

The Official History of
THE GREYHAWK WARS



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Preface

The defining event in the recent history of the continent of Oerik was the series of conflicts known collectively as the Greyhawk Wars. This file presents, in its entirety, the actual campaign history of the fighting, taken from the Adventurer's Book in the Greyhawk ADVENTURES WARS boxed board game (1991). This material should be common knowledge to any characters in a Greyhawk campaign who have paid the slightest attention to current events or their history lessons. Any number of adventures may spring from this material—but that is for the Dungeon Master to create.

Introduction: The Antagonists

Philosophers say that war is always born of lust—lust for power and loot. Perhaps this holds true for the petty forays and border raids that have plagued the Flanaess through history. However, the grand carnage of recent years cannot be explained by mere lust. Rather, the complex alchemy of mortal passions, foibles, and dementia is what hurtled nation against nation in the wars that reworked the Flanaess.

To understand the so-called Greyhawk Wars, therefore, one must understand the cast of characters. The cast ranges widely—from demigods to outcasts and from heroic warriors to red-hooded spies. Together they comprise a grand *dramatis personae*, the cast of a great tragedy.

luz the Old

"His Most Profane Eminence, Lord of Pain, Fiend of the North, Child of the Evil One, Master of the Dread and Awful Presences, luz the Evil, luz the Old"—so was this foul demi-god hailed by the corrupt and evil things that served him. Ruling from blood-black Dorakaa, City of Skulls, luz harbored an undisguised desire to dominate all of the Flanaess. He first gained notice, however, a century before the Greyhawk Wars.

In 479 CY, the land now called luz was a fractious collection of independent fiefs. The petty princes who ruled these plots of land vied to inherit the lands of Furyondy, which at that time reached far north. Among these princes was a paltry despot of the Howling Hills, who died in that year and left the land to a son of questionable origin —luz. Oddly, rumors alternately described the "son" as an old man and a 7-foot-tall, feral-faced fiend.

After the incipient Lord of Evil reorganized his small estate into a military camp, his attention swung to neighboring fiefs. Feigning a merely defensive stance, luz worked covertly to pit his despotic neighbors against each other. In time the resources and wills of these princes were whittled away by conflict, and luz seized the land. By the end of his first year on the throne luz had assimilated the three fiefs surrounding his.

luz's domain began to spread like mold upon an overripe peach, primarily due to his use of humanoid tribes. Most human princes considered orcs and goblins vermin-ridden inferiors, an attitude best typified by His Eminence Count Vordav, who swore to "burn on sight any hovel of those miserable scum."¹ Though this attitude allowed the petty princes to "maintain a false sense of purity for the old Aerdi

¹ *Annals of the Family Vordav*. Count Vordav's fief included large portions of the Vesve Forest, an area well-known for its vicious humanoid population. The quoted command appeared in an order to one of Vordav's knights guarding the frontier. The knight, now unknown, apparently carried out the order to the letter, for luz rallied the goblins and orcs of the Vesve several years later simply by reminding them of Vordav's butchery.

traditions,"² it also meant their armies were quickly overmatched by luz, who made full use of orcish cruelty and fecundity.

As more and more fiefs fell to the humanoids, a swelling stream of refugees carried wild tales of luz's powers to Furyondy in the south. According to such rumors, luz had constructed a road paved with skulls between the Howling Hills and Dorakaa, his new capital. The watchtowers guarding the road were said to be fueled on the flesh of living men. luz himself had sloughed off his withered form and grown to colossal size —or so the tales said. Though hindsight may dismiss the most outlandish of such claims, the rumors at that time spread panic along the southern shores of Whyestil Lake.³

The King of Furyondy, Avras III, shifted attention to his northern frontier to prevent expansion of luz's power into the heartlands of Furyondy.⁴

Yet King Avras's position was compromised by the independence of his nobles —particularly the Great Lords of the south, who remained unthreatened by luz. Many of these southern lords seized the opportunity to wring concessions from their hard-pressed king, depriving him of the taxes and control he was soon to need.⁵ Such concessions roused the ire of the northern-border margraves, who felt betrayed by the Great Lords. In reaction, the margraves infiltrated the Order of the Hart, a small religious faction at the time, and patiently, deliberately transformed it into a military brotherhood loyal to them.

So it was that luz's external threat sundered Furyondy internally. By 505 CY, a three-way split had grown in the ranks of the nobility. The most powerful faction was the Great Lords of the south, who used luz's threat to lever their lands from the king's control. Second in power was the Order of the Hart, which grew in unity and strength to oppose luz's border raids. Least in power was King Avras III with his estates and kin. Trapped in the lands between the more powerful factions, the king futilely strove to appease both.

² The Savant-Sage, *A Catalogue of the Land of Flanaess, Being the Eastern Portion of the Continent Oerik, of Oerth* (Vol. III); *A Guide to the World of Greyhawk Fantasy Setting*.

³ Quite possibly —as P. Smedger the Elder has suggested —luz himself concocted and disseminated these rumors. G. Ivril argues, however, that such speculation has only poetic, not historic, significance.

⁴ This distraction prevented Avras III from his planned assimilation of the Shield Lands. Freed from the threat of military action, the Earl of Walworth resisted the demands for fealty to the Furyondy crown. This resistance produced grave repercussions a century later.

⁵ Earl Kirhk of Attstad was the most aggressive and effective in pressing his demands. In exchange for a mere 20 knights and his signed pledge of assistance, the earl secured rights to assess and collect taxes within his demesne, freedom from royal levies, the right to collect tolls on the Att River, a bishopric for his nephew, and even a favorable marriage between the king's third son and Earl Kirhk's daughter!

At this crisis point, however, luz's growing power was checked. Whether by luck, wisdom, or courage, a small party of adventurers managed to seize the Lord of Evil and imprison him beneath the towers of Castle Greyhawk. How or why they undertook this feat has long been lost to the tides of time —lost along with all but one of the heroes' names: the wizard Zagyg the Mad.⁶

Whatever the adventurers' motives and means, their labors resulted in salvation for Furyondy. Deprived of their lord, the orc and goblin armies massing on Furyondy's borders rapidly dissolved. The barbarous creatures fought the regents of luz and won for themselves the east and west shores of Whyestil Lake. East of the lake, savage chieftains and unscrupulous humans founded the Horned Society by 513 CY, but the depths of the Vesve Forest remained untamed up to the Greyhawk Wars over half a century later.

Though the humanoid armies had retreated from the borders, Furyondy was too wracked by internal dissension to give chase. As pressure from the north ebbed, Prince Belvor III, King Avras's son, energetically courted the Order of the Hart. By playing on the suspicions of the Great Lords of the south, Belvor III swung the Order of the Hart into the royal faction. After his father's death, Belvor used his monarchical power to force the Great Lords back into the fold as well. Though his reign was relatively short,⁷ Belvor's coalition lasted, holding the fractious kingdom together during the years of his son's regency.

Since assuming the throne from Lord Throstin, Regent of the Realm, Belvor IV has striven to strengthen Furyondy, planning the eventual conquest of the Horned Society and luz. Relations within the kingdom are far from settled, though. The rival factions, though much weaker, still remain and have found new causes to champion. In Belvor's efforts to reform and strengthen the empire, he has undone much of his regent's handiwork. Disgruntled, Lord Throstin has gained increasing control over the Order of the Hart and thus slowed the king's reassumption of full power.

⁶Tales of Zagyg's capriciousness and power suggest that he may have performed the kidnapping alone. More likely, however, Zagyg was assisted —possibly by St. Cuthbert of the Cudgel or one of his priests. St. Cuthbert's participation in the capture could certainly explain luz's great hatred of that faith.

Note: The author of this tome has chosen to use the "Zagyg" spelling, though "Zagig" also has full acceptance among sages. Documents unquestionably penned by Zagyg bear signatures of both spellings, hinting that the madman himself was uncertain which to use.

⁷Belvor III died in his sleep in 537 CY after a reign of 15 years. Some nobles accused the Great Lords of assassination despite the fact that the Dread and Awful Presences —the Hierarchs of the Horned Society —claimed their magic wrought the king's death. A commission of wizards and priests led by Lord Throstin of the Hart determined that King Belvor died naturally in his sleep. The Great Lords were exonerated, but the Hierarchs never withdrew their claim: the deed only increased their standing in the Horned Society.

With all the turmoil within his borders, King Belvor IV virtually ignored luz's return in 570 CY. luz, for his own part, had not sought to draw the attention of the southern lands. His sudden departure left disorder in the kingdom and until he could reassert absolute authority over the quarrelsome humanoid tribes, he was content to be ignored by his enemies.

The Mad Overking

Before the conflict between luz and Furyondy began its slow festering, events of equal import developed in the east. In the palace of Rauxes at the heart of the Great Kingdom, scions of House Naelax swept through the halls, brutally slaying every last member of the ruling House of Rax. Brought to power by blood and treachery, the House of Naelax was destined to rule by terror, for madness flowed in the blood of its progeny.⁸

The tale of the Great Kingdom of Aerdi begins almost 40 years prior to luz's rise. In those days, the North Province was ruled by Prince Ivid, a charismatic and able —though thoroughly debauched —nobleman. Because decades of weak kingship under the House of Rax had eroded imperial power, nobles such as Prince Ivid grew bold in their claims, pressing demands upon the Malachite Throne. The kingship, weak as it was, folded beneath the pressure and the Great Kingdom plunged into the Turmoil Between Crowns.

When Nalif, the only remaining heir of Rax, was assassinated,⁹ a host of rival princes claimed right to the Malachite Throne. Through a campaign of diplomacy, war, and assassination, Prince Ivid solved the problem of succession by eliminating all contenders and leaving himself the sole surviving prince of blood. Thus, the House of Naelax achieved the throne and Prince Ivid became His Celestial Transcendancy, Overking of Aerdy, Grand Prince Ivid.

Included in his chain of titles were Herzog of the North; Archduke of Ahlissa, Idee, and Sunndi; Suzerain of Medegia; Commander of the Bone March; and Protector of Almor and Onnwal. Fate, however, quickly made

⁸The precise cause and nature of that madness has sparked much debate among scholars of the Great Kingdom. Pomfert the Elder, one of the Eight Sages of Rel Mord, considers the Overkings' madness magical in nature. Citing the Overking's epithet "the fiend-seeing," Pomfert argues that the lunacy of the Overkings arises from their trafficking with fiends of the Abyss. He continues to state that no similar hereditary madness has ever been witnessed, arguing strongly against congenital causes. Lorall of Almor postulates another source: the madness is a curse from the gods for the Overkings' evil treacheries. As Eye of the Faith for the clergy of Almor, however, Lorall's judgement in the matter must be considered suspect: the Almorians have long preferred to see the gods' support in their struggles with the Great Kingdom. Furthermore, as a curse, the madness has done far more to harm the foes of the House of Naelax than its members: the Ivids seem almost to relish their insanity.

⁹Though commonly credited to Prince Ivid's hand, no direct evidence links the future Overking to the assassination.

these titles little more than grandiose claims. The chaos unleashed with the assassination of Nalif did not cease when Ivid seized the throne. Indeed, the peasants of Onnwal, Idee, and Sunndi rebelled, and the Herzog of Ahlissa asserted his own independence.¹⁰

Ivid hurried to deal with his southern cousin (the nobility of the Great Kingdom were all related) only to find his lands exhausted and ill-administered after years of civil war. Unable to raise a sufficient army from his own fiefs, the Overking reluctantly called upon his remaining cousins for aid. Like sharks scenting blood, they closed in on the seemingly helpless king, intent on a kill.

The history of this second wave of civil war is even more confused and incomplete than that of the first. The sack of the University of Rauxes in 449 CY destroyed all imperial records of the war.¹¹ Likewise, Duke Astrin's considerable library at Eastfair went out in rucksacks and up in flames during the final imperial campaign. Though some fairly complete histories survived in the monasteries of Medegia, they are heavily tinged with the Holy Censor's degenerate philosophies. Their accuracy is highly questionable, especially concerning their main topic: the battles between Rauxes and Medegia.

Though reliable accounts of the battles are lost to time, the results stand clear: the Overking retained his throne but suffered losses of territory and power. A nephew that Ivid left as steward of the North Province rebelled against his uncle and established his fief as a sovereign state. So too, the chief prelate of Ivid's empire —the Holy Censor of Medegia—defied the Overking and established an independent see. The Sea Barons were not as successful: though they gained control over the Aerdi fleet, the Overking closed all mainland ports to them. Left with only hostile non-Aerdi neighbors, the Sea Barons sued for peace.

Little is known of the campaigns in the heartlands of the Great Kingdom, though certainly Ivid earned the title "the fiend-seeing" during these battles. When Almor rebelled, the Overking struck back with a vengeance, demonstrating his "fiend-seeing" abilities. Drawing upon hellish aid, the Overking's armies routed the rebels. Even in the empire's weakened state, Almor could not stand to the diabolical fury of the

¹⁰ The Herzog of Ahlissa gambled that his army alone could crush the nascent Iron League, formed in 447 CY and consisting of Onnwal, the Free City of Irongate, Idee, Sunndi, and the Gloriote and Hestmark demihumans. By defeating this economic and military alliance, the Herzog of Ahlissa hoped to create for himself an empire.

¹¹ The principal surviving source is *The Death-Code of Eeas*, a pithy listing of crimes for which execution was mandated. Though this corpus displays early tinges of the madness that would infect the Naelax line, it offers only limited vision into the political events of the era.

Companion Guard¹² until Nyronnd sent its aid. In the end, the exhausted armies fought to a draw along the current borders.

Since that time, the Great Kingdom has seen a progression of Overkings. Ivid ruled for 48 years and, though he never regained control of his lost provinces, he bound the rest of Aerdi to him through fear and debauched reward. His son, Ivid II, survived only three years on the fiend-seeing throne. Unstable before his coronation, Ivid II quickly lapsed into raving dementia upon assuming the full regalia of office.¹³

Madness did not bring Ivid II's fall, however: he was slain by a son who desired the crown. Ivid III immediately followed his grandfather's example, exterminating his blood kin so none could challenge him for the crown. With the blood of his father still beneath his fingernails, Ivid III imprisoned his children in richly appointed cages. He provided his heirs with tutors and countless lavish debaucheries lest he seem the neglectful father. When he reached advanced age, however, Ivid III declared that his surviving child would succeed him. The announcement unleashed a bloodbath of fratricide in his children's velvet prison. The sole survivor became Ivid IV.

The new ruler of Aerdi emulated his father: those children not slain at birth were imprisoned, and their mothers monstrously tortured for the Overking's amusement. With their father's throat out of reach, the children practiced their Naelaxan butcheries on a succession of nursemaids and governesses. Some survivors of the children sadly came to the Overking's attention and joined his ever-changing stable of concubines. After a brief dalliance or pleasing interlude, these women disappeared into the bowels of the torturers' dungeons: the Overking loved pain more than passion.

Otherwise Ivid IV's reign accomplished little. The Overking excelled in debauchery, not administration. He perennially launched military campaigns to retake Almor and Nyronnd and always managed only to shift

¹² G. Iviril has indisputably shown that some but not all units of the Companion Guard were barbazu, lesser baatezu from the Nine Hells. This fact accounts for the highly erratic performance of the Overking's armies.

¹³ The Overking's symbols of office are the Staff of Naelax (staff of thunder and lightning), the Orb of Rax (equal to a brooch of shielding) and the Aerdian crown (a helm of brilliance). In addition, the Malachite Throne itself is believed to be a minor artifact. Fashioned from a piece of star-fallen crystal, the throne was built by an imperial wizard centuries ago. Its powers have remained a closely guarded secret of the Overking. When the last heir of Rax took the secrets of the throne to the grave with him, Ivid I consulted the finest sages to deduce the throne's power. The sages served him well, and as reward, he slew them, jealous of his new-found secret. The Ivid line has learned that the throne allows anyone sitting on it true sight and surrounds him with an invisible globe of invulnerability. In addition, anyone knowing the command word can open a gate once per week. This gate leads to the uppermost level of the Nine Hells. The throne does not offer protection from creatures passing through the gate, however. Using the gate power of the throne is also dangerous because each use carries a 5% chance of causing insanity—a bitter curse on a line already plagued by madness.

the borders a few miles in either direction. No matter —the battles provided a summer spectacle to occupy the Overking, who was more interested in fury and thunder than real military gain.

While Ivid IV dallied, his someday successor, Ivid V, set to work. Second among the Overking's sons, Ivid V thought to simplify the appointment of an heir by exterminating his siblings.¹⁴ Though Ivid V completed this task with skill and dispatch, his father still refused to yield the throne to him. The heir apparent therefore hired the Overking's latest favorite to pour acid in the emperor's ear.¹⁵

Ivid V ascended the throne and has held it for 28 years. Though as a commander of armies he is dissolute and weak, Ivid V ruthlessly governs his empire with a genius for political machinations. Undeniably, the few campaigns he has fought ended in disaster, but madness has not obscured his diplomatic skill. The North and South Provinces have once again fallen into line behind the Overking's banner and his emissaries have even brought the humanoids of the Bone March closer to the imperial fold. With his strength growing, the Overking looks for an excuse to again press his claims on the rebellious western lands.

The Father of Obedience

The third and perhaps most decisive figure in the looming tragedy of war was also the most mysterious. Known only by a title —His Peerless Serenity, the Father of Obedience —the head of the Scarlet Brotherhood purposely fostered secrecy and rumor about himself and his followers. Most of what is known is only unfounded speculation.¹⁶

Though this organization of the Suel humans is purported to be ancient,¹⁷ the Scarlet Brotherhood only came to the notice of the rest of

¹⁴ Ivid IV had been a prolific sire. Before his ascension could be assured, Ivid V had to dispose of 123 brothers and sisters. Though suckling babes proved easy prey, Ivid V's older brother easily matched him. For many years the pair waged a war of assassination and intrigue in their prison-palace before Ivid V prevailed.

¹⁵ Ivid V's role in the affair is doubtless: the new ruler boasted of the ruthless deed. Recognizing the danger of keeping a treacherous concubine on hand, however, Ivid V sentenced his accomplice to the Wheel of Pain.

¹⁶ By far the best source on the Scarlet Brotherhood and its activities is L. Marquel's *An Honest Traveler's Strange Tales of the South*. Marquel, a paladin of Nyronde, accepted a commission from King Archbold III to investigate rumors coming from the Densac Peninsula. Traveling in disguise, Marquel wandered in his investigation into lands even farther south. Although unable to penetrate the forbidding ranks of the Scarlet Brotherhood, Marquel faithfully recorded every rumor, tale, and experience of his journey. The result is an odd admixture of petty details and grand impossibilities, but once again, it provides the best source of information on the Scarlet Brotherhood.

¹⁷ Rumors that the Scarlet Brotherhood is a nonhuman order (e.g., that they are surface-adapted drow or creatures that arrived through a magical gate) fail to account for the easy infiltration of Brotherhood spies and assassins into human courts.

the Flanaess in 573 CY.¹⁸ This year also saw the abduction of the Prince of Furyondy and the Provost of Veluna. The coincidence of these events seems significant, particularly to conspiracy theorists who suspect the hand of the Scarlet Brotherhood in all dark and mysterious deeds.¹⁹ Whether or not a connection exists, the Brotherhood has remained notoriously silent on the subject.

Without question, though, the Scarlet Brotherhood is a fanatical people. Their harshly monastic society has earned for them the epithet "monks," though the religion practiced by the Brotherhood remains a mystery. They deem all other races as inferior to the Suel People, and with cold, methodic evil set these beliefs to practice. Despite unflinching stealth and treachery when dealing with those beyond the pale, members of the Brotherhood apparently obey their leader —the Father of Obedience —unto death.

Though vague rumors of the Brotherhood had existed for centuries, the first official act of the organization was the dispatching of emissaries to the courts of the Iron League in 573 CY. Traveling robed and hooded in red, these strangers claimed to be ambassadors from the Land of Purity. Most were excellent scholars and sages who observed in the courts of the Iron League and generously offered their talents to those who needed them. Through this insidious process, the robed strangers patiently wormed into sensitive and even vital offices in the courts of many southern lords.

While the robed sages became confidants to kings, assassins of the sect infiltrated the courts under subtler guises. The time when this silent invasion actually began remains unknown, and estimates of the number of assassins are pure guesswork. Some revealed themselves prior to the war, advancing the Brotherhood's cause through assassination and terror. Even in these strikes, though, the extent of the Brotherhood's role remains in doubt: assassins seldom proclaimed allegiance as they struck the blow. Was the roof tile that slew the Steward of the Principality of Ulek wielded by an assassin, or by the capricious hand of fortune?²⁰

Of the Brotherhood's other prewar activities, only rumors speak. In the last years before the war, reports reached the southern Flanaess that

¹⁸ According to the chronologies of P. Smedger the Elder and the Savant-Sage, in 573 CY emissaries from the Scarlet Brotherhood appeared in the courts of the Iron League, offering their sagely services.

¹⁹ Morrev Ironseeker of Scant has gone to great lengths to connect the Scarlet Brotherhood to most major prewar events. He ties the group to the kidnappings previously mentioned, the release of Iuz from Zagyg's prison, the Great Fire of the Celadon, and the tribulations that plagued the city of Greyhawk. Unfortunately Ironseeker's "proofs" are as fabricated and groundless as they are interesting and popular.

²⁰ M. Ironseeker ascribes almost all prewar deaths of nobles in the good lands to the hand of the Scarlet Brotherhood. His proofs, though lacking in research, bespeak an unequalled (and unbridled) imagination.

red-hooded mystics were enslaving and martialing vast savage empires in Hepmonaland. Travelers described these savages in the most horrific terms, mercilessly detailing their cruel rites and debased customs.²¹ According to travelers' tales, vast nations following the ancient ways of the Suloise were mustering in the steamy gardens of Hepmonaland.

Still, Hepmonaland was too far from the beleaguered borders of the Flanaess kingdoms to cause much concern. Travelers' tales fell on deaf ears, and no one noticed the growing stranglehold of the red-hooded sages. Had anyone taken note, countless lives could have been saved.

²¹ The paladin wanderer L. Marquel was particularly disgusted by the rituals he witnessed in the jungles of Hepmonaland. Underlying his vehement protestations of disgust, however, the reader may note a fascination with the myriad indecent details of the rites. Amusingly, after leaving Hepmonaland, Marquel spent two months in a Sunndi monastery "seeking respite from dark thoughts and tortured dreams."

The Course of the War

Given the delicate balance of good and evil in the Flanaess and the tragically flawed natures of the land's tyrants and kings, the question was not whether a war would erupt, but how, when, and where it would. By 582 CY, these questions had met with some startling answers.

Rise of Stonefist

In the frozen north, far removed from the power struggles of the ancient Aerdi kingdoms, dwelt several tribes of barbaric folk: the Fruztii, Schnai, and Cruski, and the raiders of the Hold of Stonefist. For centuries these bands attacked anything or anyone that moved across their barren lands or seas. Three of the four groups —Fruztii, Schnai, and Cruski — claimed Suloise heritage and common foes. Numbered first among their foes were the folk of the fourth group, the raiders in the Hold of Stonefist.

The squabbling skirmishes of these small and primitive peoples should have remained merely a parenthetical aside in the epic chronicle of the Flanaess. Rumors surfaced, however, concerning an ancient artifact —the Five Blades of Corusk: the barbarian birthright of five swords imbued with otherworldly magic and lost for all ages. Four of the blades had purportedly been found in the heart of the Corusk Mountains. When the final sword was united with its mates in the proper ritual, the Five Blades of Corusk would combine their power and invoke the Great God of the North. This supernatural being would then muster the barbarian tribes and lead them to victory over the warm lands farther south.

Though countless young warriors died upon vision quests in the high mountains, no one discovered the fifth blade. Regardless, in 582 CY, a leader of great power and charisma arose among the barbarians. He called himself Vatun, Great God of the North —and had the power to support his claim. Vatun's appearance surprised even those most convinced by the rumors of the Five Blades, including the barbarian kings who had used the rumors to further their power. Vatun must have somehow proved his power to these doubtful rulers, for the kings of Fruztii, Schnai, and Cruski each surrendered their ancestral sovereignty to "all-powerful" Vatun.

Vatun, though, was hardly what he seemed: The entire episode was a fraud. Iuz, with his evil cunning and demi-god powers, fabricated the god Vatun and masqueraded as messiah of the barbarians. Perhaps the Five Blades of Corusk were genuine and perhaps the Great God of the North might really have appeared were the fifth blade found, but Iuz's evil schemes ended all search.

Vatun wasted no time deliberating. War was imminent between the barbarians and Stonefist. Even as Vatun appeared before his dread-filled followers, the Fists converged upon them to stop the ceremony. In the

brief battle that ensued, Vatun easily routed the Fists and thereby won the prostrate praise of the barbarians. However, instead of completely crushing the Fists, Vatun sought them as allies. Over the course of a few weeks, Sevvord Redbeard—once noted for his stubborn independence—underwent a radical (if not magical) change of heart and joined forces with Vatun and his barbarian hordes.

The Rovers of the Barrens, perhaps scenting the familiar stench of luz's evil upon winds from the east, proved less pious toward Vatun. Fiercely independent, the leaders of the few surviving wardogs refused Vatun's offer to ally. Retreating into the great plain between Stonefist and luz, the Rovers were both protected and plagued by their icy and forbidding lands.

Though Vatun seemed inconsequential to sages in civilized lands and though the Great God was in fact a sham, his appearing irretrievable unbalanced the delicate scales of good and evil. luz's alter ego clutched the northern tribes in a fist of iron, and with a single gesture he flung them southward.

The Hold of Stonefist, now ally rather than enemy of the barbarians, massed for an assault to the south. Demonstrating a savagery that surpassed even his reputation, Sevvord Redbeard, Master of the Hold, bloodily crushed all opposition to his rule. He turned the yearly Rite of Battle Fitness into a massacre to prove his ascendancy, then gathered his cowed forces for war talk. He said the time had come for the Fists, robbed of their lands and glory, to bring their southern neighbors to task.

With such demagoguery, the Master of the Hold assembled a huge and loyal barbarian army. The Fists were hungry for war and Sevvord Redbeard planned to let them feast. Under Vatun's orders, the Master of the Hold led his army through Thunder Pass and swept down on Calbut in the Duchy of Tenh.

The Fall of Tenh

For decades upon decades, the atamans of Stonefist had coveted the Duchy of Tenh—a land warm and lush by the severe standards of the barbarians. Yet for as many years, the Duke of Tenh and his armies blocked the way into those wealthy lands. Based in the walled city of Calbut,²² Duke Ehyeh's patrols watched and guarded Thunder Pass, repelling small forays and delaying larger raids until reinforcements from the city garrison could arrive. For centuries the walled cities and garrisons of Tenh limited the Fists to minor border raids. Preoccupied by skirmishes with the Fruztii, the Fists had not mounted a major attack through the pass for over 30 years.

²² The fortification of the frontier actually predates the founding of the Duchy of Tenh. The first defenses were built by the Aerdi, a towered wall at the top of the pass. Calbut evolved naturally at the base of the pass and was already fortified at the time of the Tenhas Rebellion.

In that time the Tenhas grew complacent. Believing the northern frontier secure, Duke Ehyeh siphoned warriors from Thunder Pass to more pressing assignments: patrols to intercept foul creatures from the Griff Mountains and the Troll Fens, task forces to hunt down desperados of Rookroost and the Bandit Kingdoms, and standing armies along the increasingly hostile border with the Theocracy of the Pale. With Thunder Pass quiet and the Hold preoccupied, Ehyeh allowed the Tenhas guard in Calbut to dwindle dangerously.

By 582 CY, Calbut lay completely unprepared for the storm of barbarians sweeping through Thunder Pass. The once-great gorge wall that sealed the heights of the pass toppled before the Fists' onslaught and Tenhas runners bearing word of the attack fell between footfalls. The relentless tide of Fists flooded through the pass, inundated the walls of Calbut, and stormed the still-open gates, catching the garrison commander completely unawares.²³ Every man among the townfolk was slaughtered and many women and children carried off to captivity.

Though the loss of Calbut grieved the Duke of Tenh, he expected the invasion to follow the course of previous incursions: the advance would grind to a halt while the undisciplined hordes looted Calbut. During the days —perhaps weeks —the Fists would spend in savage plunder, Duke Ehyeh would carefully muster his army and trap the barbarians in their camps. Slowly the duke drew the army of Tenh together, secretly withdrawing troops from other fronts.

This invasion, however, did not follow the same course as past attacks. While Tenh's forces mustered to waylay the Fists, Sevvord Redbeard pushed his troops forward again. In the brief campaign that followed, the Fists marched down a branch of the Zumker River, easily overwhelming the thin ranks of the Tenhas militia in their path. Within five days of the fall of Calbut, Sevvord's horde laid siege to the walled capital of Tenh, Nevond Nevnend.

Without the assuring presence of Duke Ehyeh, the citizens panicked. Rumors of empty granaries ignited a mob of fearful peasants, who marched on the citadel. In grotesque overreaction, the Council of Lords loosed the citadel guard upon the mob. The protest festered into a riot that spread to every corner of the city. As mob panic reach a rolling boil within the walls of Nevond Nevnend, Sevvord Redbeard laid siege to the walls without. The capital fell, and with it all authority in Tenh.

After the twin disasters of Calbut and Nevond Nevnend, the armies of Tenh were decimated. Sevvord's Fists easily fanned out through the

²³ The less-than-illustrious career of Margeist of Redspan won him the back-waters post of Steward of Calbut, a position in which he "could cause the least harm." Vain and incompetent, the new garrison commander quickly came under investigation by the Knight-Magistar of Tenh for supposedly diverting funds from the garrison treasury. Margeist's guilt or innocence became moot when he disappeared in the sack of Calbut. Rumors suggested Margeist betrayed Calbut, using the capture to screen his escape.

countryside and into the Phostwood. The Duke and Duchess, along with their children, fled their homeland, finding refuge in the court of Countess Belissica of Urnst.

Diplomacy

News of the fall of Tenh spread through the Flanaess like a rolling cloud of doom, triggering reaction on all sides. Sevvord Redbeard's conquest rung like a death knell across the land. The messengers whispered the news in the ears of kings and emperors, saying "The hammer has fallen. The time has come." The great war had drawn its first blood.

Most devastated by the fall of that hammer was deposed Duke Ehyeh. In Radigast City, he and his courtiers cobbled together a court-in-exile. The decisiveness of the defeat left the duke's reputation hobbled. Miscalculations were magnified into character flaws, misfortunes considered ineptitude, desperation labeled despotism. The shattered duke appealed to his benefactress for funds and an army to regain his homeland. The Countess of Urnst, unwilling to abuse the age-old traditions and rights of the nobility, provided him refuge and even funded his court, but refused further aid.

Other nations were no more obliging. The Theocracy of the Pale, though unhappy to have Sevvord Redbeard next door, had long distrusted and disliked the Tenhas anyway. The Supreme Prelate of the Pale refused to volunteer an army for Duke Ehyeh to command, choosing instead to strengthen his own borders and prepare to seize Tenh for himself. The king of Nyronnd, though sympathetic to Duke Ehyeh's cause, reserved his troops and funds to counter the ominous rumbles coming from its old rival, the Great Kingdom.

At the same time, Iuz suffered his first reverse. The folk of Fruztii, Cruski, and Schnai, long-time rivals of Stonefist, took exception to Sevvord's bold stroke. Tenh had always supported the barbarians in their struggles against the Great Kingdom and the Bone March. As part of that support, Duke Ehyeh customarily turned a blind eye to the arms trade traveling across Tenh from Rookroost to Krakenheim. Now, however, the Master of the Hold closed the caravan routes, seizing all weapon shipments for his own people. Angered by their loss and feeling betrayed by the "Great God of the North," the barbarians began to doubt Vatun. Iuz's alliance of trickery had begun to erode.

The barbarian kings resisted Vatun's call to overrun Ratic and invade the Bone March. Though the humanoids of the March were bitter foes, the barbarians were loathe to swarm Ratic. The tiny archbarony had cooperated with the barbarians for many years, developing strong ties between it and the lands of the north.²⁴ Though quite willing to launch

²⁴ In particular, the king of the weakest barbarian nation, the Fruztii, profited greatly from his pact with Ratic. The archbarony aided the Fruztii in clearing the northern pass

sea raids against the Bone March and Great Kingdom, the barbarians refused even Vatun's orders to march through Ratik. As the first few months of the war drew to a close, the northern alliance collapsed altogether.

And so the deception that triggered the great war met its end, but not before luz had firmly allied Stonefist to his cause. Though the alliance farther east collapsed, luz had successfully turned the barbarians' attention away from the west: instead of pouring through the mountain passes, the barbarians launched daring longship raids along the coast of the Great Kingdom.

Martyrs of the Holy Shielding

In 583 CY, luz returned to his homeland. The short absence he had taken to work his deceptions upon the barbarians threatened to reduce his evil empire to turmoil once more. Stung by setbacks in the east and determined to silence internal unrest, luz savagely restructured his nation. The straggling human nobles from the old Furyondy houses — worms of men, too weak to oppose luz and too morally bankrupt to flee — were deposed or executed. In their stead, luz placed unholy things from the Abyss: nabassu, cambions, hezrou, mariliths, and vrock. Somehow he forced them to his will.²⁵

Nor did the Lord of Evil stop at rebuilding his own lands, but reached also into the Horned Society to replace leaders there. The Dread and Awful Presences, the Hierarchs, made the task easy for him. The Hierarchs reigned in veiled seclusion, hiding their human identities from their humanoid minions. Rumors that the Hierarchs were fiendish overlords arose among the humanoids of the Horned Society — rumors the Hierarchs fostered to cement their power. luz decided merely to make the rumors reality. In the month of Coldeven, at the height of the Blood-Moon Festival, the citadels of Molag ran red with blood as luz staged his coup. In less than a fortnight, the Hierarchs became creatures of mere legend and luz held absolute control over the Horned Society.

luz's assumption of power and armament for war did not pass unnoticed. Furyondy's spies headed back to King Belvor IV with word of the swelling humanoid armies. The news could well have been written in the spies' blood, though, for most of the human agents were discovered and slain, virtually closing King Belvor's eyes and ears. When the few spies did reach him, though, the Furyondy king heeded the fate of Tenh and immediately set to building his defense. The citadels along the Veng River

of the Fists and in amassing enough strength to virtually pull free from the domination of the powerful Schnai.

²⁵ A. Yamoskov, a sage of Rel Mord, theorizes that according to the *Codex of Mordenkainen* luz held the life-force items of his minion fiends and could thus force them to his will. He argues that during luz's "imprisonment" in the dungeons of Zagyg, the demi-god was actually banished from the Prime Material plane. During this exile, Yamoskov suggests, luz collected the items he needed.

were stocked and garrisoned in expectation of immediate attack. Belvor's vassals raised militia and shifted troops to the Veng border. Emissaries rode to the Shield Lands and Veluna to brace them for war. Belvor was determined that Furyondy would not fall.

King Belvor's emissaries to the Shield Lands met with an icy reception from Lord Holmer, Earl of Walworth and Commander of the Knights of the Holy Shielding. Relations between the two rulers had always been prickly. Though ostensibly allied with Furyondy, the earl long suspected that Belvor intended to annex the Shield Lands. Thus the messenger's news of the mustering of Molag struck Lord Holmer as suspicious: he did not entirely dismiss the warning, but suspected King Belvor of overstating the danger. Holmer felt it more perilous to admit powerful knights of Furyondy into his lands to aid in its defense than to face the rabble of the Horned Society with his own knights.

In the coming of Flocktime, luz struck. In the dead of night along the banks of the Veng and Ritensa, the humanoids of the Horned Society launched probing attacks. None made more than small headway against the knights of the Hart and Shielding, but the attacks still achieved their aim. While King Belvor and Lord Holmer peered myopically at their river frontiers, luz's true legions marched east, fording the Ritensa north of the Shield Lands and striking into the Bandit Kingdoms. The petty warlords were easily cowed by luz's might and, given the number of spies recently executed, the evil lord was confident that Belvor and Holmer were blind to his maneuvers.

Indeed they were. Lord Holmer learned of luz's flanking march only after the humanoid hordes had breached the eastern border. Raging like a grass fire across the open fields of the Shield Lands, they drove on Critwall. When this dark report reached Lord Holmer, he pulled all but a screen of knights from the river frontiers and personally fought his way back toward the undefended capital, Admundfort. More than half of the knights fell in the drive toward the island, but those who reached the Nyr Dyv set fire to as many vessels as they could, then sailed across the channel to the capital. Ragged and weary, the remaining knights could not hold the capital before the onslaught of humanoids, though they came across in dories and trawlers. Admundfort and Critwall fell, and so too did Lord Holmer, borne away in clawed hands to the dungeons beneath Dorakaa.

The fall of the Shield Lands left Furyondy's eastern flank exposed, a threat King Belvor moved quickly to block. Lords scoured the countryside, raising vast militias to complement the thin ranks of the Order of the Hart and troops were hurriedly transferred from the Vesve Forest frontier. The newly raised troops and reinforcements confronted the advancing humanoids at the Battle of Critwall Bridge, dealing luz's forces a severe blow. The armies of Furyondy repelled the humanoids and held the Veng River line against further advance.

Stroke and Counterstroke

Though ill-prepared, Furyondy was not complacent. King Belvor IV, while raising troops at home, dispatched his most silver-tongued advisors to the southern courts. Ambassadors bore the alarming news to Celene, Bissel, Veluna, the Uleks, and —most important of all —Keoland. With impassioned eloquence, the emissaries warned of dire consequences should the northern kingdoms fall. They urged the nations to ally and thus check the tide of evil, finally and forever. Nor were their words in vain: most of the leaders heeded the call, but wondered how little aid they could provide and how long they could delay before sending it.

Meanwhile in the east, Archbold III of Nyronde finally rallied himself from the shock of Tenh's defeat. Smarting from accusations that he had allowed the troublesome dukedom to collapse, King Archbold decided to undeniably prove his support for his former colonies. Armed with reports that the Fists were mercilessly pillaging the fallen duchy, Archbold marched north into the Nutherwood. Elven contingents in his army allowed him to easily infiltrate the Phostwood and overwhelm the few Fists posted there. Without further warning, the Nyronde burst from the forest.

Unlike the Tenhas though, the Fists did not simply crumble: Archbold found himself facing a determined foe. Angered at the surprise attack, Sevvord executed a few lackluster commanders as examples to the others, then sacrificed Fists to delay the advance as he mustered his forces outside the village of Ternsmay. Though outnumbered, Sevvord held the advantageous ground. In the ensuing battle, neither side could gain the upper hand. After fighting well into the night,²⁶ the Fists withdrew farther and fortified their position. Though Archbold had emerged victorious, the victory was bitter, for he could risk no further advance into Tenh. He had, however, forced Redbeard into a defensive stance as well. The battle ended in stalemate and the armies spent the next tedious weeks watching their enemies across a mile-wide no man's land.

Iuz had no intention of letting his string of victories end, however. Using loot captured in the Shield Lands, Iuz hired humanoid mercenaries in the Vesve Forest.²⁷ The mercenary army descended from the Vesve, overrunning the frontier guard of Furyondy and capturing Crockport. Furyondy's capital, Chendl, lay open and unguarded across the belly of the land. But for a hasty confederation of Highfolk and knights, Chendl would have fallen by the next dusk. The ragged force of Highfolk and knights refused to grant the orcs an open fight, harrying them instead.

²⁶ Sevvord Redbeard defied the normal custom of breaking off at nightfall, instead relying upon troops with infravision to press the attack.

²⁷ Indisputably, the money came from the Shield Lands. An adventuring party from Perrenland looted the treasure of a Vesve orc chieftain and found silver from Lord Holmer's table!

Though the orcs' advance continued, it slowed sufficiently for the defenders of Chendl to prepare. By the month of Reaping, however, Chendl lay surrounded.

Furyondy Besieged

The news from Chendl struck a heavy blow on King Belvor IV. Iuz held the Shield Lands, the Horned Society probed constantly across the borders, and now Fairwain Province and Chendl —perhaps the most beautiful city in the whole Flanaess —lay besieged.

Worse yet, no help had come. The reports from the ambassadors were discouraging. Lord Kendall wrote from Celene to say that Her Fey Majesty, Yolande, was "distinctly ambiguous when pressed on how many troops she might consider as fulfilling her obligation, or when she might think fit to mobilize them." Word from Bissel was no better: the margrave expressed concern that the horsemen of Ket might attack his weakened frontier. The Commandant of the Gran March insisted it could only act in concert with Keoland and Keoland remained maddeningly silent.

Internally, the Seven Families (the noble houses of Furyondy) began to grumble at the costs of the war. In addition to the revenues spent, they lamented the revenues lost. The new militias had stripped the countryside of able young men, leaving the ripening harvest to rot in the fields. Meanwhile Iuz's agents permeated the land, stirring up unrest among the hungry poor. King Belvor hardened his face to these setbacks where any lesser man would have surrendered to despair.

Not all news was bleak, though. The knights had managed to stop the orcish advance into Fairwain and the humanoids could do little more than surround Chendl. The Horned Society's incursions across the Veng occurred less often and grew less concerted. Best of all, the Canon of Veluna sent word that his forces were hurrying to Furyondy's side. The news from Nyron, too —though not the best —at least indicated that the Fists were contained. After considering these encouraging matters, King Belvor rallied his spirit and returned to the fight.

Furyondy's first task —more political than strategic —was to sunder the siege of Chendl. Gambling on the chaotic nature of the tribes surrounding the city,²⁸ Belvor left most of his strength on the Veng border and personally led a picked command of elite units against the siege force. Belvor's knights were severely outnumbered, but by strategic cunning and sorcerers' aid, they gained the upper hand. The knights sliced through the humanoid lines and pinned the besiegers to the city walls. In short time, the fields around Chendl became a smoldering graveyard of goblinkind and the way to Chendl was open once more.

²⁸G. Ivril believes the siege force consisted of at least five major orc tribes: the Vrunik, Faarsh, Jukko, Haggnah, and Karaki. However, the Vesve army must certainly have included other races, particularly goblins and hobgoblins, and so Ivril's list of tribes is surely incomplete.

By this time both Iuz and Furyondy were stretched to their limits. The furious pace of the war had exhausted their reserves of trained manpower and supplies. Through the months of Patchwall, Ready'reat, and Sunsebb, both nations scrambled to reprovision their forces.

The Great Kingdom Wakes

To this point, the conflict that was to become the great Greyhawk War was viewed by most nations as just another regional dispute —albeit a particularly volatile one —between a few northern nations. The states of the Iron League and those around Keoland saw little reason to help the besieged nations, or even to fortify their own borders against attack. But the rulers of these nations were, as all mortal folk, blind to the plans of Fate.

Whether due to madness —as some have suggested—or political ambition, the Overking of the Great Kingdom chose that moment to enter the arena of war. The mad ruler had long coveted Nyron and Almor, but the two nations had always stood united against his legions. The recent troubles in Tenh, though, provided the Overking a perfect distraction for Nyron: King Archbold was away in the far north with a large contingent of his army, and the remaining troops, though not helpless, would be matched two to one by the Overking's forces.

Other factors convinced Ivid V that Nyron and Almor were ripe for harvest. For some time, the Overking had courted the humanoids of the Bone March, but being blood-thirsty and primitive, they saw no gain in his offers. Now an ambassador flew north on one of the Overking's personal carpets to make a new proposal. In exchange for alliance, the orcs of the Bone March would gain both land and loot —all from Nyron.

While the emissary delivered this proposal, the Overking drummed up war fever in his own land to compel his independent-minded cousins to join the fray. The North Province, sensing a dangerous shift in the wind, stood by Ivid,²⁹ reasoning that though he made an unreliable friend, he was a truly horrific enemy. The South Province dithered, fearing retribution for its past failures against Onnwal. The See of Medegia remained defiant, the Holy Censor confident in his power to keep the mad Ivid in check. Though the Overking was displeased by this refusal, he took no action against his chief prelate.³⁰ To further expand his army ranks, the Overking reached into the state's depleted coffers and paid out huge sums for mercenary bands. News of his largess spread beyond the City of Greyhawk. Even the ranks of Furyondy and Nyron thinned as hired soldiers sought better pay in the east.

²⁹ Though not too close, lest the Herzog of the North find a dagger in his side.

³⁰ Tales say that, livid at his impotence to force the Holy Censor of Medegia into alliance, the mad Overking ordered the assassination of 100 of the Holy Censor's concubines to soothe his anger.

With sizeable but unreliable armies, the Overking struck in several directions at once. His Glorioles Army crossed the Thelly River and entered the Glorioles. After hacking through stiff resistance there, the army broke south into the County of Sunndi. Ivid's Aerdi Army marched slowly toward Chathold in Almor. His Northern Army entered the Adri Forest near Edge Field, bound for Innspa in Nyronnd. Meanwhile the Grand Field Force of the South Province marched into the Iron Hills, again intent on taking the city of Irongate.

Osson's Raid

The Great Kingdom's intentions could hardly pass unnoticed. One country that held an anything-but-casual interest was the Prelacy of Almor. This small nation had long witnessed the brutal ambition of the Overking at work and therefore knew not to be caught unawares. The Prelate Kevont had personally organized an extensive spy network to monitor the lands of the madman. That network now reported the mustering and movement of massive armies in all landed quarters of the kingdom. When he received this intelligence, Prelate Kevont dispatched messengers to Nyronnd and the Iron League and sent the war banner throughout the country. With the speed of a people ever poised on the brink of war, Almor's defenses were fully manned.

A prudent ruler, Kevont did not personally take command of Almor's troops. The old prelate had long led his country by wisely recognizing the best man for every job. In this case, the best man was the Honorable Osson of Chathold. Kevont appointed the energetic young knight as Commandant of the Field, with every knight and yeoman of Almor's forces under his command.

Commandant Osson had little difficulty assessing the grave situation facing Almor. The Great Kingdom could squash the tiny country through sheer numbers —and apparently intended to do so. Though the dilemma was clear, the solution was not. Recognizing that Almor could not be defended against such a foe, Osson decided to take the offensive — committing a daring raid into the Great Kingdom's lands to keep its forces from attacking. The plan would have met with insurmountable objection from older and "wiser" knights had the prelate wavered even momentarily in support of his young protege.

The plan was simple and daring. Osson divided his army into two forces, posting the first along the border with the Great Kingdom. Too small to block a major attack, this army aggressively patrolled and probed the frontier. Their rigor would make them seem twice their actual number and thus hopefully forestall any major assault by the Aerdiens.³¹

³¹ Osson correctly measured his foes. The Aerdi Army, strongest in the Great Kingdom, was staffed not with warriors, but courtiers —experts in pandering and fawning to the Overlord. The Grandee Despotrix of the army, his Highness Yimdil of Jalpa, customarily commanded his regiment from the comfort of his palace at Jalpa rather than endure the

The second half of the army consisted of all available cavalry, riding under Osson's personal command. Baggage, notoriously cumbersome and complicated for most armies,³² was all but forbidden. Osson ordered that each man live in the saddle, forsaking all the comforts normally carried. For the outnumbered forces of Almor, speed could make the difference between life and death.

Having divided his forces, Osson set his plan in motion. Knowing that neither of his armies could long withstand the full attention of the Great Kingdom, the commandant hoped to divert Ivid's armies away from Almor. Almor needed time for Nyronnese aid to arrive, and if Osson could fluster the mad Ivid like a wasp in the helmet, the Overlord might never attack. Either way, Osson preferred to keep the battle on Aerdian soil.

Osson first struck south, passing through the Thelly Forest. With speed and surprise on their side, the horsemen brushed away Ahlissa's ill-trained troops and plunged into the South Province. The land fell quickly into disarray. The peasants, long oppressed by their Herzog, welcomed the Almorian forces. The Herzog himself was slow to respond, for the bulk of Ahlissa's troops were massed on her western border, preparing to assault Irongate. Rushing detachments of his army toward the east, the Herzog reluctantly accepted offers of aid from the Overking.³³ The Aerdi army marched southwest to engage the intruders, but before either force could catch him, Osson advanced again.

Instead of returning to Almor, Osson led his horsemen into the Rieuwood. The Glorioles Army of the Overking, though victorious, had suffered badly in its conquest of Sunndi. Osson calculated that a defeat in Sunndi would swing Ivid's attention from Almor. Once through the wood, Commandant Osson found the Overking's forces arrayed and ready for him. Even badly hurt, the Glorioles Army would have proved an equal match for the Almorians but that the Aerdians did not have a general of genius on their side. At the Battle of Rieuwood, Osson initiated the tactic of false retreat that was to become his hallmark. Believing the cavalry routed, the Aerdians gave chase, only to blunder into a deadly trap. The Glorioles Army was decimated.

After a brief delay to reorganize, proclaim Sunndi's liberation, and recruit volunteers, Osson set off again. Crossing the Glorioles, the

rigors of an actual campaign 200 miles away. His subordinates were no better, vying among themselves more than against the enemy and each seeking to discredit his colleagues and thus gain favor in the eyes of the Overking's dreaded censors.

³² The Aerdi Army provided a fine example of wasteful military baggage. Though no accurate counts were made, the provost of the Aerdi Army estimated in a letter to his wife that the baggage train for his troops stretched 40 miles behind the back ranks and took three days to properly assemble in any one place. Among the notable items in the train were 5,000 women, 500 young boys, two theater troupes, and 50 nightingales in gilded cages!

³³ Ivid extended these offers not out of friendship or kinship, but because the Overking saw a chance to secure a grip over his wavering cousin.

commandant made a stab at Nulbish on the Thelly River. Sadly, the good fortune that had followed him to this point fled. The garrison commander at Nulbish, Magistar Vlent, had the military training that other Aerdi commanders lacked. Refusing to fight outside the city, Magistar Vlent used a heavily armed river flotilla to maintain supplies and harry the Almorians. After several weeks of futile siege, Osson received word that the Aerdi Army was descending from the north. Any return to Almor was clearly impossible, for a massive army now blocked the path.

Many options —all of them grim —came under debate in Osson's war council.³⁴ Some of the knights argued for fighting back to Almor, others suggested wintering over in Sunndi, and a handful even proposed a drive for Rauxes, capital of the Great Kingdom! In the end, Osson chose none of these, calling instead for a march on the See of Medegia. For Almor's sake, Osson argued, the cavalry must continue to pressure the Great Kingdom. If reports held true that the Lordship of the Isles and the Iron League were planning to ally, surely the Lordship's fleet could provide an escape to the Almorian cavalry.

Though the attack into Medegia surprised the Overking, his reaction was equally surprising. As soon as Osson's intentions were clear, Ivid ordered his armies to stop their pursuit. Rebellious Medegia would receive no aid from the Great Kingdom. In a series of stunning field battles, Osson's army crushed the forces of the Holy Censor and seized the land from Pontylver to Lone Heath. Spidasa, the Holy Censor, fled to Rauxes to beg his imperial majesty's forgiveness. Compassion failing him, Ivid V arrested the chief cleric and sentenced him to the Endless Death.³⁵

Aid from the South

The coming of winter brought respite to all the warring states. In the north, snow and ice covered the land and freezing wind whipped across the plain. Along the south rim of the Vesve Forest, Iuz's humanoids, far from their warm and secure caves when the frigid winter blasts descended, dug crude shelters as best they could. Once entrenched, the miserable humanoids refused to venture beyond their warm dens. King Belvor used the resulting quiet in the north to plan and reorganize.

In the east, rains had an equally retarding effect. Mired in mud and hamstrung by the Overking's pettiness, the Great Kingdom's armies massed on the borders of Medegia, Almor, and Nyronnd. Osson's raid and the coming of the rains bought the Almorians time to fortify their borders

³⁴ Thredus, Commandant Osson's personal wizard and chronicler, faithfully recorded these war councils. Thredus' *True Account of the Great Almorian Campaign* spans five volumes and provides both historical accounts of battles and biographical information about Osson himself.

³⁵ Victims of the Endless Death are forced to wear a ring of regeneration while torturers endlessly perform their arts on them. These torturers, trained from youth to perfectly gauge the intensity and extensity of pain, always stop one step short of inflicting death. Rumors tell that victims of this punishment have been tortured by grandfathers, fathers, and sons of the same executioner families.

and gather new reserves. Nyronnd also raised new armies to meet the threat from the Great Kingdom.

Though the winter halted armies, it seemed to spur diplomatic efforts forward. The Bone March, fairly reeling from promises of gold and land, cast its lot with Ivid V, pledging to march when the snows lifted. Ahlissa, sensing its fate could have been like Medegia's, affirmed its intention to fight at the Overking's side. The Sea Barons too expressed their steadfast resolve, while the North Province crowed about its ever faithful loyalty to the crown.

The Overking's entry into the war simplified one task for Almor and Nyronnd —persuading the Iron League to join the alliance. With Irongate, Idee, and Sunndi threatened, the land-based members of the League met in Oldred at Archbold's invitation and signed the Eastern Pact, formally allying themselves against "the mad aggressions of the Great Kingdom." The County of Urnst also signed the pact, but the Theocracy, citing Nyronnd's many heresies, refused to join.

However, the worst setback for the alliance came when a sudden coup replaced Prince Latmac Ranold of the Lordship of the Isles with his distant cousin, Prince Froimar Ingerskatti. The new ruler surprisingly proclaimed his support of the Great and Hidden Empire of the Scarlet Brotherhood. This proclamation not only pulled the Lordship from the alliance, but effectively trapped Commandant Osson of Almor in Medegia. Though the Brotherhood's hand had heretofore gone unfelt, its effect would become increasingly undeniable.

In the west, the diplomats' alarms finally penetrated. Realizing that luz's threat was neither quick nor contained, the southern states consented to ally. First to sign the Treaty of Niole Dra came the largest and most important nation —Keoland—quickly followed by the Gran March, Yeomanry, Duchy of Ulek, and County of Ulek. Celene was last to agree, the elves begrudgingly consenting to send a token force. Citing threats on their borders, the remaining countries declined to aid, although all vowed they would give no aid to luz. With the treaty in hand, King Belvor returned to Chendl with hope for his people.

In his own heavy-handed fashion, luz concluded alliances —all obscenely lopsided in his favor. After the Bandit Kingdoms were cowed into submission, agents traveled to Ket, Tusmit, and Perrenland, urging them to take up the sword. Ket and Tusmit responded favorably while Perrenland offered only mercenaries and a promise of neutrality in the coming years. Other agents penetrated into the Crystalmists, hoping to rouse the creatures there to attack and harry the good lands.

When at last spring came, several new armies were on the march: Keoland's main force moved through passes of the Lortmil Mountains; a small but experienced army from the Gran March passed through the Lorridges; Celene sent a small detachment north through the forests; and

the Iron League gathered in Idee and Irongate. Among the evil forces, Ket was poised to strike into Bissel; the Bone March threatened Ratik and Nyron; and ships from the Sea Barons and the Lordship of the Isles raced to Grendep Bay to end the barbarians' longship raids.

An Empire Where None Has Stood

While fresh armies marched north, startling events unfolded in a long-neglected part of the world—the Pomarj. Once part of the Keoland Empire, this wild tangle of mountains and woods had long since passed into the hands of savage humanoid tribes. Over the decades, the Principality of Ulek made numerous attempts to reclaim the region, but none could defeat the fierce resistance of the orcs and goblins who now sheltered in this wilderness. The Pomarj quickly earned the reputation of a place of death, slavery, degeneracy, and treasure. Only corrupt or adventurous humans and demihumans intentionally entered there.

This savage reputation hid from the neighboring lands of Celene and Ulek the events unfolding in the Pomarj. A revolution had occurred like none that land had ever seen: a half-orc leader had emerged. After claiming chieftainship of the Nedla peoples, Turrosh Mak seized control of the neighboring tribes.³⁶ Proclaiming himself Despot, Turrosh Mak proceeded to forge the mismatched collection of tribes into a single confederation. What might have seemed folly to even attempt, Despot Mak achieved.

To gain a grip on this quarrelsome collection of orcs, goblins, gnolls, ogres, and the like, Turrosh united them behind a common cause. Tales of the Hateful Wars, which drove the tribes from the Lortmils, still circulated around the council fires, so Turrosh needed little persuading to convince his chieftains to reclaim their "birthright."

By a stroke of fortune, Turrosh struck at the most opportune time. Great crusading armies had just left the lands of the south, taking with them some of their nations' ablest men and generals. With others' attention focused to the north, the newly proclaimed orc nation found time to organize and grow.

Boastfully proclaiming that he would "forge an empire where none has stood," Turrosh fielded his savage armies in the month of Readying. He chose his first conquests carefully, looking for easy victories. In quick succession Elredd, Badwall, and Fax fell to the humanoid armies, and thus the southern Wild Coast was overrun. Flushed with victory, the tribes turned southwest, marching through the dreaded Suss Forest and into the Principality of Ulek.

³⁶How a half-breed—normally ostracized by orcs—gained command of one of the largest tribes in the Pomarj is a mystery. Some scholars speculate that Mak was aided by a wizard or perhaps by the Scarlet Brotherhood.

As noted before, the stroke fell at an opportune time. Though the Principality had not joined the alliance, any neighbor who could have offered aid to the small nation had joined, sending the picked troops well north of the Lortmils. The Principality's small army, though determined and professional, was caught completely unawares by the united mass of tribes that assaulted it. The dwarven Warden of the Jewel, Augustos Clinkerfire, fought his best, but in the face of such numbers, could only manage a careful and organized retreat. Finally in the hills of the lower Lortmils where his dwarves were at their best, Lord Clinkerfire could make a stand, though by that time all of eastern Ulek was lost.

Recognizing the fragility of his tribal confederation, Turrosh did not press the assault. His orcs needed victories to maintain their enthusiasm and the Despot was determined to avoid a prolonged and inconclusive battle. Satisfied with his gains, Turrosh stationed his human contingents on the Ulek line and turned his orc hordes north.³⁷ The time had come for the Despot to reclaim the ancient birthright of the Pomarj.

Avoiding the large tracts of forest due north, Turrosh swung his armies northwest, down the ridge of the Lortmils between Celene and the County of Ulek. The gnomes, halflings, and dwarves of the hills fought with courage and skill, but many of the boldest and best trained soldiers were away in Furyondy. The orcs drove further northwest, virtually unopposed until they reached Celene pass. There a combined force of reservists —humans, dwarves, gnomes, halflings, and even elves from Celene—made their stand.

The Battle of Celene Pass was bloody and hard-fought. The advance scouts of the League of Right (as the defenders styled themselves) had just reached a sharp bend in the pass when they sighted the first orcs, advance scouts like themselves. By order of Rourk Splinterstone of the Ulek dwarves, the scouting party, no more than 200 strong, piled up a hasty barricade of dirt and stone —a wedge-shaped redoubt along the far side of the pass. Realizing his command was hopelessly outnumbered, Splinterstone dispatched runners under the cover of night to both Celene and Ulek. Though the messengers risked the dangers of the pass, unknowing whether the orcs roamed there as well, those who remained faced a grimmer fate. If the messengers were slain, or reached civilized lands too late for relief parties to effect a rescue, Splinterstone and his men could do nothing save fight to the bitter end.

The first assault came under cover of darkness —a standard orc tactic. The attack was nothing more than a wild charge, an attempt to overwhelm the defenders by sheer numbers. Under Splinterstone's cool command, though, the barricade held. Waves of orcs pounded the

³⁷ The Despot both loathed and needed his human troops. Though he despised them as weak and lacking in savagery (when compared to his orcs), he knew they had more patience for a protracted campaign. The orc forces, on the other hand, would dwindle if not constantly provided with battles and victories.

bulwark through the hours of darkness, only retreating with the dawn. The morning sun revealed a scene both stunning and horrifying: countless orc bodies lay in gory heaps before the rocky wall, as though adding their mass to the redoubt. The dwarven casualties, though far fewer, were still severe. Despite his troops' dire need of rest, Splinterstone ordered a second and even a third wall erected behind the first.

For the next three days, the Defenders of Right clung to their rocky position against wave after wave of orcs and goblins. When the relief column from Ulek finally arrived,³⁸ the grim troops were astonished to find Splinterstone and 30 of his men still alive, tenaciously holding the pass behind the last redoubt. The relief force's commander had long since given them up for dead. For his bravery, Rourk Splinterstone received a small barony, and his troopers were gratefully pensioned for the remainder of their lives.

Rourk's defense halted the orcish advance. Once again the Despot of the Pomarj broke off his attacks, this time to deal with rebellious chieftains back home. Though Turrosh Mak could yet hold his empire together, further expansion would have to wait.

With Turrosh halted, the Uleks prepared to counterattack, but even combined their armies were too bruised and weak. Though Celene on the other side of the Lortmils could have virtually assured victory, Celene had no intention of assisting.

Long distrustful of outsiders, Her Fey Majesty Yolande now let fears and suspicions paralyze her nation. To her mind, humans from the north had "demanded" her aid and thus drained vital troops from her lands. Now dwarves and gnomes, no friends of the elves, pressed her for help in the mountains. No country offered to assist Celene in defending its woodlands from the Pomarj threat, she reasoned, so Celene would aid no others. In a brief and emphatic proclamation, the Queen of Celene recalled her troops from Furyondy and closed the borders of her nation. Others had started these wars and others would solve them —without the loss of elvish lives.

Conquest of Almor

As the clouds of spring cleared in the east, Commandant Osson, still encamped in Medegia, could little deny the fate dealt him and his men. The hope he had posted on the Lordship of the Isles proved misplaced. Ships of the Sea Barons —the sharks of Ivid V —patrolled the waters of the Aerdi Sea while the rested and refitted Aerdi armies awaited Osson

³⁸ No relief ever arrived from Celene. The elves at the time claimed they never received word of trouble. Several weeks later, however, a messenger returned to the pass saying he personally delivered news of Rourk's plight to the Luminous Elf-Commander Jevrail. No evidence exists to support the messenger's claim, and many (certainly the elves) believe he was lying to hide his own desertion from duty.

across every border. Even the peasantry that Osson hoped would arise remained quiescent, fearing retribution when the Overking's legions returned. Thus, with certain knowledge of their doom, the cavalry took the field one last time, in a break-out attempt toward the Hestmark Highlands.

Though Osson planned an orderly dash for safety, it was not to be. As the cavalry charged across the Flanmi River, most of its officers fell to the bowmen of the entrenched Aerdi Army. So many fell, in fact, that even the energetic and brilliant commandant could not reign in the cavalry. Before even securing the field, every horseman who still drew breath rode hard for the hills and the safety of Sunndi. From there, the ragged line of cavalry wormed its way home by way of the Iron League. Commandant of the Field Osson of Chathold did not return, and his final fate remains a mystery. The Great Almorian Raid had finally met its end.

Only after the fiends among the Aerdi legions had sated themselves on the dead did the Overking occupy Medegia. Ivid ordered the land — protected from looting during Osson's brief tenure —raped and looted. Unsatisfied by the eternal punishment meted out to his Holy Censor, Ivid wanted every man, woman, and child of the upstart province to suffer. The Overking authorized plundering and spoils for every soldier, and commanders even fought minor battles over the right to sack each town. Ivid's commitment to despoiling Medegia thus, removed his mightiest army from combat for some time.

Osson's raid accomplished much for Almor: destroying the Glorioles Army, redirecting the Aerdi army to conquest of Medegia, and providing Almor time to raise armies and fortifications. Even so, Almorian resistance ultimately proved futile. The Overking —with Ahlissa, Medegia (what remained of it), the North Province, and the Bone March at his side —unleashed all his might against the hapless Prelacy.

Historians hesitate to call the invasion of Almor a battle: it was more accurately a massacre. Armies from Ahlissa and the heartlands converged upon Chathold from the south and east; the Army of the North marched through the Adri Forest to seize the border between Almor and Nyronde; and orcs of the Bone March boiled through the Flinty Hills, cutting into the flank of Nyronde forces. Ivid thus overran Almor on three fronts and prevented Nyronde from aiding the Prelacy.

Ironically, both the attack and fall of Almor came within Goodmonth. Though Chathold contained a large garrison, well-provisioned for conventional siege, its defenders fell to the magical fury unleashed by the Overking's wizards and clerics. In a single day, now called the Day of Dust, fell mages and priests leveled the walls, buildings, and citizens of Chathold with an onslaught of earthquakes, fireballs, floods, clouds of poisonous gas, and worse. When the smoke cleared, nothing remained of Chathold to loot and despoil. Ivid did order, however, that the body of Kevont, Prelate of Almor, be hunted out and exposed for a month on the

toppled city gates. Thus, the nation of Almor passed from the face of the Flanaess.

The Horsemen of Ket

Meanwhile in the west, luz faced a powerful coalition of good-aligned armies. Furyondy, Veluna, Gran March, the Uleks (news of Pomarj had not yet reached the treaty troops), Keoland, and the Yeomanry all arrayed their banners against the Lord of Evil. With the Horned Society and Stonefist as his only willing allies, luz's doom seemed certain.

The Lord of Evil's own diplomacy finally bore fruit, however. At the beginning of Goodmonth, Bissel guardsman in watchtowers along the Fals sighted banners of Ivid's new ally, Ket. The vigilant armies of Bissel moved to block the enemy advance and held the riders for several weeks along the river line.

Veluna, fearing the horsemen might turn and march on Mitrick, withdrew troops from the Furyondy frontier. At the same time, news of the Pomarj's attack reached the commanders of Ulek. Torn between promises to King Belvor and needs of their homeland, the Duke of Ulek (supreme commander of the two states' armies) divided his forces, hurrying one back home and keeping the other in Furyondy.

Atop these other setbacks came a new threat from the Crystalists: giants, ogres, and other hideous creatures, long held at bay, surged into the mountain vales of Geoff and Sterich. The rulers of these lands sent frantic appeals to King Skotti of Keoland, but, with the bulk of his army gone, the king had little help to offer. Even his reserves were largely committed to the Ulek frontier. Nonetheless, King Skotti scraped together what forces he could and offered them to Earl Querchard of Sterich, provided the earl recognize Keoland's authority over him. Negotiations wasted precious time: before the two could come to terms, Sterich and Geoff were overrun.

Giants and ogres also descended from the mountains to attack the Yeomanry, which —unlike its northern neighbors —repulsed the beasts. The solid Yeomanry peasants were long accustomed to mustering in defense of their land. By becoming an armed camp, the Yeomanry repelled its attackers, but lacked the strength to uproot the creatures from their mountain strongholds. These giant troubles, as they came to be called, prevented the Yeomanry from sending more reinforcements to Furyondy.

To the minds of some statesmen and sages, the forces of evil seemed united in some grand scheme:³⁹ in the aftermath of the Pomarj invasion

³⁹ G. Ivril, more than any other, has championed this view. He holds that the precise timing of attacks from luz, the Pomarj, and the Crystalists bespeaks a central plan. To be sure, luz's agents sought to incite the inhabitants of the latter two regions, but inciting goblinkind and giantkind is far easier than martialing them for coordinated attacks. More likely, as Pomfert suggests, the attacks were roughly simultaneous

and the giant troubles, luz launched a new round of attacks. The Lord of Evil first drove on Chendl, but when his armies were repulsed he quickly shifted the attack east of Crockport. At the same time, the Horned Society forded the Veng and laid siege to Grabford. Pressed hard by these assaults, the Furyondy forces fell back and luz's armies took the shores of Whyestil Lake. The Whyestil fleet, which had long assured Belvor's dominance on that water, barely escaped, sailing down the Veng to the Nyr Dyv.

The forces of evil also tasted defeat, however. While luz marched east, Belvor counterattacked into the Vesve Forest. Aided by the elves of that wood and the rangers of Highvale, he systematically decimated the old orcish tribal grounds. With the destruction of each petty chieftain's lair, Belvor eliminated a little more of luz's ability to reinforce and rebuild. Meanwhile, the forces of Veluna checked the Ketish advance on Mitrik.

Bissel was not so fortunate: its soldiers could not hold the frontier against the mounted warriors of Ket. After breaching the Fals River line, Beygraf Zoltan, Shield of the True Faith, forced the Margrave of Bissel to accept his terms of surrender. With the peace that was concluded, Ket controlled the vital trade routes through the Bramblewood Gap.

The Mad King Takes the Field

Though the tide of evil seemed certain to flood the land—even to the gates of Greyhawk City—fate intervened, wearing the guise of madness. The mad Overking Ivid V compared the success of the Almorian campaign, in which he had played a small part, with the previous handling of Ossoon's raid. He concluded not that Ossoon had been a brilliant commander, but that his own generals were incompetent bunglers,⁴⁰ requiring his aid to be successful. In short, Ivid decided he was a military genius and all his generals were fools.

After this realization, Ivid personally assumed complete command of all the armies of the Great Kingdom, despite the counsel of his best advisors. Ivid did not just overrule or even sack his generals: he executed them, sparing only his favorites.

because the beasts of the Pomarj and the Crystalists simultaneously noted their neighbors' preoccupation with luz and decided to strike. According to Pomfert, therefore, luz's agents merely incited attacks rather than leading armies of beasts on precisely plotted invasions.

⁴⁰ More than a few were, in fact, incompetent, but Ivid also included many able commanders in his assessment.

The military campaign that followed was, predictably, a disaster. Flushed with victory over Almor, Ivid pushed his leaderless armies into Nyronnd, believing that through magic and messengers he could command them from the distant Malachite Throne. The first efforts to cross the Harp River near Innspa ended in disaster. The few commanders who had escaped Ivid's wrath feared to act on even the smallest tactical details without explicit commands from Rauxes. Such orders required hours to arrive, if they came at all, and even then were illogical or clearly surpassed by battlefield developments.

Ivid responded to these failings with more executions. Fear began to spread through the nobility: the death of a commander led to the appointment of a "trusted" noble, who was placed in an impossible situation and thus became the next candidate for execution. Intended as an honor, command appointments became the mark of death. Generals quickly learned the only way to survive was to do nothing. All progress in Nyronnd ground to a halt, but the armies continued the futile attack, mindlessly following the Overking's orders.

Nor did Ivid stop there. Believing —with good reason —that his generals conspired to mutiny, the Overking sought even greater control over them. The priests of Hextor, seeking favor in the eyes of the mad Overking, devised a solution to his problem.⁴¹ Through secret rituals, the priests revived each dead general as an animus —a being that, though dead, retained its intelligence and abilities. Perhaps the Overking believed such beings would serve him better or be more amenable to his will. In fact, Ivid was so taken with his animus generals that he broadened the program, first slaying and reviving those nobles who offended him and eventually working the death and revivification as a reward for all his favored courtiers.

Though Ivid's nobles were undeniably decadent, they were not mad: they considered Ivid's gift an unenviable "reward." Because winning the Overking's favor had become as deadly as incurring his wrath, most nobles sought refuge in mediocrity, obscurity, and anonymity. A few of the more courageous and less astute nobles attempted to dissuade Ivid from his insane schemes, but succeeded only in convincing Ivid to "reward" them on the spot. Fear gave way to defiance as the nobles plotted against their mad lord. Thus, Ivid's prediction of mutiny became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The crisis reached its climax during the Richfest celebrations of that year. An assassin emerged from the thronging crowds and struck Ivid a

⁴¹ With the arrest and "living execution" of Holy Censor Spidasa, the cult of Hextor suffered a grievous loss of prestige and power in the Overking's court. Logically, the surviving members of the cult sought to curry Ivid's favor by assisting the Overlord in "restructuring" his army.

mortal blow with a poisoned dagger.⁴² When news spread of Ivid's death, the gloom over the land lifted. The nobles stoked the fires of celebration, joyously preparing for the power struggle to come.

The Great Kingdom was spared that turmoil, however, by an even greater one. Just as the cunning of the mad Overking had saved Ivid from countless threats past, it saved him now from the grave. Secret arrangements, perhaps made with fiends summoned while on the Malachite Throne, resulted in the Overking's revivification. Ivid V—who had seemed cold and soulless in life —seemed doubly so in death.

The vengeance visited by the animus Ivid was swift and terrible. The orgy of execution and revivification soared out of control. Ivid rewarded even the slightest suspicion with death. Nobles falsely implicated enemies, seeking to settle old scores, but Ivid cared little whether the accusations were false or true. The mad Overking, now styled the Undying One, revelled in the chaos and destruction in his lands.

Hearing of massacres in Ivid's lands, King Archbold in Nyronnd counterattacked the Army of the North between Womtham and Innspa. Though Ivid's animus generals fought well—being themselves unafraid of death —the chaotic heartlands of the Great Kingdom offered no support to the Northern Army.

Grace Grenell, Herzog of the North Province, rebelled against his cousin in a desperate attempt to hold his lands against the march of King Archbold. Freed of the mad king, the Herzog and the orcs of the Bone March halted the Nyronndese armies in the rugged Flinty Hills. The Herzog callously sacrificed both human and orcish troops to grind King Archbold's advance to a halt. Though the Nyronndese could advance no further against the combined armies, Archbold, tantalized by the prospect of ultimate victory, refused to break off his assault.

The North Province's defection from the Great Kingdom unleashed the pent-up fears and ambitions of all nobility in the Great Kingdom, both living and animus. The Herzog of the South, among the first nobles rewarded with death and revivification, reasserted his claim to the South Province. The wave spread outward from there: living nobles turned their fiefs into armed camps and animus lords sought to expand their realms. The Overking's authority collapsed entirely, leaving Ivid with only his personal estates. Thus, the always-fragile Great Kingdom shattered into a hundred petty principalities, dukedoms, baronies, counties, and earldoms. The Aerdi Empire was no more.

The Scarlet Brotherhood Strikes

Throughout the first year of the war, one faction had remained notably silent —the ominous Scarlet Brotherhood of recent legend. While

⁴² The identity and political alignment of this assassin remains a mystery: the blow was only seconds old when Ivid's bodyguards blasted the assassin into dust.

other nations hurled massive armies against each other, the Brotherhood insidiously wormed advisors into courts of kings. Against armies the Father of Obedience sent agents. Though the isolated Brotherhood seemed a mere bystander in the wars, nothing could have been further from the truth.

The first phase of the Scarlet Brotherhood's plan was simple —wait and watch. The Father of Obedience spent the opening months of the war assessing who would fight whom and where the true centers of power lay. So long as the war stayed in the north, the Father of Obedience contented himself with reports from agents in all camps. These men, posing as tutors and learned sages from before the start of hostilities, advised lords and commanders and thereby added the Brotherhood's invisible hand to every battle. In all things, these spies worked to assure that neither side came too close to victory or treaty. The Father of Obedience commanded that the war continue, and so it did.

Another group of the Brotherhood's agents work even further afield, in desolate and horrible places. These men sought out foul things and whispered promises in their ears. "Arise, take the lands of men as your own, and you shall find great reward," was their song. From the Crystalmists to the Troll Fens, fell creatures responded. Thus, like the silent and inexorable tug of the moon, the Father of Obedience raised the tide of evil.

When the Great Kingdom awoke from its slumber, the Brotherhood initiated the second phase of its plan: to shift the power bases to its advantage. The Father of Obedience considered certain countries and alliances vital to his plans. Chiefest among these was the Iron League: the Brotherhood neither wanted the neighboring League to prosper nor to die. As long as the little states remained sovereign but impotent, they acted as a useful buffer between the Brotherhood and the menacing Great Kingdom to the north. Though he equaled or exceeded Ivid in evil, the Father of Obedience held no love for the mad Overking.

Because of its ambivalent position in the Brotherhood's plans, the Iron League received strange helps and hindrances in the war. Irongate, threatened by armies of the South Province, received secret support: equipment, money, advisors, and mercenaries all flowed into the city, evidently from diverse sources. In truth, the Scarlet Brotherhood guided everything to the city. Apparently unsuspecting of the source of this aid, Cobb Darg, Lord High Mayor of Irongate, put it to good use. The mayor, an able and energetic leader with good sense and tactical cunning, used the resources to repeatedly trounce the South Province's Grand Field Force with his drastically outnumbered Army of Irongate. Cobb Darg, aided by many wise advisors, made astute use of deceptions, magic, fortifications, and traps —luring more than one Ahlissan army to destruction.

While defending Irongate, and thus Onnwal, the Brotherhood worked elsewhere to destroy the unity of the Iron League. Confident the Vast Swamp would block any overland attack, the Father of Obedience did not lift a finger when Ossoon liberated Sunndi. Under Ivid's rule, the courts of Sunndi were impervious to the Brotherhood's advisors, but liberated from the yoke of the Great Kingdom, the people would welcome the Scarlet Brotherhood —at least for a time.

One other part of the Iron League held particular interest for the Scarlet Brotherhood —the Lordship of the Isles. The Father of Obedience's plans necessitated that he gain control of the southern waters, and this was best done by capturing an existing fleet. True to form, the Brotherhood did not attempt to conquer the islands from without. Instead, agents of the Scarlet Sign corrupted a distant cousin to the throne and then, through their secret connections, engineered the overthrow of Prince Latmac Ranold. Once the puppet Prince Frolmar Ingerskatti was securely on the throne, the Brotherhood signed him to a favorable treaty and then took over. By the Father of Obedience's demand, Ingerskatti installed Brotherhood agents in powerful offices. Priests of the Scarlet Sign opened temples and preached to the disaffected. New laws suppressed the old nobility. In short, the Scarlet Brotherhood swiftly remade the isles in its own image.

With the Iron League under control and the Great Kingdom headed for certain decline,⁴³ the Father of Obedience initiated the third phase of his plan. A red-hooded ambassador arrived at the court of the Sea Princes, bearing an ultimatum: "Submit to the Scarlet Brotherhood or be destroyed." When the lords of the land mocked the messenger, he presented them with a list of 30 names, all petty nobles of the Sea Princes' lines. Before the next sunrise, 27 of those names had been crossed off the rolls of heraldry, slain by red-hooded assassins. Only three of the listed nobles survived the attacks, and two of them were seriously injured. The mockery stripped from their ashen faces, the Sea Princes surrendered and signed a treaty stating as much. Within a fortnight, ships bearing the Scarlet Sign docked at Port Toli and Monmurg, off-loading strange, savage warriors from the jungles of the south.

With a newly enlarged fleet and armies from the steaming jungles, the Brotherhood struck fast and hard. Idee and Onnwal collapsed in a single stroke, undone by traitors within and invaders from the sea. Irongate proved stronger. Despite appearances, Cobb Darg had known the precise origin of the aid that Irongate had received, and used that knowledge to his best advantage. Just before the Brotherhood armies closed in, Darg expelled or executed every agent he could find. When the armies did arrive, Darg met them with his customary skill and energy. Safe

⁴³ G. Ivril confidently asserts that the Scarlet Brotherhood engineered the Great Kingdom's eventual collapse. Most other historians consider Ivid V's insanity reason enough for the kingdom's fall.

from betrayal, Irongate stood, the last bastion of freedom in the Iron League.

In the west, the Brotherhood blockaded Gradsul, but the Keoland fleet prevented their landing. The Father of Obedience sent a savage army through the Hool Marshes and into the Dreadwood. There a strong force of Keoland elves fought the savages to a stand-still. Though the defenders held, fresh reinforcements from the Hold kept tight pressure on Keoland.

Unlike other nations in the war, the Brotherhood did not press its gains or attempt to overreach its resources. The Father of Obedience, again taking the long view, halted further advances to develop governments in the newly conquered lands. Brotherhood agents replaced key officials, priests of the Scarlet Sign established temples, and new laws slowly tightened the stranglehold of the Father of Obedience over the new lands.

The War's End

For two long years (582 to 584 CY), the nations of the Flanaess had schemed, murdered, and warred against each other until nearly all sides lay bloodied and beaten: war had exhausted the land and the people. Furyondy and Iuz ground to a stalemate; Nyron'd's vast coffers were drained dry and its overtaxed peasants were rebellious; the Great Kingdom was shattered into a swarm of petty landholdings vying for power; Keoland fought invasion on all sides; countless men, dwarves, elves, and orcs marched off to war, never to return; farms stood empty; fields lay fallow. . . . The Flanaess could make war no longer.

Proposals for a peace conference met with greater and greater acceptance. The puppets of the Scarlet Brotherhood, taking orders from the Father of Obedience, issued a call for a grand truce:⁴⁴ every nation would cease hostilities and put its own house in order.

In the end, through negotiation, intimidation, and even assassination, the Brotherhood's proposal found acceptance.⁴⁵ The City of Greyhawk, untouched by the war, became the site of the conference.⁴⁶ In the month of Harvester, the Great Council (as it came to be known) convened.

⁴⁴ Why the Scarlet Brotherhood sought a universal peace remains unclear. Peace would certainly allow the Father of Obedience to establish governments in Onnwal, Idee, and Hold of the Sea Princes as well as infiltrate new agents into other lands. The true motivations, however, remain unknown.

⁴⁵ For example, the Yeomanry signed the truce only after the border between it and the Sea Princes was clearly defined. The Hold of Stonefist signed following the mysterious deaths of several atamans.

⁴⁶ Greyhawk actually prospered immensely from the war. Refugees fled to Greyhawk to escape the war-torn lands — among them the world's greatest scholars, artists, and wizards. Having fled with their gold and little else, the refugees needed food, clothing, and shelter—and had the money to buy them. This influx of people expanded

The proposed truce, though simple in theory, proved an enormous undertaking, what with the countless ambassadors present. In the six months of the Great Council, intrigues abounded as each side attempted to gain the upper hand. The conference nearly collapsed more than once when ambassadors took umbrage over some real or imagined slight.

The final act of the immense drama of war occurred on the Day of the Great Signing. A pact had been resolved and nearly all the nations had agreed to sign it. As this solemn ceremony got underway, however, a tumultuous event occurred.

Even today a haze obscures the details: apparently someone plotted to annihilate the entire diplomatic corps in attendance, but the scheme misfired. A blazing explosion destroyed a good part of the Grand Hall only minutes before the ambassadors assembled for the day. A fierce magical battle immediately ensued, spreading havoc through much of the old city. When the fire and dust cleared, constables discovered smoldering robes belonging to two powerful members of the mysterious Circle of Eight —Otiluke and Tenser. The murderer of these wizards, undeniably a powerful mage, was discovered to be a third member of the Circle of Eight —Rary. Using secrets gained in confidence, Rary not only vaporized his two fellows but also tracked down and destroyed every clone the pair held in preparation.

The motive behind Rary's treachery remains clouded. According to many who knew him, the wizard probably saw an opportunity to seize power and land in the confusion that would follow the assassinations. Others suggest Rary was a pawn of the Scarlet Brotherhood.

With the plot discovered, though, Rary and his co-conspirator Lord Robilar fled the city. Unable to return to Robilar's castle, which was immediately seized by the troops of Greyhawk, the pair escaped into the Bright Desert. There they conquered the savages and established a kingdom of their own. Though small and mysterious, this growing state could someday threaten the very borders of Greyhawk.

Fearing further disruptions, the delegates hurriedly signed the Pact of Greyhawk, and so the wide-ranging war of the Flanaess came to an end, and gained the misleading title, the Greyhawk Wars.

Greyhawk's small borders to include the northern Wild Coast and the hills as far as the Duchy of Urnst.

