

DOMAIN OF HERYNGARD

A SANDBOX MINI-CAMPAIGN AREA SET IN THE WORLD OF **HERYNGARD**

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PART ONE: THE WORLD OF YRTHION

This book introduces the Heryngard world-setting, so we're providing some background information for those who intend to use this material as the basis for an ongoing campaign. This material is entirely optional; the Domain of Heryngard and the Uldra Cthon can be used independently, without reference to a larger world.

The world's name can be pronounced either "YEAR-thee-on" or "YER-thee-on." This term isn't often used by inhabitants of the world itself, who have no need to distinguish their world from any other — since other worlds don't exist as far as they know. Only a few wizards and particularly sensitive oracles are aware of the vast multiverse of worlds, planes of existence, fey realms, and other modes of reality that lurk beyond ordinary perception.

IN GENERAL

Although Yrthion is an ancient world, the old civilizations have collapsed under the pressure of a supernatural cataclysm, described below. The cataclysm was the result of a planar conjunction, but the people of Yrthion do not generally know this. The world has been plunged into a dark age by the destruction of almost all its recorded knowledge, and is just beginning to recover.

The general "feel" is that this is a world balanced on a razor's edge of opportunity and threat. Civilization is beginning to expand from its shattered redoubts, but has yet to encounter what has grown — and

now waits — in the wilderness. Yrthion has an early-Medieval atmosphere in the settlements and for lower-level characters, but a strong sword-and-sorcery element of weird magic and bizarre powers lies just beyond the boundaries of the gritty Medieval reality. Higher-level characters will encounter stranger and stranger things as they continue to adventure in the world setting.

The Old Empires practiced a form of Earth magic, the details of which are now lost due to the Cataclysm. The people of Yrthion are aware that the Ancients excavated huge tunnel-complexes looking for nodes of Earth power, and the location of several of these Cthoniums are known. These are, of course, no longer in use, although adventurers do try to explore them seeking ancient scrolls and books that may have escaped damage during the Cataclysm. From the perspective of a player character, the world is rich in mega-dungeons and forgotten underground ruins.

THE CATACLYSM

In the year 476, Yrthion suffered a tremendous cataclysm. Little is known about the reason or even the extent of the disaster, but it had several results.

- A new moon appeared in the skies overhead, altering tidal patterns and causing great waves that flooded and destroyed many coastal cities.

- As a supernatural event, the cataclysm scrambled and changed much that was written, literally converting written words to gibberish, scrambling the order of words, and in some cases creating outlandish scripts that make little sense. Documents and manuscripts in underground cellars showed relatively little change, but those in ordinary buildings were greatly damaged. Most books and maps from the cataclysm period are unreliable, and magical knowledge fell back into an immediate dark age when spellbooks were affected by the cataclysm.

The relatively civilized world declined rapidly into chaos after the cataclysm. It is now the year 601, a hundred and twenty-five years after the cataclysm, and the forces of Law are beginning to reassert themselves. The original empires of the pre-Cataclysm world have been replaced with smaller political units, mostly tribes, city-states, or small feudal kingdoms, and vast areas of the world are wasteland, occupied now only by the forces of Chaos. The landscape is filled with the ruins of the Old Empires, including the vast underground Cthoniums where Earth magic was practiced by the great mages of those societies.

SPECIAL RULES

COPYING MAGICAL WRITINGS

Due to the residual Chaos energy lingering in the world after the Cataclysm, making a copy of magical writing can create a static shock of Chaos-energy, re-activating the Cataclysm's original effect and turning the writing into garbled nonsense. Copying a spell (unless the scroll or spellbook originated from an underground source insulated from the Cataclysm) has a 2% chance per level of the spell to destroy both the original and the copy. Non-magical writing is not affected by copying; that time has passed.

PLANES OF EXISTENCE

The most important planes of existence in this first book are the fey realms, since they are relevant to the Whisperwood and the Uldra Cthon. Essentially, the "normal world" begins to melt into other planes of existence if one travels in the right direction. Going too deeply into the wilderness can lead into an area where the Wildfey overlaps with ordinary reality, and eventually leave the traveler in an area that is entirely within a fey realm. Going too deeply underground can lead to areas where the Gloomfey overlaps and eventually becomes the dominant reality. These are still material planes of existence, but they are most definitely not the same as the ordinary world where the characters begin their adventures. The overlapping of the Gloomfey with the ordinary material plane is the reason why deep dungeons seem to be almost alive, inimical to creatures of the surface world, and filled with more deadly creatures than an ordinary underground environment could support.

There are other sorts of connections to planes beyond the material plane, but those will be addressed in later books. For now it suffices to say that travel into any realm, whether the realm is that of dream, wilderness, underground, or sky, leads eventually to a place where planes of existence begin to overlap, and the laws of ordinary existence begin to fail. Material planes can also connect with each other in these half-worlds, at the far boundaries of reality. The "map" of any world, or even a whole universe, becomes blurred and vague at the edges where different planes and realities intersect — the most accurate of maps are those with the warning, "Here be Dragons" at the outer margins.

THE GLOOMFEY (GLWMFEI)

Rather than the distinction between a Summer and Winter Court, the fey are distinguished between Wildfey (such as satyrs, dryads, and pixies) and a second category known as the Gloomfey.

Just as Wildfey creatures inhabit strange dimensions in the wilderness of the surface world, the Gloomfey inhabit similarly strange realms in tunnels below the surface. The best-known type of Gloomfey are the goblins, a species with many different forms ranging from the ordinary goblin up to the sinister goblin nobility, beings as powerful as fey nobles. Goblin spellcasters, and others who use the Gloomfey realms as a source of magical power, are usually referred to as ombramancers. As one ventures deeper underground, these Gloomfey realms begin to overlap with reality in a vast subterranean realm known as the Cthonic Dark, a kind of half-reality of massive fungus-caverns, twisting tunnels, and the lairs of the creatures of the Gloomfey.

NON-HUMAN ANCESTRIES

The dwarves and elves of Yrthion are both (although in different ways) branches of a lineage that was related to the fey in the long-lost past. Dwarves are a species of subterranean delver-fey that broke off entirely from the Gloomfey, rejecting Chaos and absolutely embracing Law as an alignment. Although the dwarves have virtually no spellcasters of the arcane type, they manage to infuse their workmanship with strange charms and enchantments, probably a result of the distant lineage back to the fey realms below the earth. This is also the reason why the dwarves are implacably hostile to creatures of the Gloomfey (and vice versa).

The elves, unlike the dwarves who rejected everything about their origins, are still closely tied to their fey origins. Many elves cross over into the fey realms, and there is much commerce between the elves and their fey cousins. While the elves have less inherent magic than most fey creatures, they are more capable than most fey at casting spells and grasping the full potential of a true magic-user.

Although there are a number of elves and dwarves to be found living in human society, the vast majority of both these non-human ancestries keep to themselves in their own settlements.

As a Referee, I think that the role-playing side of the game benefits from elves and dwarves having the feel of their original folkloric identities: as truly non-human, partly supernatural, and uncommon to the experience of most humans in the world. A common trend in fantasy literature over the past 20 or so years has been to portray elves and dwarves as little more than sub-groups of humans, rather than as completely different, unrelated species that just happen to bear a passing resemblance to humankind. In Yrthion, the species of humans, elves, and dwarves often work together toward common goals, but they are by no means the same type of being. Elves aren't just good at magic; they are *inherently magical*. Dwarves don't just *prefer* underground dwellings in mountain halls, they are supernaturally linked to darkness, stone, and gold as a part of their fundamental collective being. It is the unusual (or heroic) elf or dwarf who ventures out from the spirit-sustaining environment of wilderness or stone hall and into the cleared farmlands and filth-ridden cities of the human species.



PART TWO: THE DOMAIN OF HERYNGARD

INTRODUCTION

The Domain of Heryngard isn't a direct analogy to any historical time or place in our Earth. The climate is that of the fertile crescent in ancient times, the social organization is similar to that of Ancient Greece but with more feudalism mixed in, the names include many from Celtic/Gaelic and Medieval Occitan, and the situation is mostly inspired by the Dark Ages in Western Europe. It is, in other words, a place of historically-inspired *themes*, not historical *analogues*. This is deliberate, intended to push the region into the realm of folklore and legend, much as fairy tales begin with "Once upon a time in a land far away," and Robert E. Howard's Conan saga begins with "Between the time when the oceans drank Atlantis and the rise of the sons of Aryas, there was an age undreamed of."

And so, in that tradition, let us begin with this:

After the new moon appeared in the skies, and the written record of all that had gone before was twisted into meaninglessness, there rose the city state of Heryngard, with its heroes and bards, to confront new challenges and dread fears, to re-explore changed continents, and to discover new magics undreamt of by the Ancient Empires.

The Domain of Heryngard is the territory claimed by the Free City of Heryngard, which includes all of the hexes in the northern portion of the map (north of the Yarzu Hills). The Cendri Hills are the approximate northern border of the Domain. Heryngard is a relatively small city, but it is geographically and culturally well-positioned. The Heryn River gives it access to the interior, and the city is the de facto headquarters of the Bardic community.

Adventuring in the territory of the Free City of Heryngard is designed to begin in the small hamlet of Morag, location of Castle Morag, one of the free city's border castles. Caer Morag is located near a fey realm, and also near a large Cthonium of the Old Empire known as the Uldra Cthon, so it offers a good source of adventure hooks to launch a campaign.

CLIMATE

The Domain of Heryngard is in a warm but not tropical climate; crocodiles infest the Heryn River, but snow often falls in the river valley during winter. The Yarzu and Cendri Hills, with their higher altitude, are colder than the river valley.

RELIGION

DRUIDISM

Druidism is the predominant religion in the Domain of Heryngard, and is strongly affected by the presence of demigods in the region. A demigod, in this context, is a being powerful enough to grant spells to followers but living in the Material Plane rather than a higher plane of existence. Many of these demigods are powerful nature spirits revered by the druids, but some — the Iron God in Hex 1010, for example — are minor gods that are too weak or simply don't choose to transcend the material planes.

The druidic religion in this area can best be described as honoring the nature-spirit demigods as the representatives of Nature itself. Druids commune with these demigods for guidance on their actions, which mostly involve performing rites and maintaining holy sites, both of which strengthen the demigods.

Druidism does not require any particular morality of its followers, but it does require respect for (and sacrifices to) the powers of Nature. The behavior of Druidic followers is still governed by the Druids in terms of not stealing things or killing people, but these requirements aren't based in morality: they are simply practical. Most of these "laws" are by tradition. If a Druidic follower commits murder, for example, a Druid might rule that the murderer is to be sacrificed to the gods of Nature. This "ruling" is based on the Druid's reading of omens, not on a body of law, so Druidic rulings are much less consistent than those based on capital-L Law. Tradition, omens, and the Druid's independent judgement are much more of a factor than logic, legislation, or even fairness.

LAW

The gods aligned with Law are worshipped in the cities, but these religions have not made much headway in the rural countryside. One gets a sense that Law was more predominant in the time before the Cataclysm.

Law, in this world-setting, is akin to the concept of "Divine Law," which has a moral component and multiple hierarchies. As a basic principle it is as described in the Swords & Wizardry Book of Options: a system that strives for the common good, that contains multiple hierarchies and interpretations. Law embraces change when the change would further these goals, and embraces whatever societal complexity is required to improve the common good. Most interpretations of Law are like chivalric codes; it is not a "morality free" reliance on hierarchy and mere social order. Law itself is not an entity, it is a mindless force interpreted by the various gods of Lawful alignment.

NEUTRALITY

By contrast to Law, Neutrality is not a cosmic force. There is (or so many believe) a cosmic force of "Balance" out in the multiverse, which strives to balance Law and Chaos, but this force is far weaker than the other two cosmic processes. Followers of the Balance are of Neutral alignment, but the Neutral alignment is much larger than just the followers of the Balance. Those who revere unchanged things such as Nature or ancient traditions are often of Neutral alignment, since both Law and Chaos are willing to change anything to support their goals. Similarly, those who are unaligned in the battle between Law and Chaos (for whatever reason) are of Neutral alignment. There are Neutrally-aligned gods, although they tend to be less powerful than gods drawing strength from Law or Chaos.

CHAOS

Chaos is a force of ruination and tyranny, a cosmic force of equal power to the cosmic force of Law.

Of the actual gods of Chaos, the worship of Baal is the most common in the Domain of Heryngard; there is a temple to Baal in Heryngard.

TEMPLES OF CHAOS

There are temples of Chaotic deities in many cities and towns, and they are permitted to remain. Why?

The first answer is that Chaotic or not, these beings are still GODS, with tremendous power at their disposal. It's a bad idea for a city to outlaw simply the worship of a Chaotic deity, tear down the temple, and imprison the worshippers. This kind of plan invites the direct attention of the deity, and often results in divine retribution against the city in the form of storms, bad luck, and even more dramatic interventions such as rains of fire or virulent plagues. That's the simple answer to the question of why human settlements may contain temples to the gods of Chaos.

Another answer is that the battle between Law and Chaos isn't clear-cut. Law and Chaos are mindless forces. The gods don't have perfect knowledge of everything that goes on in this ever-changing, impossibly complex battle. Gods of destiny or knowledge are more aware, but most gods essentially rely on their intuition. Even the gods of Law may find themselves working at cross-purposes from time to time. The situation is even less clear at the human level, where cryptic divinations and visions are the only clues humans have to interpret the (already imperfect) understanding the gods possess. There is no single tactician or general in charge of the forces of Law even at the divine level.

There's a more in-depth answer as well, but it's not quite as clear cut to the modern reader or gamer who is likely to view the tension between Law and Chaos as a battle to be won or lost.

The gods of Chaos are usually gods with tremendous destructive power that is held at bay by offerings. The offerings do, in some way, strengthen these deities, but from the perspective of a human settlement it's still better to appease these gods than to "take arms against, and by opposing end them." Because they aren't ended on the material plane: they are still out there, and still able to exert considerable destructive power even without their temples and followers. Those of Neutral alignment, who don't care about expunging Chaos in the first place, will certainly blame the forces of Law if they suffer from a backlash by a Chaotic-aligned deity, and in the long run alienating the forces of Neutrality could definitely hurt the viability of Law.

The second answer is that although there are several different approaches to Law (including civil disobedience when a leader isn't fulfilling the Lawful duties of a leader), the general rule is that if a city chooses to allow a Temple of Chaos in its walls, and makes it a crime to attack that temple, the forces of Law will usually follow the city's laws — up to a certain point. If a paladin with a Lawful alignment and a willingness to "go it alone" against the forces of Chaos enters a city, there's little doubt that one of the temples of Law will get a divine hint that this paladin needs to be warned against starting a one-man crusade in the city when the temples haven't authorized it. This is where the role-playing gets complicated — in a good way. When a temple of Law starts getting omens and divinations about attacking a temple of Chaos, that's the sign that some kind of agreement has been broken at a high enough level to warrant an assault on a Chaos temple. It's also a sign that some kind of protection will be provided against the Chaotic deity after the fact. Without this sort of divine trigger, ordinary followers of Law don't take divine events into their own hands and set holy wars in motion.

MAJOR LOCATIONS

- The Cendri Hills
- The Domain of Heryngard
- The Jalu River Valley
- The Forest of Rhoon
- The Whisperwood
- The Yarzu Hills

THE CENDRI HILLS

The Cendri Hills are the northern border of the Domain of Heryngard, and although the city-state sends occasional patrols into the hills, they are for all practical purposes to be considered wilderness. Some hill tribes roam the area, but human occupation is sparse.

ENCOUNTERS IN THE CENDRI HILLS

For encounters in the Cendri Hills, roll one encounter per day and one per night, using the Wilderness Encounter Tables from Swords & Wizardry (either the Complete Revised Rulebook or the Book of Options) — or any other encounter tables you choose to use for a wilderness area.

THE DOMAIN OF HERYNGARD

Heryngard is a city-state that controls the Heryn River Valley. Small towns in the region pay a tithe to Heryngard; they are usually self-governed, but their decisions are subject to a veto from the city-state. Smaller villages are usually assigned a “Protector,” a citizen of Heryngard from one of the city’s Great Houses, and are actually managed or governed by a reeve or bailiff appointed by that citizen. Every clear hex in the Domain of Heryngard has a settlement of some kind, although the population density is still far below historical population densities of the Medieval period. They are not connected by any system of roads unless noted, and trails aren’t easy to follow. It is more likely than not that an adventuring party won’t stumble upon a settlement even if they enter the hex, because each hex is approximately 23,000 acres — a vast area when there are no man-made landmarks. Although it’s only an approximation, we’re discussing these hexes as if they are square areas, not hexagons — the math is much easier, and the numbers aren’t off by too much. That said, crossing a six-mile by six-mile area would only bring a traveler into contact with about 6 square miles of terrain, when the actual size of that area is 36 square miles. And even though there are a few signs of settlements beyond their actual area, such as sheep-trails, smoke from hearths, and cultivated fields, those aren’t visible from terribly far away, and don’t always point directly toward the settlement. For this reason, hamlets usually have only a 1 in 6 chance to be “found” if the adventurers aren’t traveling on a road or along a river that would increase the chance of finding the place. Towns and cities create evidence of their existence in a much wider radius, and can be found automatically.

Notations in keyed hexes refer to major lairs and landmarks that have a higher likelihood of being found by casual travelers; in these cases, the probability of encountering the keyed landmark is left entirely to you as the Referee.

The clear hexes in the Domain of Heryngard are designed for low-level parties to do some hex crawling before venturing out into true wilderness. This is also an area that works if the characters are going to engage in banditry, since the encounter tables reflect lots of merchants to rob and lots of patrols to offer a threat. If you are going to run a hex crawl campaign starting at first or second level, begin in the Heryn River Valley and have an NPC caution the party that the hills are dangerous places. From there, the characters can proceed to the Jalu River Valley or elsewhere.

ENCOUNTERS IN CLEAR, CIVILIZED HEXES

Apply the following only to the clear hexes in the Heryn River Valley, or a hex that specifically states it is “Clear terrain, civilized,” such as Hex 0417 (which is not in the Heryn River Valley, but contains a town). There are four types of travel: on a road (roll on the Road Encounters Table), on a river (roll on the River Encounters Table), along a coast (roll on the Coastal Encounters Table), and cross-country (roll on the Cross Country Table). In all of these travel modes, check 3 times per day for an encounter (twice during the daytime and once to see if something comes nosing around the camp during the night). The chance of an encounter is 1 in 6 for each check. This is a more frequent check than suggested in the Swords & Wizardry Complete Revised Rulebook. The reason is that this is a civilized area with lots of people moving around, and the tables contain more “normal” encounters than the ones in the rulebook. The net result is that traveling in this area generates lots more encounters, mostly with travelers, farmers, and so on, and the monster encounters are also weaker (because the area is better patrolled).

ROAD ENCOUNTERS

01-05	Adventurers. A party of 1d4 adventurers, each of level 1d4.
06-20	Bandits. 3d6 bandits
21-30	Caravan. A caravan of 1d20 +10 humans.
31-45	Farmers. A group of 1d4 farmers, with 1d2 guard dogs.
46-55	Hunters. 1d4 +1 hunters.
56-61	Nobles. 1d4 nobles, each with 1d4 human soldiers. The group is accompanied by 1d2 knights (Level 4 fighters)
62-66	Patrol. A patrol of 1d4 x5 human soldiers, led by a mounted sergeant at arms.
66-70	Pilgrimage. 1d6 x5 human pilgrims led by a Cleric (Level 4)
71-00	Monster Encounter (Land)