



Erlkazar: A DM's Domain of Intrigue

Before we get to Gamalon's report to Queen Zaranda of Tethyr, we should explain what we have done with Erlkazar. We've deliberately left it light on description so that you, the Dungeon Masters of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting, can flesh out this unusual country to fit your own campaigns. The information from Gamalon is the least amount of data from which a DM can develop Erlkazar in full. The only things that are cemented in official Realmslore are the place names and the king's dynastic family name, the Morkanns; beyond these details, all else is left to your imagination.

Under many topics are inserted "Hints & History," bits of material developed for this area in my first FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign, played nine years ago. "Hooks & Plots" are suggestions on how to use a particular area or person named in the many plots set up in one of the books in this boxed set. With a little work and personalization for the DM's players (whose PCs could become the adventurer-barons of the land), Erlkazar can be an adventurers' kingdom for skilled players. In a few weeks of play, Erlkazar will grow into a detailed and integral part of your Lands of Intrigue campaign.

—Steven Schend

A Report To Her Majesty ON The State of Erlkazar

"Your Majesty, my most humble greetings to you. At your request, I went with my son-in-law, Arn Gyrfalcon, to our eastern neighbor, Erlkazar, formerly the duchy of Elestam under His Majesty King Alemander's regime, to learn its peoples' current condition and feelings toward Tethyr and our recent Reclamation. As you prefer your reports with more brevity than does the king, I shall point out only the most basic details of Erlkazar and its notables."

*Ever your servant,
Count Gamalon Idogyr of Spellshire*

Country & Climate

"Erlkazar is like Tethyr's Highlands in climate and terrain. It is covered with hills and mountains, and the land itself slopes down to the east and southeast, leaving few flatlands. All streams lead to the Deepwash and Impresk Lake, which lie at higher elevations than the Queen's City."

Civilized Races

"The only difference between Erlkazar's and Tethyr's populations is a notable lack of halflings in Erlkazar. Many half-elves and wild elves fled here during the persecutions of the last three kings of House Tethyr. More shield dwarves are evident here, too—the remnants of Shanatar or recent settlers above those ruins. Unfortunately, Erlkazar's next largest populations are goblins and ogres."

Social Customs

"As in the Highlands of Tethyr, the social habits of Erlkazar—from king's court to farmers' lands—are lax and informal. The Erlkazarans mean no disrespect, but their rugged land forces them together, so respect and nobility must be earned, not gained by natural or divine right."

Languages

"Erlkazar's mother tongue is identical to Tethyr's pidgin Common. The natives do use a few more dwarven root words, as their lands were heavily influenced by Shanatar in the past."





Religion

"Many of the same gods who are revered in Tethyr and Amn are worshiped among the hills and dales of this tiny land, but Erlkazarans hold more reverence for Mystra and Asuth, as did Tethyr over 40 years ago and as does Calimshan today. In the towns of Erlkazar are over 20 holy places dedicated to the mages' gods."

Hints & History: The largest temple to Azuth in the Lands of Intrigue stands in the town of Duhlmarim, at the High One's Hand [see later]. Inside is a 6-foot-high crystalline hand carved in the shape of Azuth's symbol, into which worshiping mages cast magic missiles. Once a year, priests perform a ceremony that releases that magic skyward as a monstrous bolt—a "power sacrifice to our patron," they call it.

Politics & Power

"As the Duchy of Elestam, this region once contained two counties and five baronies. The counts and barons who once conspired with the Duchy of Dusk to overthrow the Morkann family were slain during or soon after the Black Days of Eleint. After a few years of fighting along its borders, Elestam seceded from Tethyr and became the monarchy of Erlkazar; restructured baronies were recently added. I was told at court and overheard in tavern talk later that Erlkazarans are happy to be Tethyr's allies, but 20 years of independence suits them well, and they fiercely defend their rights as a sovereign people. Erlkazar's king and queen have no wish to discuss dissolving their realm to rejoin Tethyr as a duchy merely to unify the old country."

Coinage & Commerce

"While Erlkazar has yet to strike its own official coins, it does have official trade weights for coins and exchange rates per amount and type of precious metals. Most coins in use are Old Tethyrian, but nearly any coin across the Realms can be found here, thanks to trade links with the Vilhon Reach. The two major cities of Erlkazar have trade routes going from the Deepwash to the Vilhon Reach and the Sea of Fallen Stars, via the deep, outflowing Wintercloak River."

Hooks & Plots: Llorbauth has royalty-approved trade deals with merchants and costers in Ormpetar, Sespech, Nimpeth, and minor ports in the Vilhon Reach. Merchants in Duhlmarim have links with those places, as well as with Hlondeth and points farther east in the Inner Sea. Lesser sons of the H'Krabil clan of Duhlmarim have begun a slave trade with Thay for evil interests in the Vilhon Reach and the Lake of Steam.

History

"This territory was largely wilderness until the aging Queen's Consort Karazir Titraklar of Tethyr and his brother, Ellessor, led an army in to "conquer the uncivilized lands to the east." Ellessor became the duke of Elestam in the Year of the Cascade (309 DR); Elestam was then home to humans, wild elves, shield dwarves, and others living in small mountain settlements since the Second Age of Calimshan. After the fall of Shoonach, Elestam fell back into wilderness, but it was officially made part of Tethyr in the Year of the Visions (731 DR) by King Strohm II, following the defeat of Tathtar's invading forces."

"Little is of note in Elestam's history until recently. The good duke Valon Morkann, who was well known to me, disagreed greatly with King Alemander's stance against the elves, but the duke was loyal and kept open the trade routes with the Vilhon Reach. His counts and barons, however, were loyal only to themselves and the neighboring Duke of Dusk. Though they could never prove who sponsored the attacks, Duke Morkann's son and friends in Elestam's Crusaders stopped four attempts against the duke's life, ordered by the barons and counts before and during the Black Days."

"While forced by the political situation to accept these nobles, Duke Morkann could not gauge how deeply his people hated these lesser rulers. With the dissolution of order in Eleint 1347 DR, Duke Morkann learned how deeply the dissent ran. Though his people remained loyal to him, many villages and towns turned on the local barons. The duke moved to put the barons in irons, then try them for crimes against the people and himself after the chaos had subsided, but the counts and barons fled rather than face angry mobs and official prosecution. Both counts and most of the barons are known to have been slain since then, but some lesser nobles of old Elestam escaped justice and their whereabouts are still unknown."

"Within a year of the Black Days, Elestam's borders were stable and secure, the duchy ruled solely by the duke in the absence of higher authority. Given that Tethyr had fallen and petty lords abused their powers to the west, the people bid the duke to be their king and protect them. Duke Morkann officially broke his ties with Tethyr and declared Elestam to now be Erlkazar, and he its king. During much of the Interregnum, King Valon ruled directly, without counts, dukes, or barons beneath him. Vampires and dragons plagued Erlkazar, but Elestam's Crusaders and the Emerald Brotherhood kept the peace—at least, until the latter vanished from the Realms in 1359 DR. (I later learned that the Brotherhood was taken into Realmspace by an illithid spelljammer but escaped; the Emerald Brotherhood roams wildspace still, and used to make stops at the Rock of Bral to see me.)"

"For nearly the entire Year of Shadows (1358 DR), the goblin hordes of the High Peaks and the Kuldin Peaks attacked Erlkazar, laying siege to Duhlmarim for over three months. The war against King Ertyk Uhl of the Starrock goblin tribe seemed endless, despite the assistance of the mages of Duhlmarim and numerous heroes, until the Crusaders struck an alliance with the neutral and unusually trustworthy Shieldbreaker Ogres of Rivenshield. By year's end, the goblins were cut to less than a third their previous numbers; they are only now regaining their strength."

"King Valon died in the Year of the Sword (1366 DR), bequeathing his crown to his eldest son Korox, the leader of Elestam's Crusaders. The four other Crusaders were made barons to aid the new king, much to the king's relief and Erlkazar's fortune."

A Tour of Erlkazar

This small kingdom is the most stable country in this region of the South. The baronies' at the behest of the new king bothered some who had suffered under the old system, but even they admired the new leaders. Erlkazar now has strong ties in commerce, defense, and diplomacy to other countries,



The Baronies of ErIkazar





and it is rich from the trade coming through the Vilhon Reach and up the Wintercloak River.

Hooks & Plots: Amn's Council of Six meant to infiltrate and conquer Erlkazar until Tethyr's Reclamation put a stop to those plans. Given Tethyr's new links with Riatavin, Erlkazar and Tethyr can now become strong trade allies and reap benefits once known only to Amn. Tethyr's connections with the Lords' Alliance have King Korox considering the idea of joining the Alliance to gain more allies for protection and trade.

Political Features

- King Korox is a former hero and adventurer, just like Tethyr's Queen Zaranda and King Haedrak. He is as capable a king as he was a leader of the Crusaders.
- The royal stronghold of Klarsamryn has been the center of the capital of Llorbauth since the city's founding, though the castle is about 500 years older than the city.
- Given the close personal ties among the four lesser nobles and the king, Erlkazar has few serious political intrigues. Minor power plays take place between government bureaus and trade guilds.

Geographic Features

- The northern border of Erlkazar is the Snowflake Mountain range; the eastern edge is marked by Impresk Lake and the Deepwash. While Erlkazar engulfs the Kuldins on all sides, the Itkazar range and the headwaters of the River Ith form its western borders. The southern Thorn Wood and the eastern foothills of the Omlarandins define the southern borders.

Impresk Barony

Political Features

- The baron should be a woodsman or someone with ties to the forests on the lower slopes of the Snowflakes.
- Three or four farming villages, one mining village in the Snowflakes, and a few shepherding and logging towns in the foothills are present.
- This northernmost barony of the realm is responsible for keeping down the monstrous populations among the Snowflakes and protecting the trade road to Riatavin.

Hints & History: This domain is ruled by Baron Jivam Tammisel (LG hdragonm R8), a half-steel dragon ranger who was accepted by the hill clans of Impresk as a chief despite his draconic nature. Known as "the Tammisel," he is nearly 50 years old; he appears as a young half-elf with gray hair and skin, massive claws, and a dorsal ridge running from his head down his back. [Use the half-dragon rules from the COUNCIL OF WYRMS™ boxed set and from the article "Part Dragon, All Hero," from DRAGON® magazine issue #206, pages 22-30. The latter has the half-steel PC race and the modified Ward kit needed for Baron Tammisel.]

Geographic Features

- Impresk Lake is an ice-cold lake fed by four rivers and many streams. The river leading down to the Deepwash is passable to experienced captains and pilots.

- The Snowflake Mountains are among the highest in the South, with some northern Snowflake peaks reaching as high as 20,000 feet above sea level.

Cities & Sites

- Caradon (Town): This small town lies on the southern shore of Impresk Lake on a small peninsula. The town's primary livelihood is fishing.
- Kholmeth (village): This small village of shepherds and trail guides is the closest settlement to the baron's hunting lodge, high among the central Snowflakes.
- Soaring Spirit, the cathedral to Deneir built by High Scrivener Cadderly, replaced the ruined Edificant Library that once stood in this barony. [See the Cleric Quintet novels.]
- Castle Trinity lies in ruins, the former stronghold of Talona-worshippers who tried to conquer this area by organizing armies of ogres and humanoids. Their attempt failed thanks to the actions of Cadderly and the elves of Shilmista.
- Nightglow is the name for the former cavern lair of a red dragon, Fyrentennimar. This massive cave complex, carved from the heart of the mountains, is now mysteriously abandoned.

Shalanar Barony

Political Features

- The central barony of Erlkazar are the king's lands, which encompass the major agricultural lands and the capital.
 - Four villages and over a dozen hamlets here are supported by farming; three villages subsist on fishing.
 - The king directly controls the major port at Llorbauth and the bulk of the agricultural trade in Erlkazar.
- Hints & History:** King Korox Morkann (LG hm Pal10) was the fair-haired leader of a group of local heroes called Elestam's Crusaders. All other Crusaders are now barons in Erlkazar. King Korox personally trains many officers in his country's army.

Geographic Features

- Shalane Lake is the local name for the northwestern end of the Deepwash. It is a prime area for fishing, as its waters are less disturbed by the feeding of the dragon turtle of the Deepwash.
- Lost Lovers' Pool is a coastal sea cave north of Llorbauth that is reachable only during low tide. Legends say that two newlyweds found the pool and vanished, never to be seen again.

Cities & Sites

- Ellhimar's Tower rests on the bottom of Shalane Lake, surrounded by a magical field that keeps the water out and air in. The wizard Ellhimar hasn't been seen around here since the rise of his pupil to the baron's seat of Ahlarkhem.
- Llorbauth (City): The capital of the realm, Llorbauth is home to 28,000 persons of varied races. This major city handles 40% of the port traffic and trade on the Deepwash.
- Shalane (Town): This fishing town has the best ship-builders of Erlkazar, even better than those in Duhnarim and Llorbauth.



Llorbauth
1 Klarsamryn

- The Mystics' Academy is an academic school for mages, alchemists, and a small sect of Azathan and Mystran priests. It lies south of Llorbauth, on the shores of the Deepwash between Llorbauth and Duhlnarim.

- The Hills' Cheer Distillery & Brewery produces some of the finest liquors and ales exported by Aurora's Wholesalers outside of the Purple Hills. It is run by Araneth Idogyr (CG hem F7/W8), the elder half-brother of Count Gamalon Idogyr of Tethyr. Araneth still mockingly refers to Gamalon as "Gem-head" because of the latter's numerous ioun stones.

Hooks & Plots: The Mystics' Academy has links with the ruined School of Wonder in Amn. Many Academy alumni are now major mages across the Realms, including Count Gamalon Idogyr and the Mage-Brothers Kolat of Waterdeep. Twisted Rune agent Vaxall of the Dying Gaze (a beholder) has two *charmed* deputies in the staff here, teaching falsehoods about beholder anatomy to ensure the doom of would-be heroes.

Ahlarkhem Barony

Political Features

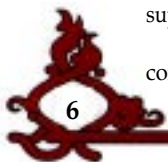
- The baron of this domain controls the majority of the trade into and out of the Deepwash through Duhlnarim. The leader should have a grasp of both magic and merchants.
- Nine scattered villages and hamlets in Ahlarkhem are supported by fishing, mining, or farming.
- This barony is the trade linchpin for Erlkazar and thus controls much of the power of the realm for the king. It also

defends Erlkazar from the goblins of the High Peaks, and Ahlarkhem's troops patrol the eastern ruins of Tathtar, preventing monsters or brigands from spreading out of them.

Hints & History: Ahlarkhem's baron is Lord Purdun "The Firefist" (LN hm Inv8), whose calm, steady, diplomatic demeanor is in contrast to his fiery name and reputation. His wife is Princess Dijara (CG hf F0), the younger sister of the king, and together they are the king's most ardent supporters.

Geographic Features

- The Arglander River divides the High Peaks, flowing over many cataracts and cascades from the highest of the High Peaks down to the Deepwash. It is passable only at the Shadebridge along the trail between Duhlnarim and Saarlik, which is reputedly haunted by the ghosts of the drowned.
- The Deepwash is a freshwater lake that is nearly as deep as Lake Esmel. Its icy depths are haunted by a singular danger: a dragon turtle.
- The High Peaks are the western spur of the Cloven Mountain Range. They rise as high as 10,000 feet among the eastern peaks above the ruins of Dajaan.
- The Wintercloak River provides a link between the Deepwash and the Nagawater and eventually the Vilhon Reach. Its swift-flowing waters cut through a number of Cloven Mountain gorges and the tangled Winterwood, but the river is navigable either way, given fair winds and the strength of rowers if traveling upstream to the Deepwash.





Cities & Sites

- Duhnlarim (City): This major port city is often split by political squabbles between the mercantile H'Krabil clan and numerous mages' factions. The oldest city in this area, Duhnlarim dates back over eight centuries.

- Furrowsrich is among the largest farming villages of Erlkazar, thanks to its location at the crossroads of trails leading to Llorbauth, Duhnlarim, and Five Spears Hold.

- Saarlik is a ghost town on the south shore of the Arglander River, in the northwestern ruins of Tathtar. It marks the end of the Erlkazar trade road leading from the Tethir Road.

Hooks & Plots: The ruined city of Dajaan lies south of Surkh, across the Deepwash and in the foothills 2 miles south of the Deepwash's coast. Dajaan's ruins extend to the water's edge. Its crypts hold the main lair of Shyressa, a vampiric Runemistress of the Twisted Rune, as well as other evil things.

Tanistan Barony

Political Features

- The people of Tanistan have always been ruled by a warrior whose mission is to protect the borders. The baron could also be a priest of a god of guardianship, loyalty, or battle.

- Four human villages lie in the upper barony and foothills, and a few nonhuman villages are among the western Peaks.

- Tanistan is responsible for protecting the southern borders of Erlkazar. The area between the Thornwood and High Peaks is technically controlled by the Ahlarkhem barony, but the baron of Tanistan patrols these lands and shares their bounty. This barony maintains the alliance with the Shieldbreaker Ogres to contain the monstrous populations among the High Peaks.

Hints & History: The Baroness Tanistan is High Watcher Laxaella Bronshield (LG hef P8—Helm), who still mourns the loss of her elven husband Rysodyl Boughstrong at the hands of the Goblin King Ertyk Uhl. She buries herself in her duties, protecting the south and maintaining the garrisons.

Geographic Features

- The broad Plains of Pehrrifaal are nestled between the High Peaks, the Kuldins, and the Omlarandins. Their main products are barley and millet, though grapes for table wines are also found in smaller hamlets. The name Pehrrifaal was that of a famed local warrior who died stopping a goblins' charge.

- The western Omlarandins and the Iltkazar Foothills (and the lower High Peaks) here are lightly forested. While the trees prevent a clear view of the border, many garrison scouts were trained by the baroness and her dead husband in elven practices using the trees as lookout posts.

Cities & Sites

- Five Spears Hold (Town): This garrisoned mining town is the baronial seat and the third largest settlement in Erlkazar. Its name comes from an old dwarven legend in which defenders who survived a battle with the drow had only five spears left.

- The four Pehrrifaal Garrisons act as garrisons for troops along the southern border and as minor temples to Tyr, Helm, Torm, and Tempus, respectively.

- Praskallest is the surviving manor house and estate of the former Count of Correlath. Now it is a staging area and primary garrison for the southern armies, and also the official keep of the baroness. It is located west of Five Spears Hold, between the hold and Mount Noblesse in Tethyr.

- Rivenshield (Village): This village of ogres is the home of the Shieldbreakers, Erlkazar's primary allies against the giants and goblins in the High Peaks. The Shieldbreakers are not very friendly but are known to stick to their word, and they are usually trusted and even well respected in Erlkazar.

Hooks & Plots: Mintar's Knights of the Black Gauntlet have placed a double agent among the scouts from one garrison. The agent is trying to work into the baroness' favor to discover crucial information he can sell to Mintar, though he would not reveal something he thought would cause the end of Erlkazar (Tethyr and Saradush, yes, but not Erlkazar).

Carrelath Barony

Political Features

- Since the days of Shanatar, this area has been ruled by a shield dwarf warrior or priest, regardless of its overlord.

- Among the mountains of Carrelath are army garrisons and a few mining villages and isolated religious communities.

- Carrelath defends the western gap in the Iltkazar Range, supplementing Impresk's defense of the trade roads. A garrison is kept to defend the headwaters of the Shining Stream.

Geographic Features

- Aside from passes and foothills, Carrelath lies entirely among the Kuldin Peaks. The passes and trails in these mountains were first used at the rise of Shanatar; they are used now by travelers, troop patrols, and shepherds and their flocks.

- Beneath the Kuldins south of Tibold lies Ravimor's Cave. In the floor of this cave is a rift that opens directly into a huge chasm area that might reach Deep Shanatar. A few adventuring companies have descended here, but fewer heroes have returned.

Cities & Sites

- Tibold (Town): This mining town in the western Kuldins lies south of the headwaters of Swimstar Creek. Tibold acts as the baronial seat. Built atop the ruins of an old dwarven stronghold, Tibold is larger than it seems, as a third of the city (including the baron's home) lies in caverns under the mountains. Tibold is the oldest continuously occupied settlement in the Lands of Intrigue, founded over 4,000 years ago as an outpost of High Shanatar. From here, dwarves and highland human allies resisted the Second Calimshan Empire's advances into their territory.

- Golconda (Village): This mining village has a long-abandoned fortress built during the Third Calimshan Empire.