he has information gathered from the road he must share. Once there the Hero talks with the patriarch, who tells of malign entities within the city that ferment baseless resentment and seek to rouse the people into revolution. The Hero refuses to allow the destruction and misery of thousands that will be the inevitable legacy of a revolt. So the Hero begins investigation and tracks down the leaders, dispatching them one by one until the city is once more secure and free from evil influence.





## In the Titans Likeness

The Hero takes to a mighty battle between the Holy Ordo and a mighty horde of the agents of darkness. Though the Hero fight valiantly they are dealt a grievous blow by a great fiend. As the Hero kneels in the thick bloody mud they resolve that they shall not die. They will not depart from this world as such and declare in a loud roar that they shall not yield. It is then that the Hero feels a sudden surge of force spread renewed strength into their weary muscles. Their wounds heal instantly and they rise with greater purpose. They are in the Titan's likeness now, never slowing or faltering. They are a mighty machine of war that rallies the Knights of the Holy Ordo and leads them to victory.