

MIDGARD™

PLAYER'S GUIDE



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MIDGARD

PLAYER'S GUIDE

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A NEW WORLD AWAITS!



Enter the world of Midgard, a shared vision built over many years by Kobold Press. It began with collaborative adventures and supplements describing the trade city of Zobeck, and it soon expanded to detail territories outside the city. The setting now continues in a rich, fully detailed world in this *Midgard Player's Guide*, packed with options for players of the land's races and regions. But before you explore all of the mechanical possibilities that this book offers, take a moment to step into Midgard's rich lore.

Let your adventurers begin their tales and build their legends in one of Midgard's realms!

WORLD OF MYSTERIOUS POWER

From the days of titanic struggles between giants and dragons, to the time of warring gods, Midgard has been a world of great powers and endless change, triumph, and conflict. Its primary races—dragonkin, dwarves, gearforged, humans, kobolds, minotaurs, ravenfolk, shadow fey, and trollkin—have each held vast kingdoms, while just as many lesser races have fought to establish nations of their own, from goblin warbands to nomadic gnolls. And even among those that have held sway over entire realms, glory can be fleeting and no nation lasts forever. The giants rose and fell long ago. More recently, the elves have largely abandoned the mortal world, having retreated to the Summer Lands of the fey and the Shadow Realm for darker courts and minions.

The world's magic is powered by ley lines, rivers of pure magical energy that can fuel a wizard's power, or can help a villain's plan unfold. This magic enables swift travel along shadow roads and down catslide alleys, connecting distant realms for those daring enough to find, unlock, and travel on these roads.

To understand those places and their connections, here is an overview of 10 great regions where adventure awaits, with a quick summary of important places, events, and history in each area.

THE CROSSROADS

Here lies the heart of Midgard: The Free City of Zobeck, whose revolt 90 years ago forged a thriving city ruled by freepeople and gave birth to a trading hub famous throughout Midgard for its alchemy, star and shadow magic, steamworks, and egalitarianism. Known for its magical clockwork masterpieces, its unique magical traditions of gear mages and star mages, its magnificent Arcane Collegium, and its status as a protectorate of Rava, the Gear Goddess, it is a bustling city of glorious achievements and dark, deadly alleyways.

The 14 dwarven Ironcrag Cantons in the Ironcrag Mountains border the vampire realm of the Blood Kingdom and the dwarves are stout enemies of the undead in both the Blood Kingdom and the underground Ghoul Imperium residing below. While their axes are sometimes for sale, when danger threatens their cantonal halls, all dwarves unite to drive away the common enemy.

Also in the Crossroads region is the Magdar Kingdom, a land of rolling grasslands, noble knights, fickle mercenaries, and massive war wagons, many of which are built in Zobeck. To the east of Zobeck is the Duchy of Perun's Daughter, a realm renowned for the demigoddess who rules there: Vasilka Soulay, daughter of the storm god Perun. Just as important are its Amazonian archers, and its schools for the learned and the wise. This small but powerful duchy also hosts many elvish ruins from the days of the Valeran Empire.

The Crossroads is rife for urban adventure and intrigue, old-school dungeon delving, and the discovery of ancient secrets long buried.

BLOOD KINGDOM


Black King Lucas, the vampire lord of the Blood Kingdom of Morgau, has recently seized the entire Kingdom of Krakovar for himself, in a daring of lightning strikes with undead allies and malign magic to shatter and overwhelm that land's rightful rulers. His troops have secured a new province, which they name "Krakovar," and his vampire and ghoulish allies slaver at the thought of new feasts and new human peasants to grind beneath their heels.

While the new province suffers under the lash of evil masters, all is not lost. A Sister Adelind, a shield maiden of Sif, died in the defense of the realm, though not before stabbing the notorious vampire lord Otmar the Sallow through the heart with her radiant spear, incinerating him utterly. Many of the decent folk of Krakova pray to Saint Adelind for help, and resist the efforts of the invaders to build the Red Temples of the Blood Goddess and feed her ever-hungering altars.

The Blood Kingdom is a place of terrors, but some of its people remain true-hearted, and surely someday, the rule of King Lucas will end. Adventurers in its borders will find many opportunities to help the meek and innocent, and strike down the ghost knights, the mercenaries and the dark priests of Marena who rule the realm.

ROTHENIAN PLAINS

Bold Centaurs, opportunistic and nomadic Kariv bands, fierce Kazzakh nomads, and even Baba Yaga's dancing hut wander the Rothenian Plains, a land of endless grasslands, river barons, and cities on horseback. The



inhabitants of the Plains are brave and bold, but there is much abyssal evil to be fought here.

From the nine cities of Niemheim, where infernal gnomes practice sacrificial rites to please the lords of the Eleven Hells, to the wizardly Master of Demon Mountain, whose motives are unknown, but who has a hand in most plots and tragedies in the plains, to the kingdom of the Ruby Despotate, ruled by the erratic and iron-fisted Veltrin the Glittering King, a follower of the cruel White Goddess. Veltrin's servants scour the grasslands, capturing slaves to work the kingdom's fields, mines, or galleys' oars; and his strong navy controls much of the Ruby Sea with its infamous demon-prowed black ships.

Mystical magic, centaur steel, demonic servants, and the gratitude of dragons await adventurers braving the Rothenian Plains.

THE SEVEN CITIES

The clash of endless war rings eternal in the lands of the Seven Cities, which both revel in, and depend upon, the economies of war, even setting aside a season for it and creating intricate rules and codes of siegecraft.

Among the many warring fiefdoms adventurers will find the August Republic of Valera, which commands feared legions of humans and centaurs; the Green Duchy of Verrayne, where the druidical order of the Oaken Ring and the mighty heroes of the Black Band protect the East from invasions of goblins and the twisted monstrosities from the Wasted West.

Here too, is the mighty Theocracy of Kammae Straboli, led by a powerful Oracle, who has chained and imprisoned Nethus, the former god of the sea, and now uses his deific powers for her own purposes.

To the south, you will find the Maritime Republic of Triolo with its magnificent navy and fierce privateers and its ally, the minotaur-ruled Serene Isle of Kyprion, besieged by the navies of the expanding Dragon Empire of the Mharoti. Most recently, it has been absorbing by a tide of refugees fleeing the fall of the Grand Duchy of Illyria, once an ally to Triolo, now another in the long string of draconic conquests.

Adventures in this region include discovering ancient, elven secrets, restoring the glories of the imperial past, questing for fame, fortune and power, descending into the darkness under ancient imperial ruins, settling ancient rivalries, protecting trade routes against draconic raiders, and fighting to free Illyria from the Mharoti yoke.

THE NORTHLANDS

The Northlands are a study in opposites. A land of deadly beauty, with sights that can be seen nowhere else on Midgard; but if you find yourself outside on a midwinter's night without fire, you are a frozen meal for wolves by morning. Like the lands they inhabit, the people here are a mosaic of contrasts: fierce and fearful, honorable but cruel, hospitable but vengeful, fateful and furious.

The Northlands are home to many strange kingdoms: Bjornheim, the kingdom of Talking Bears, and Wolfheim, the gray kingdom of the Wolves Who Walk as People. Also here are ancient dwarven halls, some inhabited by doughty dwarves, and some by the ghosts of their fallen ancestors. In the mountains are Jotunheim, the city of the giants, offshore lies the icebound Island of Loki, and the skies sometimes howl under the thunderstorm fortresses of the cloud giants. In the furthest north stands the icy lair of the God of the North Wind, Boreas, who wishes to spread his frozen halls and living glaciers across the face of Midgard. Will you take up the axe and shield, and dare the fateful dangers and golden treasures of the Northlands?

GRAND DUCHY OF DORNIG

Sometimes called the Domains of the Princes for its many lesser nobles, the Principalities of the Grand Duchy of Dornig have a deep and troubled history. Here, petty elfmarked lords squabble over the scattered northern lands of the once great elven empire of Valera, abandoned hurriedly during the Elven Retreat. The elderly, elven Imperatrix of the Grand Duchy retained a tenuous throne, while her great-great-great-grandchildren squabbled over every castle, honor, and knighthood in the Grand Duchy, and each hoping to be next in line to replace the ancient Elf Queen. For a time, many thought she would never die, but rule for centuries while keeping her courtiers dancing to her tune. All that jockeying at the foot of the Golden Sphinx throne has recently taken a darker turn, since the Imperatrix has fallen into a coma, from which none seem able to revive her.

The Grand Duchy is a place where an adventurer with a strong sword arm, a headful of spells, and a glib tongue can win him or herself a fine, petty barony, rife with trouble. Enter both the dark forests and the glittering elvish courts of Dornig at your own precarious discretion, however, for both are deadly dangerous, and many of the Grand Duchy's most powerful are choosing sides for a succession struggle that most await with dread—and a few with delight and bloody glee.

DRAGON EMPIRE

In the empire forged by the legendary dragon Mharot, the Dread Sultan seeks to expand the borders of his desert realm into the lush farmlands of the Crossroads to the north, the islands and coasts of the Seven Cities to the west, the vast plains of Khandiria and Ishadia, and the magic-ridden riverlands of Nuria Natal to the south. Ruled with a scaly fist by powerful dragon lords and their dragonkin descendants, this growing empire inspires fear in all on their borders. Often the best solution for its neighbors is to pay tribute, lest they fall to claw and fire.

Conquest, trade, and tribute have led to a Golden Age of prosperity in the powerful young empire, and the markets of the empire's cities are unrivalled. Masterwork jewelry, armor, and weapons are commonplace; golden treasures

are found in abundance here. Even mighty war oliphants and battle lizards are available for purchase, if you dare to ride them!

The Empire's most recent conquest is the Grand Duchy of Illyria, once called Land of a Thousand Heroes, despite its sky militias of hippogriff riders and stout defenders in hills and mountains. Clever dragon generalship and overwhelming numbers eventually brought Illyria low, though at a price in blood and sorrow. To make up that cost, the newly conquered lands are being quickly turned into defensible towns and productive mines, the better to feed gold, silver, and steel to meet the needs of the Mharoti armies, and to fuel their next conquests.

The Empire's wealth has led to an explosion of draconic art and architecture. The largest building in Midgard, the Temple of Veles, is in Harkesh, the magnificent capital of the Empire. Harkesh surpasses any other capitol, with its mighty elemental temples, its schools of philosophy, magic and theosophy, as well as fractious schools of brawling elementalists, where dragonkin Wind Palm devotees vie with scaly Fiery Fist monks for bragging rights.

Adventurers can find draconic intrigues, unique treasures, and dragon hoards, and fabulous glory and fame fighting against (or for) the kobold and dragonkin conquerors.

WASTED WEST

Once home to prosperous human kingdoms ruled by powerful mages, dotted with ivory towers and flying cities and fortresses, the western heartlands of Midgard fell to warring among themselves. Raining acid on their enemies, summoning mind-warping monstrosities, sacrificing whole populations to bend ley lines and reality to their will, the great mage-kings reduced green forests and lush farmland to dry, blasted deserts, populated by twisted dust goblins and reduced to scrounging for ancient magics and lost science.

The Wasted West is a howling wilderness with nothing but goblin raiders and a few vastly powerful (and power mad) mage kingdoms, including the White Kingdom of Bourgund, known for its sweet perfumes and foul corruptions; and the Mage Kingdom of Allain, home to the powerful and victorious survivors of the Mage Wars.

Also to be found here is the Seat of Mavros, where the god of war first trod the soil of Midgard and showed men how to use fire and steel. Now it is a sprawling fortress shrine, where pilgrims from the Seven Cities and beyond come to buy the favors of the war god.

Stalking through the wastelands are strange, enormous Dread Walkers, creatures summoned by vile rituals and constrained to move slowly in time. These are the god-totems of the dust goblins, and the mere sight of them sometimes shakes the courage of great heroes. No wonder, then, that many of the great magical treasures of the region remain undisturbed.

Ancient treasures, magic, and technology can be found here by brave adventurers, if they can survive the goblin raiders, the warped and hellbound monsters, and worse, that dwell here.

THE SOUTHLANDS

Deserts abound with forgotten tombs, swift sand skiffs, and nomadic spirit talkers. The tall grass of the savannahs hides lost cities and fierce warriors, and the dense jungles swarm with living vines that choke the life from those who call these lands home and careless visitors alike.

Those who adventure into the Southlands or call it home can find fierce jungles, wild coasts, and ancient cities beyond imagining—and perhaps even a spark of divinity itself, the remains of the divine magic of a race of titans. The great ley line mages of the River Kingdom of Nuria Natal are the oldest and most powerful arcane tradition of Midgard, and their magics were taught to them by the living gods who still walk among the cities of Nuria: Aten, Bastet, Horus, Isis, and Ptah. Their magic is great, but their rulers are divided, keeping the River Kingdom from overwhelming its neighbors. Some of those neighbors are small free cities, such as the Free City of Siwal with its sandships, or the Horus-bound legions of Makuria.

Nearer the Seven Cities stands the remains of Roshgazi and Cindass, great minotaur cities razed by dragon fire and then slowly, ever so slowly, rebuilt. Their power is small, but the minotaurs are great seafarers and keep a long memory. In time, their fallen kingdoms will surely prosper once more.

THE SHADOW REALM

The Shadow Realm is a dark reflection of Midgard, a place of flickering reality just on the other side of a planar door. With dark reflections of the mortal world, it is haunted by shadow fey, undead, and creatures of strange temptations and corruptions—as well as, truth be told, wellsprings of enormous power and weapons of tremendous prophecies.

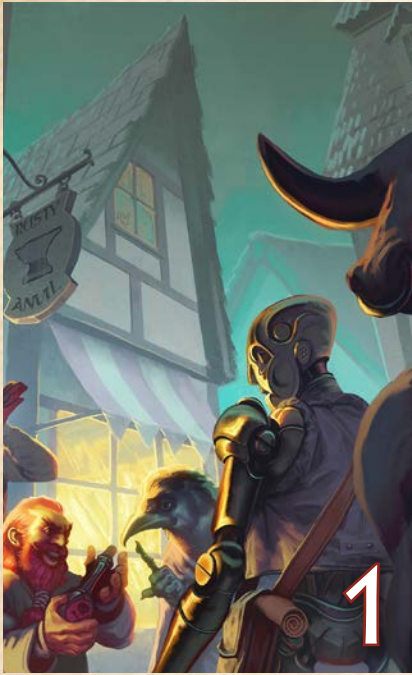
Those who have visited and return tell of a charcoal sky, rich in stars and luminous clouds, but never true sunlight, and never full dark.

Within the Shadow Realm, the shadow fey are strong and their courts and kingdoms are a large part of the place. Their enemies, the bearfolk, are likewise far more common in Shadow than in the mortal world. Fey creatures, darakhul, and hideous abominations best forgotten are all part of the cities, nations, and tribes of the Shadow Realm, always shifting, far more fickle than human or dwarven kingdoms.

Rife with magic and ancient secrets, but also riddled with pitfalls for both body and soul, the Shadow Realm is a place where the lands and its magic follow different rules than most places. The rewards are also often highly magical and entwined with fate and destiny—what better place for a hero to visit?

—Wolfgang Baur, *Publisher*

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