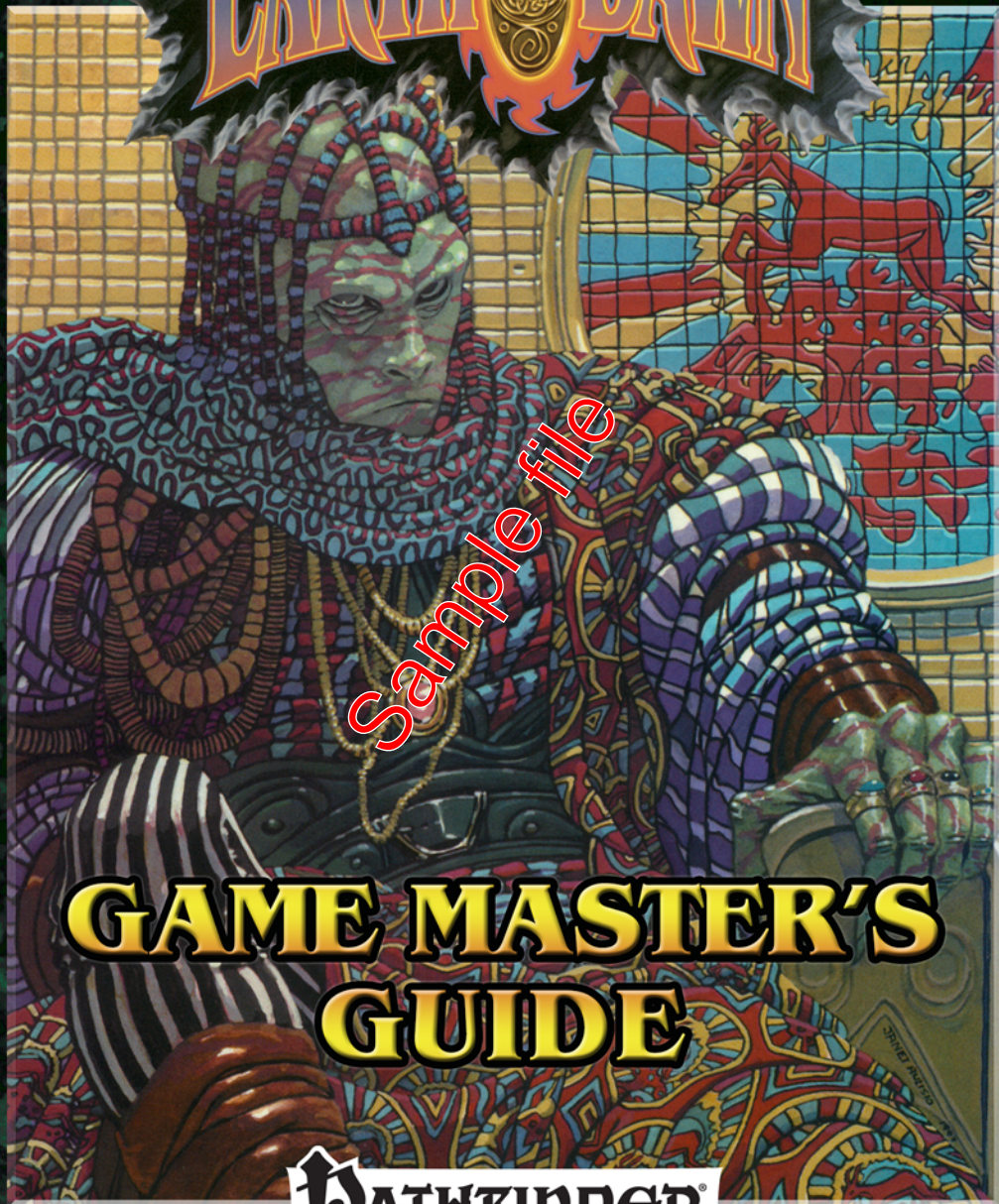


EARTH DAWN



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GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

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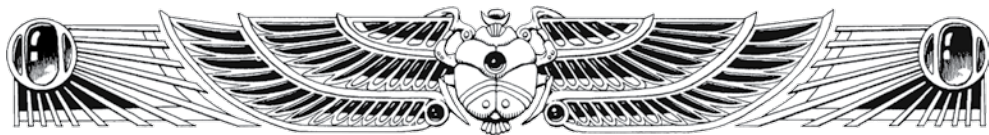
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EARTHDAWN PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME EDITION RULEBOOK



CREDITS

EARTHDAWN® GAME MASTER'S GUIDE™

PATHFINDER ROLEPLAYING GAME EDITION

Line Developer: Hank Woon

Writing and Development: Hank Woon

Editing and Additional Development: Eric Williamson, Ira Mertes, James Sutton

Product Director: James Sutton

Administration: Dawn Sutton

Layout: Dawn and James Sutton

Cover Artwork: Janet Aulisio, Dawn Sutton

Interior Artwork: Anita Nelson, Darrell Midgette, David Martin, Fred Geier, Janet Aulisio, Jeff Laubenstein, Jim Nelson, Joel Biske, Karl Waller, Kent Burles, Larry MacDougall, Liz Warforth, Mark Nelson, Mike Nielsen, Paul Jaquays, Rick Berry, Rick Harris, Robert Nelson, Steve Bryant, Tom Bata, Tony Szczudlo

Earthdawn First Edition Material: Allen Varney, Christopher Kobasik, Greg Gordon, Jordan Weisman, L. Ross Babcock III, Louis J. Prospero, Michael Mulvihill, Nicole French, Nigel D. Findley, Robin D. Laws, Sam Lewis, Sam Witt, Teewynn Woodruff, Tom Dowd

Playtesters: Craig Guarisco, Justin Carson, Katherine Fan

Dedication: [Hank] *For Yuri and Yuzu, for their outstanding patience and support—ありがとうございました (arigatou gozaimashita!).*

Internet: www.redbrickllc.com

Contact: earthdawn@redbrickllc.com

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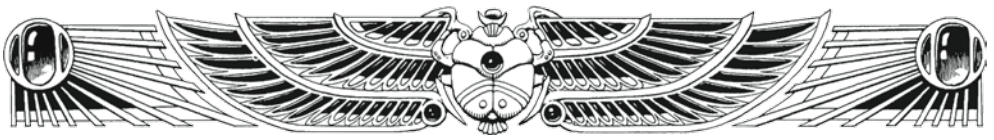
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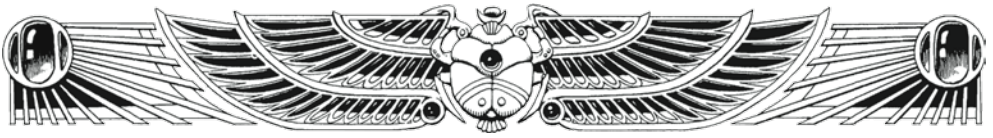




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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Passions play by their own rules—every being more powerful than a Namegiver does. It's a fact we have to live with. But remember that rules work both ways. Use your wits and you can make them work for you.

—J'Role the Honorable Thief

Among the group of people who gather to play roleplaying games, one player moderates the game, keeping in mind and enforcing the game's limits and rules. This person, called the **Game Master** (or **GM**), determines the effects of the Player Characters' actions and what the responses to those actions will be.

The Game Master also plays all the bit parts—bystanders, creatures, villains, and other characters who, while not always central to the action, still interact with the Player Characters.

As the GM, you run the game. You create or adapt the story told during a game session. You create

the situations and scenes your players' characters get involved in. You determine whether or not a character succeeds at an attempted action. You decide what creatures the characters encounter, how the creatures react to the player characters, and who gets to hit who first. You describe the world as the characters see it, functioning as their eyes, ears, and other senses.

Being a Game Master requires practice, but the thrill of creating an adventure that engages the players, tests their characters' skills in the game world, and captures their imaginations definitely makes the job worthwhile.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

When combined with the *Savage Worlds Core Rulebook*, the *Player's Guide* and *Game Master's Guide* contain the rules you will need to run an **EARTHDAWN**® game.

The best advice we can give new players and Game Masters is this—*only use the rules you need*. Much of the content in the *Player's Guide* and *Game Master's Guide* is sorted alphabetically—Edges, spells, and so on—with other content organized in a similarly accessible order—creatures, for instance, which are grouped by their general type.

Chapter 2: Barsaive (p.8) offers an in-depth description of Barsaive province, expanding the information found in the *Player's Guide*, and including historical information about the Scourge and reports written by other adventurers describing the dangerous places of Barsaive.

In **Chapter 3: Game Mastering** (p.126) you will learn the art of being a GM, creating your

own **EARTHDAWN** adventures and campaigns, and how to deal with situations that your group will encounter while adventuring. It also includes examples of legends and rules for blood magic.

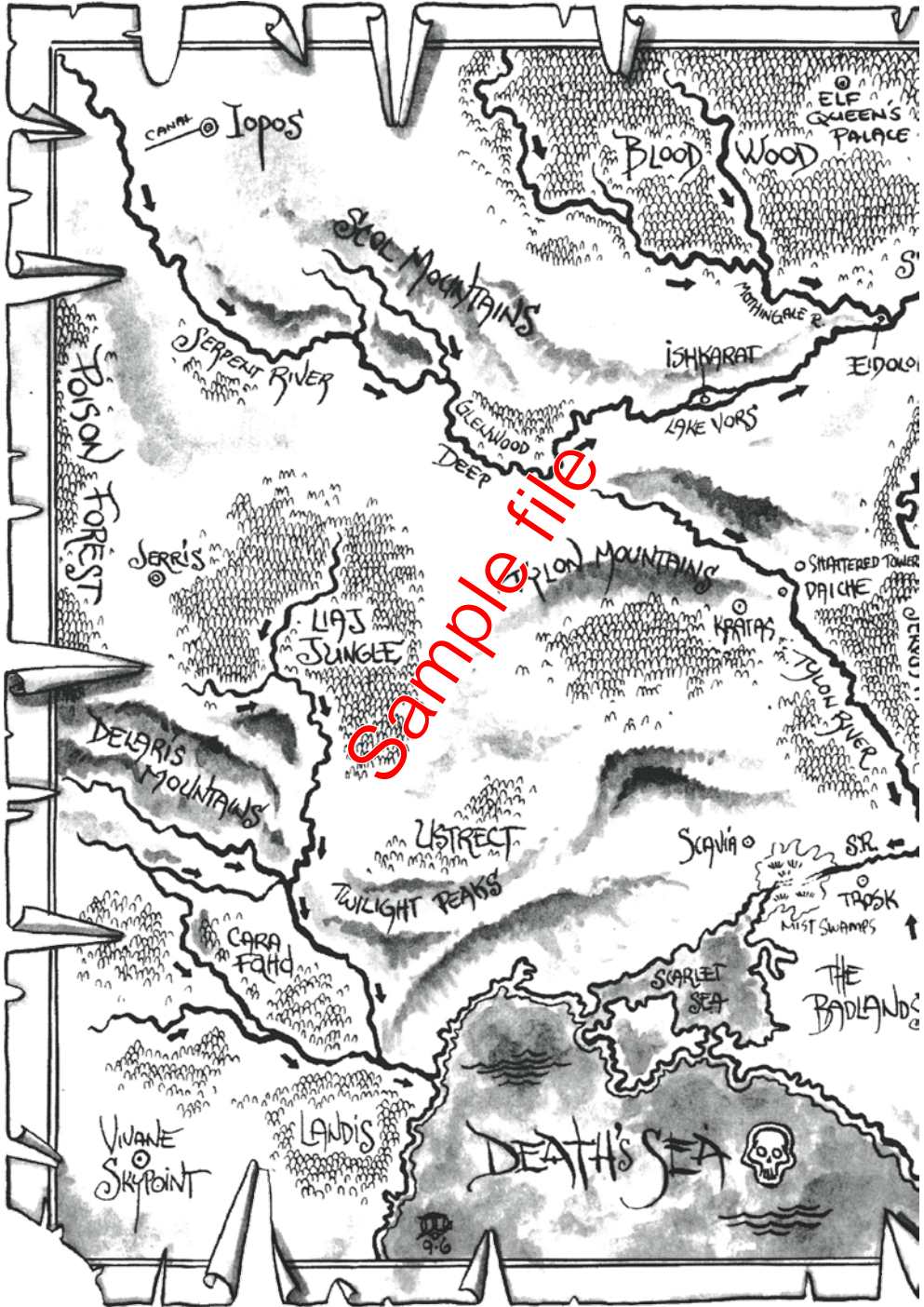
Chapter 4: GM Characters (p.164) covers how to handle non-player character in **EARTHDAWN**, along with a sample of typical Game Master Characters that might be encountered, plus descriptions of some of the movers-and-shakers of the **EARTHDAWN** world.

Chapter 5: Treasures (p.190) contains a number of general and unique magical items for use in your campaigns, and includes rules for learning Key Knowledges, allowing Player Characters to enhance and improve item abilities.

Finally, **Chapter 6: Bestiary** (p.221) describes magical and mundane creatures unique to **EARTHDAWN**—including the great dragons and Horrors of Barsaive.



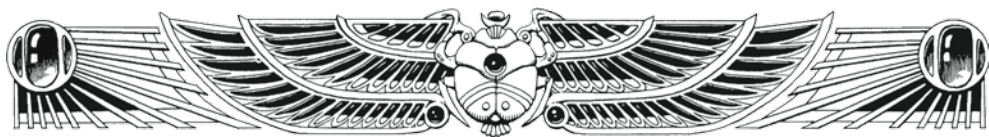
EARTHDAWN GAME MASTER'S GUIDE



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BARSVAIVE PROVINCE MAP





CHAPTER 2: BARSAIVE

ON THE NATURE OF THE EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO BARSAIVE

We live in an age of magical thought. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the earth we stand upon, and the fire before which we warm ourselves are ours to manipulate as we desire. I know people who can give life to the bones of the dead with a wave of the hand. I have traveled with troll raiders in their magical airships, flying just below the belly of the clouds. I have seen a man ripped apart from the inside out because his enemy learned too much about him. Magic controls all things, all change, all destinies.

I do not know if our world has always been as rich in magic as it is in our own age—certainly the research of the Therans dictates otherwise. For myself, I am convinced of the inevitability and power of change in all things. I have watched the world transform from a bleak landscape of dry brown earth to a living bower of lush, green forests. I have seen the terror of the Scourge give way to cautious, new hope. Where once people lived in isolated hamlets ruled by fear of the outside world, the dwarfs of Throal have brought Barsaive's towns, cities, and villages together through trade and political pacts. I have also seen Throal's efforts thwarted by the airships and legions of the Theran Empire, bent on recapturing a province they once owned. The world abounds in complications, and the ebb and flow of its transformations form a pattern that no one still living in the world can discern.

Magic gives us all the chance to influence the fate of our world, because magic allows us to know and even alter all things. Magic leads brave adventurers to glittering treasures buried in the Dragon Mountains, and magic powers the fire cannons of riverboats that clash in fierce battles along the Serpent River. One can use magic to assassinate political rivals, sway the emotions of enemies and allies, or steal jewels from the hand of a sleeping prince. Magic allows the Horrors to enter the minds of unwitting victims and determines victory or defeat for the bands of ork cavalry that sweep across the plains to plunder lonely caravans. Swordmasters, thieves, troubadours, magicians, and others practice their arts through the magical thought that is the living force of our world.

How long this age of magical thought will last, I cannot say, nor can I know what the following age may bring. I believe, however, that this magical age will one day end. So that those who come after us may remember the time in which we lived, I have commanded Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, to see to the writing of this book.

Our story is a part of the world's legend, and our children must and should know of it. In our age, farmers defend their families against creatures more dreadful than nightmares from the darkest depths of the soul, and the free kingdom of Throal battles tirelessly to throw off the last remnants of Theran oppression. Wonder and splendor exist side by side with brutality and strife.

The Barsaive I know is a world of despots and corrupted kingdoms, of magical treasures and fantastical creatures. In Barsaive, wonder and fear twine together; hope and despair are the twin sides of the same coin. You who read this, think well on our lives. Whether or not we have left you a world to your liking, we are your past, and our stories carry lessons for your future.

—Varulus III, King of Throal, 12 Gahmil, 1506 TH





ON THE COMPILATION OF THE EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO BARSAIVE

The writing of this great book began on a day no different from any other day. Though the summons that came for me was from King Varulus III, such an occurrence was not unusual. As Master of the Hall of Records of the Library of Throal, I have on other occasions been called by the king to gather certain information or to perform odd bits of research. On this day, however, his request far exceeded the mundane tasks he had previously set for me.

I found the king in his study, chin in hand as if contemplating his next move in the game of pratee he was playing with his eldest son. He looked up as I entered, greeting me with a warm smile.

"Merrox, I wish you to undertake an important task for me," he began as he almost always did. "I wish you to compile a document that describes Barsaive to those who know nothing of it. Many of Barsaive's own people remain ignorant of the wonders and perils that lie within the boundaries of their own province, but that is not as it should be. I wish for them to learn more of this place in which they live. Our library needs a book to serve as a guide to our land."

I clutched the back of a chair to steady myself, feeling the raised patterns of the carvings in its cold stone back bite into the tips of my fingers. My day had taken a turn into the realm of the fantastic.

"You may have whatever you need to complete the task—within reason," the king continued. "Spare no efforts, Merrox. This document is of paramount importance to me."

Dazed but undaunted by my king's unusual request, I returned to my office and called together my chief assistants. We sat wakeful long into the night determining how best to accomplish our mission. It was many days before I returned to King Varulus with my list of requirements, all of which he granted save one. Permission to visit the Eternal Library of Thera he refused me, reminding me that the enmity between Throal and Thera made it impossible for any known citizen of Throal to patronize a Theran institution. Though I would have liked to inspect their archives, I acceded to my king's wisdom and began work on this book with the resources at hand.

At last, many years after King Varulus called me into his chambers that day, my assistants and I have completed the task set us. All of the information in this document was gathered first-hand by explorers and adventurers who have traveled across Barsaive in search of knowledge. Each group visited a different region of Barsaive, reporting on the various cities, mountains, rivers, forests, and other sites of interest along the way. My fellow archivists and I have distilled the information they brought into a readable and fascinating manuscript, available for the asking to any resident of Barsaive who visits the Library of Throal.

Each section of this book describes in detail a facet of life in Barsaive. Comments from the librarian in charge of each area of research preface every section. In addition, my fellow scholars and I have added our own observations regarding certain places and events in the margins of the text and copied in entries from the explorers' journals in hopes of conveying the realities of Barsaive through firsthand accounts of its marvels and terrors.

For all those who read this, remember that every individual sees the world through his own eyes. Though we have tried to pass on only verifiable facts, some of the information in this document may be inaccurate, if only because it reflects the particular bias or peculiar turn of mind of the explorer who provided the source material.

The following archivists contributed to this work, in the areas listed:

☯ Project Master Merrox, *On the Origins of the Land of Barsaive*; ☯ Daron Fenn, *On the Scourge*; ☯ Ardinn Tero, *On Life in Barsaive*; ☯ Derrat, *On the Nature of Magic*; ☯ Thom Edrull, *On Travel in the Land of Barsaive*; ☯ Jerriv Forrim, *On Denizens of Barsaive*; ☯ Kern Redhand, *On Towns and Cities*; ☯ Thom Edrull, *Regarding the Land and Its Places*; ☯ Jaron of Bethabel, *On the Kingdom of Throal*; ☯ Karon Foll, *On Blood Wood*; ☯ Merrox, *Of the Theran Empire*.

☯ —Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records Great Library of Throal, 14 Rua, 1505 TH





ON THE ORIGINS OF THE LAND OF BARSAIVE

Given the importance of the task, I thought myself the best candidate to write a condensed history of Barsaive. My work, culled from a vast array of material collected for this book, is as complete as I could manage, given the time and space constraints under which I labored. I can, however, personally vouch for the accuracy of the information given. To convey the fullest sense of Barsaive's wonders and rich past, I could find no better words than those of the following journal excerpt.

☉—Most humbly offered by Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, and by the Passions' Grace, a Loyal Servant of His Majesty the King of Throal

After countless days of travel, many of my companions became convinced that we had had become hopelessly lost. Though we had followed to the letter the directions given us in Throal, the Forgotten City was still nowhere in sight. Still, I was determined to find the place and so resolved to continue on alone if need be. Fortunately my resolve was never tested, for only three days later we found it.

We were walking through a partially wooded area, the trees covering the top of a large hill. As we reached the hilltop, we saw the spires of ruined Parlainth spread out below us like a shattered mosaic. The descriptions we had read in the journals of Jrole the Thief and in the Library of Throal told of the shattered splendor of the Forgotten City, but I had foolishly considered this description exaggerated. The sight of the ruins brought me that words alone could not convey the awe and sadness one feels when face to face with the ruins of Parlainth. The city lay smothered in tangled vines and overgrown plants. Once-tall spires and pyramids had crumbled into piles of broken stone, mute testimony to the destructive power and corruption of the Horrors.

Parlainth was like no city I had ever seen. I had been an explorer of sorts for years before that journey, and had discovered more than a dozen lost cities and kaers, but none so magnificent and sad as this. The ruins had a majesty to them, as if to say that neither the Horrors nor time itself could mar their beauty. But for Karon Foll all its grandeur, the place held a cold and uninviting presence...

—From the journal of Torgak, 1665 TH
(transcribed by Lorin of Throal)

OF THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

The Therans named the province of Barsaive six hundred years ago, before the Scourge began. Even today the Therans consider Barsaive a province of

their empire, though most Barsaivians give their allegiance to the dwarf kingdom of Throal. This stark contradiction between the perceptions of Barsaive's people and its would-be overlords creates much of the conflict between Thera and Barsaive.

A vast land, Barsaive takes weeks to cross even on the back of a war horse. The journey from the northern boundary to the southern takes 40 days on foot, 25 on horseback; the journey from east to west requires 60 days on foot, 38 days on horseback.

Barsaive's southern boundary is Death's Sea, a huge body of molten stone so hot that only elementals, horrors, and those with magical protection may travel over it. The heat from the sea has transformed the surrounding land into a vast expanse of barren sand and rock. Legend says that enough blood spilled into the earth will quench the fire, and the sea will turn to water.

At Barsaive's northern boundary lies Blood Wood, a lush forest many days' ride across wherein the elven Queen and her corrupt court reside. Many elves outside Blood Wood no longer give their allegiance to the elven Queen, considering her as monstrous as the Horrors. The elves of Blood Wood have never lost their ability to perform intricate magic, however. The Queen's castle, supported by six great trees, is a magical wonder to behold.

For my part, I agree, but I must add that many years ago I visited Blood Wood, and despite the horrible things the elves did to themselves, they are still a beautiful people. A terrible beauty, perhaps, but undeniable.

☉—Karon Foll, Scholar of Throal

In the west of Barsaive lie the Wastes, where little magic has yet touched the land to renew it after the



CHAPTER 2: BARSAIVE

Scourge. Most scholars believe that the Horrors entered more shelters built in the Wastes than elsewhere, and so fewer people survived to re-emerge. Nowadays, little exists in the region other than monsters, Horrors, and a few small plants and animals. If the scholars are correct, then the Wastes must be dotted with more unopened, undiscovered kaers and citadels than exist in the rest of Barsaive. Because of the Wastes' reputation as a storehouse of undiscovered wonders, bands of adventurers often journey there in search of ancient treasure and magical artifacts. Unfortunately, few ever return.

The Aras Sea marks the eastern border of Barsaive. This large, saltwater ocean connects Barsaive to lands beyond the province and to the expanse of the Theran Empire. From the city of Urupa and other coastal towns, scores of seagoing ships sail from port to port, trading Barsaivian goods for those from other lands.

Other major trading ports lie along the Serpent River, a majestic waterway that cuts Barsaive into two uneven parts as it winds its way from north of the Wastes down to the Death's Sea. For most of its length the Serpent is so wide that a forest boat takes an hour to traverse it. Save by magical means or on a well-designed ship, it is impossible to cross. The river creates the most fertile land in Barsaive, and the wide, long valley sloping up from its banks contains countless villages and towns. The reptilian t'skrang, who live in half-submerged towns alongside and in the river and sail their riverboats from port to port, conduct most trade along the Serpent. Many t'skrang maintain trade agreements with the kingdom of Throal and work to promote unity among the people along the Serpent. Other t'skrang captains use their ships for piracy and raiding.

The Serpent winds its way around the Throal Mountains, a large range whose peaks reach into the clouds. So huge that they are almost a province unto themselves, the mountains are home to nomadic tribes who hunt the wild beasts that roam the slopes. Within the mountains lies the kingdom of Throal, where the dwarfs retreated during the Scourge and from which they have at least temporarily united Barsaive against Theran encroachment. Though many Barsaivians are suspicious of the power the dwarfs wield, they fear the terrible magic of the Therans more and so give grudging

allegiance to Throal. The dwarf hold on this wary loyalty remains tenuous. Should the Therans ever be defeated beyond recovery, the dwarfs of Throal may find themselves dealing with a new set of troubles.

Countless people, citadels, villages, forests, and other marvels fill in the spaces between Barsaive's borders. The Theran outpost of Sky Point rests within Barsaive's southern border, near the Theran-controlled city of Vivane. Nomadic tribes of ork scorchers roam the untamed lands on their massive riding beasts. Some of these tribes are as primitive as the hunters wandering the Throal Mountains; others, known as ork cavalry, have organized themselves into effective mercenary bands. These ork cavalry sell their talents and strength to anyone who can pay the price. In the skies above Barsaive, troll raiders fly their magically crafted vessels, searching for villages to raid and Theran airships to plunder. These and other wonders are fully described in later sections of this work.

Rather than offering a detailed history of our world, or even a complete description of the ancient civilizations that thrived in Barsaive before the province was Named, this work intends only to provide the history necessary to understand the Barsaive of our time. It is the workings of the present world I wish to preserve, and this history makes those workings clear. I have added to the account of the coming of the Scourge an excerpt from A Concordia of History, a generational text constantly updated by the librarians of Throal. Readers interested in a detailed history of Barsaive and the ancient lands that became our province should peruse that volume. A similarly detailed history of Barsaive may also be found in the transcripts of the speakings of Storymaster Jallo Redbeard, an account preserved in the Library of Throal.

☉—Most humbly offered by Merrox,
Master of the Hall of Records

OF THERA AND THE SCOURGE

According to the tales the Therans tell, many hundreds of years ago, an elven scholar named Elianar Messias discovered ancient texts predicting an invasion of the world by creatures from a certain plane



of astral space. These documents claimed that the creatures would ravage the Earth for nearly five hundred years and then return, sated, to their own plane of existence. The truth of this discovery drove Elianar to madness and a bloody death. Years later, Messiah's colleague Keros Navarim founded a school dedicated to the study of this prophecy on an island in the Selestrean Sea.

A hundred years passed, during which the school attracted talented magicians and Adepts from all fields. The school taught all kinds of magical theory and practice, but turned its best minds toward finding a way to stop the invasion of our world by its astral enemies.

At that time, the area now known as Barsaive comprised a jumble of different peoples: the dwarfs in the mountains, the t'skrang along the Serpent River, the orks and trolls on the plains, the elves in the woods, humans in stone towns and a few cities, and so on. Different communities had little commerce with one another, and the dialects of each region varied enough to make communication between different groups almost impossible. Little, if any, trading went on between regions, or even between towns. Despite this staggering degree of isolation, travelers and adventurers from faraway places gradually carried tales of the extraordinary school for magic to the people of other lands, and many magicians and Adepts traveled south to seek the school.

After a century of existence, the school had grown so large that its eldest members founded a city to house it, which they named Thera. With magicians and adepts as half of its citizens, the island that would become the Theran Empire claimed its place as the most powerful city in the world.

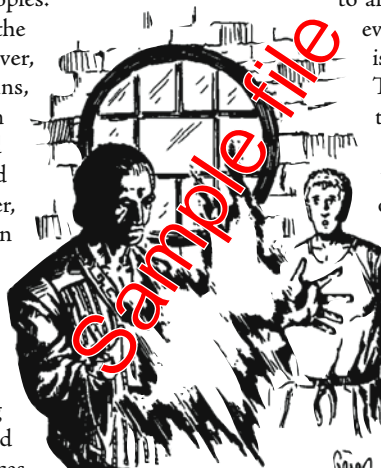
Word of the coming attack of the astral creatures, now referred to by all races as the Horrors, had begun to spread through the lands around Thera. When the distant elven kingdom of Shosara heard of the impending disaster, they sent messengers to Thera asking for guidance in defending against the

approaching invaders. In their studies of ways to defeat or forestall the Horrors, the Therans had devised several methods of protection. Rather than simply giving this information to the elves of Shosara, however, they demanded favorable trade agreements in exchange for the knowledge. The elves accepted these terms, and soon other realms throughout the world followed suit, giving their riches to the Therans in return for the precious knowledge that the magical scholars held.

The Shosaran treaties marked the beginning of the Theran Empire. Soon after their success with the Shosaran elves, the Therans sent envoys to all the nearby lands, warning all of impending doom and selling the secrets of safety from the Horrors to all who could afford them. With every new bargain they made, their island city grew in power, until the Therans' reach stretched around the globe. As trading increased, the various factions of the region that would become Barsaive took on common traits. The area's diverse people now shared much that they had not before: a fear of the Horrors, a need to build strongholds against them, and a distaste for Theran influence. This dislike bonded the races and factions together more tightly than any other. The Therans tried to impose their calendar, their style of dress, and

their architecture on the region; they also brought with them the barbarism of slavery. Though not everyone suffered under the lash of the slaver's whip, everyone knew and feared that they might. Some groups worked together to stop the practice of slavery; others aided the Therans in a desperate attempt to buy continued freedom.

When the Therans arrived as Barsaive's conquerors, the dwarf kingdom of Throal was the largest realm in the region, and so the Therans delegated to them much of the day-to-day government. The dwarf language became the official language of trade, superseding the Theran tongue. Through their administrative responsibilities, the dwarfs exerted considerable influence over the area.



CHAPTER 2: BARSAIVE

For one hundred years, Theran power grew. Using their magical arts to unite their new possession under a common name, the Therans officially created the province of Barsaive. They searched the world for Barsaive's pattern items, knowing that the study of these items gave them an advantage in all places not already Named by those living in the province. What they did to Barsaive, they repeated throughout their empire, creating new names and dividing the world they ruled into different provinces.

At the northeastern corner of Barsaive, the Therans built the sprawling city of Parlainth, intended as both the provincial capital of Barsaive and the gateway to the "uncivilized" world that lay beyond. Once the Horrors left the plane of the world, the Therans hoped to return to Barsaive and resume imperial rule. As the Therans worked their great magics to protect their island heart from the Scourge, people throughout the Theran Empire constructed shelters against the Horrors as the Theran magicians had taught them. Some of these shelters, built underground, were called kaers. Large shelters built above ground were called citadels. Many of the human-inhabited cities became citadels.

As the time of the invasion approached, strange monsters began to stalk the countryside. Far worse than the griffins, giant serpents, and firedogs common to Barsaive, these misshapen monstrosities struck terror into the hearts of all who saw them, attacking with a perverse delight in their victims' pain. Some of these early-arriving Horrors looked like moving mass graves, single beings composed of a dozen corpses stitched together. Others wielded finely crafted instruments of torture imbedded in their own skin. Some were misshapen lizards 20 feet long. Some attacked the body with teeth and claws; others attacked the victim's very thoughts.

...The Passions no longer heed me; what have I done? I am a good king...this I know, for my subjects love me. Never, they say, never has Scythia had such a gracious and loving sovereign as King Cardok the Peacemaker.

Or so they said once. Now they raise their eyes to the heavens and cry out against the injustice of the world, begging the Passions to tell them wherein they have erred. And I, even I, the king, can do no more than raise my voice with theirs. I cannot stop the evil that has befallen Scythia. I cannot keep their children from dying.

I cannot keep my son from dying. Every day he slips a little further away from me, my only son -who almost cost his mother her life at his birthing. His illness began scarcely a week after his first breath, with a low fever and a dryness of the skin. Then a cough, harsh and hard as though the dust of a desert clogged his infant throat. He cries from the pain, but sheds no tears; he has not enough water left in his body to make his eyes wet. They stare upward at the ceiling and inward at me, crusted with the last tears that dried against his lashes like the salt ring on a barrel offish.

His voice comes out as a thin whine, often broken by coughs. Blood from his lungs dries on his parched lips, and his breath rattles in his throat. Ancient bones might make such a sound, raised to a horrid mockery of life by a nethermancer. In this last week, his skin has begun to wrinkle; my grandsire's leather saddle, ridden on to countless wars and cracked with age, feels more smooth and supple than the flesh

of my son. I stroked his hair last night to calm him as he wailed, and pieces of it broke off and crumbled to nothing in my hands.

My son has lived for less than three weeks. He looks like a shriveled root, a dying old man.

Of all the children born in Scythia since the last year's harvest, none has yet lived a month. Something has sucked the life from them, some monstrous evil borne by the very air. With each tortured breath my child takes, I can hear the evil's footfall. With each passing day, I feel its nearness. We are dying, and we know not why...

—From the diary of King Cardok of Scythia

Within a short time, the Horrors' attacks became bolder and more frequent. Creatures stormed villages; smaller Horrors swarmed forests and grasslands, consuming everything in their path. Flocks





of birds vanished within hours. Herds of cattle disappeared, relentlessly pursued by Horrors. Barsaive's people tried to fight back, but the creatures' ferocity and overwhelming numbers finally drove the terrified people to seek protection within their kaers and citadels. They sealed themselves behind doors inscribed with wards and glyphs to ward the Horrors away, taking up residence in tomblike places that would be their homes for hundreds of years.

Within the kaers, magical lights lit the underground darkness and magical crops and springs fed the hiding populations. For four centuries, generations were born, lived, and died within the shelters, waiting for the day when they could return to the world their ancestors left behind. At the end of four hundred years, a full century earlier than the Theran magicians had predicted, the magical devices created

by the Therans to herald the end of the Scourge revealed that the awaited time had come. Under the earth and in their walled towers, Barsaive's people waited, afraid to leave the safety of their shelters too soon. Finally, driven near to madness by the longing to leave their self-imposed imprisonment, the people began to unseal the doors of their kaers and citadels. Outside, they discovered a corrupted and barren world.

Some shelters did not survive the Scourge. Horrors entered some of the kaers and citadels, crashing physically through the walls or invading the minds of those hiding within, possessing them and making them do the Horrors' bidding. Whenever the creatures could breach a kaer's defenses, they fed well in the shelters; the victims within had nowhere to run and nothing to do but die.

CHAPTER 2: BARSAIVE

As people emerged from hiding, they moved back onto the land, using magical arts to turn the world green again. Though the Horrors ended their assault on the world one hundred years earlier than the Therans had predicted, some especially powerful Horrors remained. To this day, they take every opportunity to shatter the fragile peace.

For the first fifty years after the opening of the kaers, the dwarfs of Throal worked to reunite Barsaive's scattered villages and towns through trade and treaties. In all that time, no word came from the Therans. Many believed, even hoped, that the island heart of the Theran Empire had perished during the Scourge. Alas, such hopes proved fruitless. Forty years ago the Therans returned in force, determined to lay claim to the province of Barsaive once more. The return of the empire sparked the Theran War, which ended in a massive siege of Throal. For once, the Therans' armed might failed to bring them victory, however. The people of Barsaive united against the Therans and drove them back to the southern corner of Barsaive, where they still hold sway.

Barsaive in the present day is a land still recovering from the devastation of astral invasion, its people only beginning to reclaim their world. The kingdom of Throal and the Theran Empire remain poised in conflict. Through widespread raiding, the Therans have brought back slavery to a land taking its first free breaths under the idealistic laws of the dwarf kingdom. The land is rife with unopened shelters, some reportedly still filled with people who refuse to believe the Scourge over, and monsters roam the hills in search of victims.

Upon this stage, with these players and props, the struggle for Barsaive and perhaps the future of our world will be acted out. If the Therans prevail, the world will turn one way; if the kingdom of Throal prevails, the world will turn down a different path. Between these two great powers lie constant smaller struggles, each leaving its own mark, large or small, upon the shape of our world's destiny.

To those now reading this book, we hope that you, our descendants, find our actions worthy.

ON THE SCOURGE

It fell to me to complete the arduous task of gathering information regarding the Scourge, how we weathered it, and how it changed the land of Barsaive. For two reasons I have found this a difficult assignment. First, the topic itself is less concrete than many others in this work. By this I mean that it is one thing to report on various settlements, or on the landmarks of Barsaive, but another to distill fact from opinions about the great change that shook our world. Every person we queried gave us a different answer to our questions about the changes that the Scourge wrought in Barsaive.

The second difficulty in completing this task has been facing the sometimes unpleasant fact that the Scourge changed us as a people as much as it changed our land. When our ancestors chose to hide in their kaers and citadels for the duration of the Scourge, they saw no other choice, and did not consider the ways in which such long-lasting, self-imposed imprisonment might affect their descendants. Unfortunately, the effects were significant. We cannot ignore the fact that the Barsaive we knew before the Scourge is gone. Other than geographical features immune even to time and the Scourge, little that is familiar remains. The larger purpose of this document is to serve as a permanent record of present-day Barsaive so that we may make our past and present part of our future.

—Composed on this First Day of Strassa, in the Year 1505 TH, by Archivist Daron Fenn of Throal

ON THE SCOURGE AND WHAT IT WROUGHT

We cannot hope to completely understand the Barsaive of our own day without understanding how the

Scourge affected the land and its people. Both the threat of the Scourge and its arrival changed Barsaive in ways unimaginable to our ancestors. From a vibrant land of many tribes and kingdoms, Barsaive



became a subject province of the oppressive Theran Empire, which owed its existence to the world's need for powerful magic to survive the coming disaster. The Scourge itself drove the people underground and laid waste to the land, and Barsaive has yet to fully recover.

This chapter speaks of the Scourge. To fully understand it, we must recall how our people lived during that terrible time.

THE BOOKS OF HARROW

Ever since the long-ago days when the elven scholar Kearos Navarim determined that creatures from another astral plane would one day roam the world, leaving destruction and corruption in their wake, this invasion has been called the Scourge.

The first glimmer of knowledge that such creatures as the Horrors existed came when Elianar Messias, now known as the Martyr Scholar, unearthed the *Books of Harrow* in the catacombs beneath an ancient monastery in the Delaris Mountains. After extensive study of these six volumes, Messias learned the nature of the Horrors, a discovery that drove him mad. Whether his madness or some other force killed him, no one knows. Before he died, he scrawled a note that read:

These are the Books of Harrow.

They are our doom and our salvation.

Learn from them, or we will all perish.

Cryptic and unsettling, this note provided the first clue to the coming of the Scourge. After the death of Elianar Messias, an elven scholar and colleague named Kearos Navarim took the *Books of Harrow* and traveled with several fellow scholars to an island in the Selestrean Sea. Sequestering themselves for many years on the island that would one day become Thera, Navarim and his fellows studied to unlock the secrets the volumes held.

The final translation of the first *Book of Harrow*, completed a century and a half after they first came to light, revealed that the magic level of the world would increase until it reached a peak, at which time rapacious creatures from astral space would enter our world and ravage it. Navarim and his fellows, all scholars at the newly christened School of Shadows, also learned when this fearsome event would take

place and calculated precisely how much time they had to discover a way to protect the world and its people from the Horrors. After translating several more of the *Books of Harrow* and studying them closely, Navarim wrote the *Rites of Protection and Passage*. With this collection of plans for shelters to hide people from the Horrors and theories for creating magical protection against them, the Therans could counsel the rest of the world on how to prepare for and survive the Scourge.

ON THE BUILDING OF THE SHELTERS

The Theran *Rites of Protection and Passage* instructed the people of Barsaive on how to construct two types of shelters: kaers and citadels. Though both share many features, each has unique aspects.

Citadels

The term citadel carries two common meanings. The earlier meaning, which we survivors of the Scourge have begun to use again, refers to a large, walled city that also serves as a fortress. Barsaive has many such citadels, most built before the Scourge. Some of these suffered the ravages of time, war, and the Horrors; many others provide glowing testimonials to the builders' art and craft. Today, members of many of the Namegiving races inhabit these large cities, having resettled them after the Scourge.

The second meaning originated with the Scourge and refers to a city built or strengthened to withstand the Horrors. Massive domes of rune-inscribed stone usually surrounded such citadels, though some builders created domes of elemental air and fire. To protect against Horrors that might break through the first line of defense, magicians set traps and magical defenses at the edges of these fortified cities.

Because it is easier to build shelters from stone and dirt than from elemental fire, wood, water, and air, the Theran magicians focused on building with elemental earth, in the same way that magicians weave elemental air into the design when building an airship, elemental earth could be easily woven into the walls of the shelters. Equally important, the commonplace nature of small stone and dirt shelters made it easy to develop plans for larger shelters intended to house entire villages.





Castles and other shelters woven from elemental air, fire, water, and wood still exist, but the methods used to build those structures died with their architects. Few such citadels survived the Scourge intact, and few in Barsaive have ever seen one. Many believe that the Horrors enjoyed destroying these shelters more than any others, that the creatures took particular pleasure in crushing those who flaunted their control over magic by building such impressive citadels.

The people who lived in the citadels that survived the Scourge remained in them after it ended, and their cities became a part of the new Barsaive. The citadels that succumbed to the Horrors are little more than massive graveyards filled with the bones and treasures of their luckless inhabitants. Horrors who remained on this plane, creatures seeking isolated lairs, and roaming bands of nomads and ruffians often live in these ruined citadels, hidden from view in thick, leafy jungles that shield the remains even from passing airships.

Kaers

The kaers consisted of living quarters and common areas dug into mountains or under the ground. Unlike the people who sheltered in the citadels, most who took to the kaers abandoned their cities as soon as they believed it safe to do so.

Kaer designs across Barsaive varied widely, depending on the resources at hand and how much time their builders had to construct them. All, however, were designed to accommodate generations of inhabitants. Some kaers, with their countless rooms and chambers, lay deep inside mountains or far underground. Some had many levels; others consisted of one level that stretched a long distance under the earth and rock. Some were dug out roughly, like the warrens of rats, long and narrow with winding passages; others boasted the clean lines and colossal design common to Throalic cities.

Most kaers were divided into common and private areas. In many larger kaers, each family was assigned its own quarters; smaller kaers built communal sleeping quarters. Residents used the large chamber at the center of the kaer for meetings and celebrations. Other vast rooms filled with tables and chairs served as communal eating facilities,

adjoined by kitchens built to feed hundreds and set up to work day and night. Communal cooking and eating rooms also allowed the kaer's leaders to keep a watchful eye on food supplies.

As with the citadels, most kaer builders created traps and magical wards to keep the Horrors out. Though many kaers survived, many still remain sealed because of their inhabitants' fear. Other still-sealed kaers protect only the corpses of inhabitants long dead, their treasures still guarded by the traps and wards designed to repel the Horrors.

Living Quarters (1)

A large area containing many smaller rooms wherein each family slept. Most also included a communal bathing chamber. (1A)

Central Chamber (2)

In this central chamber, lit by magical moss to create the illusion of day and night, the people gathered for ceremonies and meetings. Merchants set up shops all around the perimeter, and the village's leading citizens attended to the smooth running of the kaer from offices also built in this place (2A).

Dining Areas (3)

Here the kaer's residents ate and drank together, at times chosen by the village leaders. Every member of the kaer shared in cooking the meal and cleaning.

Food Growth/Preparation Chambers (4)

Here the villagers grew food for the kaer when the stored supplies ran out. Larger kaers set aside additional space to raise livestock (4A), but most kaers grew only vegetables and fruits. Generations of gardeners and farmers worked to feed the kaer, experimenting with water and light cycles and hybrids to produce heartier plants.

Water Source (5)

The water that kept the kaer alive often came from an underground river. A few villages built springs in their kaers that drew water from the elemental water plane.

Statue of Garlen (6)

The Passion of Hearth and Healing, Garlen spoke to the people's hearts more strongly than ever during