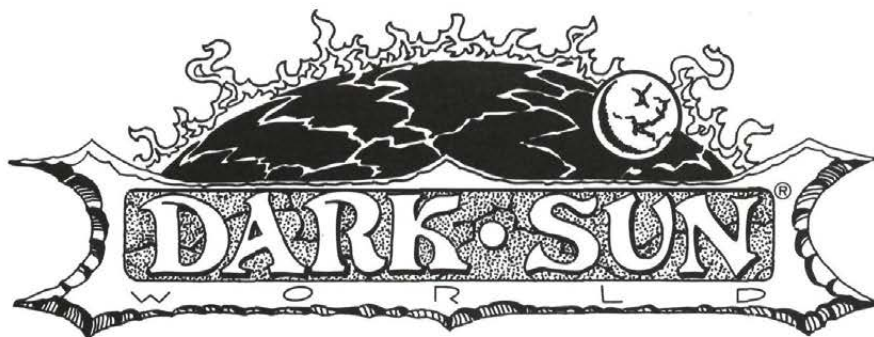


Advanced Dungeons & Dragons® 2nd Edition



City by the Silt Sea

Campaign Book

by Shane Lacy Hensley

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Introduction

Death of a Sorcerer-King

Dregoth shook off his dirty robes and collapsed onto his mammoth bed, letting his thoughts roam free. For over a millennium he had toiled for Rajaat's cause by day while seeking to fulfill his own plans in the quiet of the night. How long had he searched through the older sections of Giustenal, sifting through ruins and texts from the earliest moments of the Green Age for the knowledge he desired? How many centuries had come and gone since he first agreed to take the title of Dregoth of Giustenal, Ravager of Giants, Third Champion of Rajaat? Since the Cleansing Wars had started, raged across the land, and finally ceased? Since the Champions had turned traitors?

Rajaat was mad, that was true, but his goal was sound. Athas had to return to the glory and harmony of the Golden Age. It wasn't the halflings who would benefit from this new era of plenty, though, no matter what Rajaat believed. The First Sorcerer was locked away, and his crazy notion that halflings are the only pure beings had evaporated as quickly as the receding sea lapping at Giustenal's shore. Dregoth had his own vision, and he needed knowledge from the Time of Rebirth to make it come true.

As far as Dregoth was concerned, the Rebirth was not a mistake in and of itself. Athas needed new races, and he believed some worthy creation would emerge from the abominations. Humans were close, he knew, for they were definitely superior even to the ancient halflings. He and the other Champions—now the sorcerer-kings—were human, and they were so far beyond the other races as to be almost gods. There was something beyond humanity, he knew. Something very much like the Dragon that the Champions had helped Borys of Ebe transform into. The Dragon had gone insane shortly after coming into his power, so there was more to learn about the process. But in that learning would

come the answers he sought.

The halflings of the Blue Age possessed the secret to creating new races, and Dregoth was determined to recover that lost knowledge from the ancient days. With it, he could transform his followers into beings worthy to enter the new Blue Age at his side. The power was already his, and in a short time he would join Borys as a full dragon king. All he needed now was the knowledge—provided he could keep the animal rage at bay. He had succeeded so far, but each day brought him closer to the end of the process, and closer to the madness that had claimed Borys.

To think the secrets he had searched so hard to find might finally be at hand! Dregoth had discovered more ruins buried beneath Giustenal's cobbled streets. Some of these appeared ancient enough to contain the secrets he sought, for at the deepest levels were ruins even older than the Pristine Tower. The last of the demihumans who had sought refuge in these ruins had been destroyed, their bodies left on display as a warning to the rest of Giustenal's citizens.

Dregoth dragged himself wearily from the bed and strode to the balcony that overlooked his gardens and the Grand Plaza. Thousands of people filled the plaza, waiting for their Dread King's nightly sermon. Dregoth laughed. The people of Giustenal actually saw him as a god. He wondered if the other Champions received similar devotion.

Suddenly there was a bright flash of light in the shadows of Dregoth's bed chambers. The sorcerer-king turned and watched as a lithe figure darted toward him. It was Abalach-Re, the sorcerer-queen of Raam! In less than a heartbeat Dregoth saw that she was not alone. Kalak, Nibenay, Lalali-Puy, Andropinis, Tectuktitlay, and the newly elevated Hamanu tore through the far wall in a terrible parade of power and ominous doom.

"How dare . . ." was all Dregoth managed to utter



Introduction

before a great ball of fire surged from Abalach-Re's fingertips. The blast slammed into the Dread King and he toppled backward. The crowd below saw their ruler teeter on the edge of his balcony and then another blast came from the darkness. Dregoth and tons of stone showered down onto the frightened mob. Scores died beneath the thunderous crash and stunned thousands watched as seven sorcerer-kings of Athas descended from Dregoth's palace. The Dread King struggled to his feet and blasted back with all the power he could muster, but to little effect. Throughout the city, trees withered into spindly, gnarled husks, and the precious gardens that had once adorned the palace grounds slowly turned gray and crumbled into ash as Dregoth called forth their energy. It wasn't enough to stop the combined strength of seven sorcerer-kings.

The sorcerer-kings drained life from the frightened crowd to power their continuing onslaught. Anzropinis unleashed a bolt of crackling lightning at Dregoth. Then Nibenay bathed him and most of the survivors in white-hot flame. Thousands ran screaming and dying as mighty Hamanu struck Dregoth down with a sword of blackest ebony. The Dread King fell, his dying body sprawled on the bloody, cracked stonework. As Dregoth's eyes rolled in his charred skull, he could hear the sharp voice of Abalach-Re slash through his mind.

"One rampaging Dragon is all we want to deal with at a time, Dregoth," she said, carving her words into his fading consciousness with the Way. "Besides, you're too powerful for our own good."

Distantly, Dregoth felt her long nails dig into his throat, slowly, almost sensually. Blood flowed freely, drenching her hands. Except for a telling smile, she didn't seem to notice. Then Dregoth, Ravager of Giants, Third Champion and Betrayer of Rajaat, the Dread King of Giustenal, died.

For a while.

City by the Silt Sea is a campaign expansion for the DARK SUN® setting. You'll need the DARK SUN boxed set, the AD&D® *Player's Handbook*, *The Complete Psionicist's Handbook*, and the *Dragon Kings* hardcover book to use it. The following accessories are also referred to extensively in this product, and you might want to have copies available: *Slave Tribes*, *Earth, Air, Fire and Water*, *Elves of Athas*, and *Dune Trader*. These accessories are recommended, but not required to use this product.

If you are a player, stop reading now. The information contained herein is for the Dungeon Master only. Don't spoil the surprises by reading ahead.

Using This Set

The *City by the Silt Sea* is Giustenal, a ruined metropolis that once sat along the shore of an endless sea of water. The last ruler of Giustenal was Dregoth, once a sorcerer-king of the same powers and ambitions as the rulers of the present-day cities of the Tyr region.

This book details the ruins of Dregoth's Giustenal, as well as the subterranean regions beneath it. It also reveals the creatures and tribes that live in and around the city, and provides information on several new races and cultures peculiar to the Giustenal locale.

The Campaign Book (the one you're reading) details these features and should be read first. Go through it completely before moving to the next book. There is also a MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® appendix of new monsters, a full-color, double-sided poster map, and six reference cards. After you've gone over all of this material, turn to the Adventure Book for a full-length adventure to introduce your player characters to the *City by the Silt Sea*.

Chapter One: Giustenal's History

Stories of Ages Past

Jessareen, an elf tale singer of the Sky Singers' tribe, recently returned from the ruins of Giustenal with strange new songs in her repertoire. Those who knew her before her journey are concerned about her current condition. For Jessareen is not herself. In fact, she seems to be someone else entirely, as though another being shares her form.

Meeting Jessareen is a strange experience. Her eyes continually dart from side to side, and she behaves nervously. She sometimes speaks to the very air, often using words from some long-forgotten language. The music from her lyran is even more haunting than before, as if the strings summon notes from some far-off place.

Adventurers can encounter Jessareen in Nibenay's Hill District, in the Sky Singers' Market. She has been in the Happy Hurrum Tavern since her return, singing of unknown places, distant times, and horrors yet to come. The stories she sings are never complete. They come across as disjointed fables or dreams inspired by too much fermented javo nectar. The song presented below, however, tells the vision Jessareen was granted in the ruins of Giustenal. It is complete, the way it remains in her mind, though she will never be able to perform it for the crowds. Except, perhaps, this one time. Listen! Her fingers dance across the strings of her lyran, and her otherworldly voice sings . . .

I met Kataal in haunted Giustenal, amid the ruins and silt and shadows. He was a voice, a presence, a creature of the Way whose Will remains strong even though his body has faded.

"Who are you," I asked. "Kataal," he answered. "Kataal the Mover." He spoke, but his words were silent to my ears. My mind heard them loud and clear, however. "Where may I send you," he asked. "Have you come

to visit Vakura or Pelcunal or splendid Liuss?"

"No," I said, "I have not come to visit these places of the dead. I seek knowledge of the ancients."

"As you command," was all he answered, and suddenly my mind was flooded with images that were so fantastic they didn't seem real. But they were real, and I was drowning in their intensity.

Where Giustenal should have been was an endless expanse of water. Rising out of this unbelievable sea was a city of growing rock, populated by halflings! These were not the feral creatures that roam the Forest Ridge. These were civilized halflings, and they lived in a place that makes even the grand cities of Nibenay and Raam seem like ramshackle villages.

"This is the Blue Age," Kataal's mental voice informed me. "It was a time when halflings were the masters of the world and nature itself bowed to their commands."

The scene shifted before me. The water receded, giving way to a ragged shore. Now the lay of the land looked more familiar, except where the Sea of Silt should have been there was a sea of sparkling water. The sandy wastes were covered with thick forests, and the land looked like the Forest Ridge for as far as I could see. I recognized the walls of Giustenal, though they were new and solid, not broken and crumbling like the ones I passed through only hours before. The city was full of people, though not one of them was a halfling. I saw humans and elves and dwarves, along with a score of creatures I couldn't identify. Some were small with brightly colored wings. Others looked like thin dwarves. There were so many I couldn't begin to absorb all of the details.

"This is the Green Age, after the Rebirth, before the Time of Magic," the Mover explained, though I barely understood the terms. "This was the time I was born to, a time when the Way was supreme."

Time passed, and I watched the city grow and change.



Chapter One: Giustenal's History

It stretched along the coast and expanded to the islands nestled among the rolling waves. Castles became keeps, keeps became fortresses, and stone towers reached higher and higher into the sky. Soon magic joined the Way, and the two sources of power worked together to turn Giustenal into a paradise.

A new leader arose during this period. He was a giant, with the head of some strange cat creature, and the people loved him. They built statues of this king, and dedicated temples to his name. All the varied races lived within his domain. Giustenal was a city of harmony and happiness, of peace and tranquillity like I have never dreamed of.

Then the Ravager came. With an army of humans and a thirst for conquest, the Ravager attacked Giustenal and its giant-king. I watched this fierce battle rage, trembling in terror at the power I witnessed. The giant-king was a master of the Way, that much was obvious. The Ravager commanded the Way as well, but he also wielded sorcery. In the end, the Ravager claimed victory, slew the giant-king, and declared himself Dregoth, sorcerer-king of Giustenal.

"This was the start of the Cleansing Wars," Kataal said. "The sorcerer-kings raised armies and marched to slaughter the races created during the Rebirth."

Giustenal's armies, led by Dregoth, ravaged the land. As more and more sorcery was used, more and more of the lush countryside withered and died. The races I couldn't identify were systematically wiped out as I watched the years roll by. The land became more desolate, but the wars finally ended.

"So began the Age of the Sorcerer-Kings," the Mover intoned. "an age that still exists but is rapidly coming to a close."

This is the story of the ages of Athas as Kataal the Mover placed them in my mind. It is a confusing story, full of incredible events, but I believe it to be true.

Kataal the Mover

The being known as Kataal the Mover is all that remains of a halfling from the Green Age of Athas. Kataal's psyche was placed within a psionic item deep in the tunnels below Giustenal. There, he controlled an intricate transportation system with the Way. His psyche can still be encountered in the tunnels, and that is where Jessareen met him. (See Chapter Five for more details.)

The images Kataal placed in the elf bard's mind are real. They are the memories of his own experiences, the scenes he witnessed as time passed by. The disembodied psyche doesn't know everything, however. He only knows what he was able to read from the minds of Giustenal's many occupants and the travelers that stopped by on their way across the region.

If adventurers meet Kataal and he decides to grant them the knowledge of the ages of Athas, the chances are good that they will go mad. That's what happened to Jessareen, and now she has only brief moments of lucidity before the scenes boiling in her mind again overcome her.

Giustenal Through the Ages

During the Blue Age, water covered the world and the halflings ruled a harmonious society. An ancient city occupied the spot that would later house Giustenal, but this was a city of the halfling nature-masters. It grew out of the sparkling sea, formed from porous stone. Wide canals took the place of streets in this living city, and splendid boats provided transportation.

Late in the Blue Age, the halflings made a terrible mistake. Their vast knowledge wasn't perfect or anywhere near complete. An experiment went wrong, and the sea began to die. During this time, the halflings sought to protect themselves by building subterranean cities. Some went underground, but others struggled to find a