

FORGOTTEN REALMS

The Lalya Maurshanta

The Zealots of the Black Tree



By George Krashos

This work is dedicated to Brian Cortijo and Jeremy Grenemyer for their love of all things Cormyr.

The Lalya Maurshanta

Seven scourges – five long gone, one of the day, and one soon to come – open the door no man can close. Out come the armies of the dead and the legions of the devil made by itself, to sweep all Cormyr away in ruin, unless those long dead rise to stand against them.

Alaundo the Seer
Year of Destinies Foretold (-233 DR)

*The childe of men, lette his bodie nourishe the tree.
The tree of this bodie, lette it growe as it nourishe.
The spirit of this tree, to them lette it return as it grew.*

*Thus the havoc bearers sleepe, the sleepe of no reste.
Thus the sorrow bringers sow, the seeds of their ruine.
Thus the deathe makers kille, the sons of their sons.*

The Curse of the Aegisir Oerylii
Year of the Foaming Wave (65 DR)

The Lalya Maurshanta

A.K.A. The Zealots of the Black Tree, the Bane of the Obarskyrs, the Devil Dragon's Revenge.

Group Mark: A black, gnarled tree

Group Colors/Livery: No identifying colors are worn by members of this group.

The Lalya Maurshanta (la-LIE-a mor-SHAN-ta), a term that means "Zealots of the Black Tree" in the elven tongue, is a re-formed, hidden fellowship of elves that seeks to reclaim the land of Cormyr for the People. This organisation devoted centuries to nurturing the *ghazneths* of prophecy and seeking answers regarding the final fate of Lorelei Alavara, whilst waiting for the day when the omens would come to pass and "armies of the dead and legions of the devil" would fall upon the Forest Kingdom. In the aftermath of the Dragonfall Battle, this shadowy group of legend is talked about only in whispers by the folk of Cormyr, but agents of the Crown and the Mage Royal Vangerdahast fear that they have not been entirely vanquished. As such, they have devoted many resources to uncovering

the secrets of Cormyr's long past in an attempt to better understand the events of the Devil Dragon War and where the next attack will spring from.

In the wake of the death of King Azorn IV and Vangerdahast's decision to seek to reform the Sleeping Sword through the use of dragons, the Mage Royal has found cause to revisit the scribings of his predecessors and has gleaned sufficient information to advise the Steel Regent, the Queen Dowager Filaferil and Alaphondar Emmarask that some greater power yet lurks at the fringes of the realm, eager to bring ruin to the Forest Kingdom. Rumors continue to circulate of something or someone rousing the goblinkin of the Stonelands to continual raiding and causing the unexpected deaths of Crown officers and agents in the outer reaches of the realm.

In response the Steel Regent has dispatched a handful of highknights to investigate these nefarious activities and report back to her so that a plan of action can be devised. They in turn have recruited several chartered adventuring bands to assist in drawing forth Cormyr's foes. Things, as they say, are getting interesting in the Forest Kingdom.

Goals

The Lalya Maurshanta's grand scheme is as ambitious as it is simple: the removal of all humans from the Lythtlorn (the elven name for the Wolf Woods, or what is now Cormyr) and a reclamation of their ancestral home along with a return of the hegemony of the elves over the region. In more practical terms the Lalya Maurshanta seeks to undermine the Obarskyr monarchy, foment unrest in the Forest Kingdom and support and protect the kingdom's foes.

The defeat of the "Devil Dragon" Nalavara and the dread *ghazneths* has however been a huge blow to the ambitions of the Lalya Maurshanta. The organisation had labored for centuries to make the events of Alaundo's prophecy come to pass and in their defeat, the few remaining senior members of this cabal have questioned their lofty goal of returning the land to the People. Some members burn with a desire for vengeance, while recent recruits talk only of slaying humans throughout Cormyr. The senior leaders of the group have been forced to discipline some indiscretions, causing

tensions within the group, while seeking to retain the security of their relative anonymity.

To that end, the Lalya Maurshanta has drawn back from overt activities and instead resolved to operate with more subtlety and guile. As such, they have provided secret financial support to Sembian merchant interests looking to destabilise Cormyrean trade, have through intermediaries provided safehavens for enemies of Cormyr seeking to escape the authorities, and more recently have sponsored pirate raids on Cormyr's shores and shipping.

The goals of the Lalya Maurshanta are now in transition and they may simply devolve into a localised version of the Eldreth Veluuthra, if indeed that organisation, aware to an extent of their activities, does not subsume them wholly in the years to come. Alternatively, they may stay true to their founding goal and continue to remain a shadowy foe of Cormyr, creating threats to the Forest Kingdom with the patience of long years.

History and Motivations

The formation of the Lalya Maurshanta has its origin in the clashes between the elves of Lythtlorn and the human settlers who reached the shores of that land in the time before the raising of the Standing Stone. The elves of House Amaratharr had been granted the right to colonise and claim the woodlands of Lythtlorn by decree of Coronal Tannivh of Cormanthyr for services rendered during the Shadow Wars against the drow of the Twisted Tower. House Amaratharr was made up of two major gold elven clans, the Nelnueves and the Keoves, as well as the minor clans of Alavara, Berethryl and Elian. Of these clans, the Alavara were renowned for their fierce hatred of the drow, and their devotion to the faith of Shevarash, the Black Archer.

As history shows, the first meetings between elf and human in the forests of modern Cormyr were unfriendly and oft at the point of a sword or arrow. The catalyst for the formation of the Lalya Maurshanta lies in the -75 DR death of Thatoryl Elian, the betrothed of the elf maid Lorelei Alavara at the hands of Andar Obarskyr. The death of Thatoryl saw his betrothed take an oath of vengeance against the human "beasts" and swear to see them erased from her woodland home. Recruiting from within the Alavara and Elian clans, many of whom were Shevarash worshippers, Lorelei commenced a campaign of death and devastation against the human presence in the

Lythtlorn. This pogrom against the increasingly plentiful human settlers culminated in an all-out attack on fledgling Marsember in the Year of Sorrow and Pain (-21 DR). That attack then generated reprisals against the elves along the coastal areas of the Lythtlorn woods, as the humans bolstered their battle might with mercenaries and wizards from the lands of the Vilhon Reach.

The elves fought back in turn, and Lord Iliphar moved quickly to assure his subjects that the spread of human settlement would be confined to the coast and that the woodlands would remain inviolate as the sole preserve of the elves. This proclamation had the effect of assuaging some of the more fearful residents of the Lythtlorn, and Iliphar's sanction of an attack on a brazen human settlement nestled within the forest in the Year of Distant Thunder (6 DR) went further to comforting the increasingly concerned elves. However Lord Iliphar, aware of the vulnerability of his subjects to the burgeoning human incursions into their woodland home, took counsel with Coronal Eltargrim of Cormanthyr and guided by that noble elf's vision for the future of the *Tel'Quess* came to a surprising decision. In the Year of the Fallen Fury (20 DR) he began the preparations for a Retreat from the Lythtlorn and declared that Lorelei and her group were banished from their clans and no longer counted as members of House Amaratharr. Undeterred, Lorelei and her followers retreated to the more northern forest of Rivrau, located in the present-day Stonelands, and continued their depredations against the humans and any elves sent to challenge them. They named themselves the Lalya Maurshanta in reference to the deity that drove their desire for vengeance. When Lord Iliphar surrendered the sovereignty of the Lythtlorn to Faerlthann Obarskyr in the Year of Opening Doors (26 DR) several elves of House Amaratharr joined Lorelei and her band and their assaults against the humans of the newly proclaimed kingdom of Cormyr continued.

As the years passed, the realm of Cormyr prospered and grew under the Obarskyr monarchs. Yet Lorelei and her followers, now a desperate, battle-hardened group of some fifty elves, continued to hinder human attempts to expand their areas of control. Their constant raiding and slaying bedevilled the reign of King Faerlthann and his successors, despite their best efforts to hunt down this unrelenting foe. It was in this time, as Lorelei and her band were slowly winnowed down that she encountered unlooked for allies in the form of a trio of baelnorn, from a nigh-dead, ancient elven house of Uvaeren.

House Oeryl was an elder house, strong in magic and which set great store in lineage, heritage and tradition. Decimated in the Twelves Nights of Fire, the few, surviving Oeryl elves were saved by the magic of Malaear, Ordrimmin and Naerlatha, their family baelnorn. The few survivors, mostly babies and younglings were fostered and raised in Semberholme while the Aegisir Oerylii, as the house baelnorn were known, created a hidden refuge for the family's magic and lore far from Cormanthor in the forests of the Lythtlorn, near present-day Gnoll Pass. This trove included a series of tomes devoted to the faith of the deity Labelas Enoreth and more particularly to the writings of the elven seer Undralass, one of that deity's greatest worshippers. The scribings of Undralass would form the foundation of the prophetic work of many oracles of various races in the centuries to come, including that most famous of seers, Alaundo of Candlekeep. The Aegisir Oerylii devoted themselves to deciphering he work of Undralass, seeking to avert any future threats to their House.

Following the destruction of Uvaeren, the position of Lord Speaker of the house fell to Tamrynn Oeryl. Barely an adult and immature in thought and deed, Tamrynn told no members of his house of the existence of the Aegisir Oerylii and when he and the other, few senior members of his clan were slain in the Dark Court Slaughter, the surviving children of House Oeryl were adopted into the other great Houses of Cormanthyr. The now forgotten baelnorn of House Oeryl maintained their eternal vigil, waiting for contact from members of their house, but as the years passed with no word, they slowly succumbed to insanity. They became obsessed with a particular prophecy of Undralass known as the "Seven Scourges Prophecy", which when rendered in an archaic, elven dialect stated:

Seven scourges – five long gone, one of the day, and one soon to come – shall open the gate no man can close and the slumbering armies will come forth. The legions of the beast without end will come to ruin and be swept away from our wooded land as the long dead rise to stand against them.

The Aegisir Oerylii became convinced that they were the "long dead" of the prophecy and that they were destined to prepare for and lead the defence of their new, woodland home. The identity of their foe however – the "beast without end" – remained elusive and they continued to fervently consult the omens and auguries for guidance. In addition, the

Alaundo the Seer

None know the origins of Alaundo the Seer as even his surname, if ever he had one, is lost in the mists of time. Many sages and historians, such as Jalarna of Elturel and Poldort "the Examiner", consider that he must have been Netherese given his renowned devotion to the deity Savras, the All-Seeing One. Others, such as the controversial Muham yn Mualas el Hafar of Memnon assert that Alaundo came from "another world" to be the voice of that god.

What is known is that Alaundo settled on the shores of the modern-day Sword Coast sometime around the Year of Scriveners (-264 DR), building a small tower and inner shrine to Savras. Over the years as his powers of prophecy proved reliable if somewhat inscrutable, many clergy and followers of the Gods of Knowledge (the powers of Oghma and Deneir) came to his abode as a consequence of dream visions sent to them by their own deities.

They were tasked with providing assistance and security to Alaundo, who ignoring his surroundings, continued to labor on his prophecies and building on the work of such notables as Auguthra the Mad and the elven oracles Vartharian of Thaeranyl, the long-lost capital of Shantel Othreier, and Undralass "the Seer-Speaker". As the years passed, the small settlement grew ever larger, receiving support and patronage from rulers near and far, especially the fledgling Ithal Dynasty of Tethyr, culminating in the founding of the great monastery known as Candlekeep in the Year of Stonerising (-200 DR).

Alaundo the Seer lived a long and simple life at Candlekeep until the day he disappeared from his spartan cell in the Year of Lost Messengers (-116 DR). His bed was slept in, his robes discarded over his chair, but he was just "gone". Reports of sightings and even Alaundo's death ensued over the years but his final fate remains as mysterious as his life and origins. In recent times, rumors have arisen that Alaundo's skull has been offered for sale in the markets of Llorbauth far away from Candlekeep. Many loremasters have scoffed at this claim but the truth of it remains as impenetrable as the prophecies of the man himself.

baelnorn pondered on what the reference to the "slumbering armies" in the prophecy could mean. In their oldest tomes of lore they found a reference to a long-ago clan of elves known as the Nethelinnir, that had left Shantel Othreier during the Crown Wars, vowing to create a hidden haven "for all true elves devoted to the defeat of the foes

of the *Tel'Quessir*, not those seeking to slay their kith and kin". They believed that the Nethelinnir had used High Magic to create a realm removed from Faerûn, but accessible to those who knew its secrets. Believing that the Nethelinnir were the allies that they were seeking, the Aegisir Oerylii bent their research to finding this fabled haven.

In the Year of The Hidden Fortress (46 DR) the wards of the baelnorn's concealed crypt flared into life as their millennia-long home was breached by human explorers looking to plunder ruins left behind by the departed elves. The Aegisir Oerylii slew the plunderers with ease and emerged into a world greatly changed from the one that they had forgotten countless years before. Using powerful magic they located and communicated with the closest group of elves in the vicinity: Lorelei Alavara and her group of renegades. They learned that the elves had departed the forests and left them to the human "beasts". In that moment the Aegisir Oerylii concluded that they had found their foe of the prophecy and that the time had come to fulfil their destiny by preparing for the time of the Seven Scourges and the return of the Nethelinnir.

Roused from their languor, the baelnorn began preparations for the casting of a great High Magic ritual intended to serve as the vehicle to create the Seven Scourges. They spent many years crafting a powerful soulcurse that would deliver their instruments of vengeance, believing in turn that their creation would lead them to fabled Nethelinnir and the utter defeat of the human invaders. At the same time, the Aegisir Oerylii provided magical aid to the Lalya Maurshanta who, growing ever bolder, stepped up their raids against human travellers, caravans and hunters. Ultimately the baelnorn discerned that the elves of House Amaratharr had cast their own ritual magic over the Lythtorn, tying their vitality and grasp of the Weave to the forests, and providing benefits to those who connected to it. In departing, Lord Iliphar had transferred some of that boon to the familial line of Ondeth Obarskyr and provided insights into how that enchantment could be tapped into to the Mage Royal Baerauble and his line also. The Aegisir Oerylii advised their new cohorts that the blood of the Obarskyrs was required to bring the Seven Scourges into existence and so Lorelei Alavara began her hunt.

The stalking of first King Faerlthann, then his son and successor King Imlon and then finally King Bryndar saw the elves suffer heavy losses, not the least of which was the near death of Lorelei herself in 55 DR, leading to her transformation into a red

dragon. In the Year of the Boisterous Orc (64 DR), the Lalya Maurshanta engineered the death of King Bryndar in an apparent hunting accident when he was gored by a giant, wild boar. With some of the precious Obarskyr blood now in their possession, the Aegisir Oerylii wove their unique High Magic ritual, which they named *Foqal'talasis'archarim/ "Summoned Souls of Vengeance"*. This ritual had the effect of transforming several Trees of Memory (*shanta na ansriovvar*) planted by House Amaratharr into a new form, which the Lalya Maurshanta named *shanta nal arakhane*, or Trees of the Accursed in the human tongue. These magical vessels stole the souls of humans who were inimicable to the bloodline of Ondeth Obarskyr, transforming them into *ghazneths* and were veiled and hidden from seeking magic cast by elves and humans alike.

The casting of their ritual cost the Aegisir Oerylii dearly however. Being creations of High Magic themselves, Ordrimmin and Naerlatha were consumed in the casting, while Malaear's corporeal body was torn asunder, causing his consciousness to return to his phylactery, a *kiira* of House Oeryl located in their hidden crypt bastion. Bereft of their baelnorn guardians, the Lalya Maurshanta were vulnerable and their situation was compounded by the absence of Nalavarauthatoryl, who had flown east two winters earlier to the Thunder Peaks to give birth to her clutch of dragon eggs and succumbed to the "spawning sleep" that invariably follows such an event. The Mage Royal Baerauble, aware of a mighty magic having been cast in the environs of the Forest Kingdom took counsel with his consort Alea Dahast. Her powerful scrying, augmented by the Art of the Srinshree, revealed the exact nature and presence of the Lalya Maurshanta to the humans of Cormyr for the first time.

In the next forty winters, notwithstanding the depredations of other foes of the realm such as the goblinkin of Hlundadim, the Mage Royal Baerauble and his mage apprentices engaged in a concerted effort to seek out and destroy the members of the Lalya Maurshanta. Their efforts bore deadly fruit until the Year of the Jagged Leaves (114 DR) when Nalavarauthatoryl returned to aid her followers. The dragon's descent on the gathered forces of Cormyr was devastating and King Sacrast was a lucky survivor of one of her assaults near Arabel. Scrying magic discovered the hidden lair of the Lalya Maurshanta in the Storm Horn Mountains and Baerauble and his forces managed to corner her and her remaining followers in 116 DR and unleash powerful magic that trapped them in the demiplane

Nalavarauthatoryl the Red

The story of Lorelei Alavara and her acts of revenge following the death of her loved one Thatoryl Elian loom large in both the ancient and modern history of Cormyr. Swearing vengeance in the name of Shevarash the Black Archer, Lorelei became a revenge-driven battlemistress seeking to scour her woodland home clear of humans and their works. In the days before the raising of the Standing Stone, her activism and attitudes found favour within the ruling elite of House Amaratharr but over time, as her toll of blood and death rose ever higher, many began to doubt her sanity and the wisdom of her singleminded crusade. This led ultimately to her banishment from the Lythtorn and the life of a renegade.

In the Year of Caustic Blood (55 DR), gravely wounded and near death following an encounter with armymen of Cormyr, Lorelei found a salvation of sorts when the Aegisir Oerylii used a forbidden High Magic ritual to transform her into a red dragon. The *N'fhaor'allar'orm*/"Shape of Dragonflame" ritual was used by the dark elves of Ilythiir during the Crown Wars but after the Descent forbidden by proclamation of Elven Court. Lorelei saw her new, powerful body as the means by which she could wreak vengeance against the slayers of her only love and took a new name in tribute to him.

Nalavarauthatoryl is known to have mated with at least two male red dragons before her banishment to the demiplane of Grodd. She roused her first consort Eardynnansczyk, the last great red wyrm of the Wyvernwater, to attack and slay King Rhiiman "the Glorious" of Cormyr in the Year of the Whispering Woods (79 DR) and her only clutch of wyrmlings, born to the mighty Arnfalamme "Redwing" of the Thunder Peaks would bedevil Cormyr well into the reign of King Draxius "the Neverdying".

The banishment of Nalavarauthatoryl the Red in the Year of the Mortal Promise (116 DR) saw the seeming demise of the Lalya Maurshanta until she was inadvertently released by the Mage Royal Vangerdahast, setting off the events of the Devil Dragon War. It is believed that Nalavarauthatoryl met her end at the hands of King Azoun IV in 1371 DR, but such was her thirst for vengeance that many whisper that the Devil Dragon lives on, in another form or on another plane, ready to bring further death and devastation to Cormyr in the years to come. Knowing the mighty magic that gave her form, the truth of her destruction or otherwise, is still a matter for conjecture.

of Grodd. That casting cost the life of the Mage Royal's apprentices Vaeral Crownsilver and Phaendra Bleth, and their demise is recorded in Court annals as the "Sisters' Sacrifice".

In the following centuries, memory of the Lalya Maurshanta and their attacks on early Cormyr faded. The Trees of the Accursed however continued to reap their harvest of souls, and the *ghazneths* grew in number and slept the sleep of the damned. The consciousness of Malaeor Oeryl slumbered also, the *kiira* of his House sitting dusty and forgotten in his hidden crypt in the formerly forested lands that were now the rocky foothills of the easternmost Storm Horns. But such is the power of revenge and treachery, that the dreams of the Lalya Maurshanta were not destined to die a forgotten death. In the Year of the Tankard (1370 DR), the exiled fugitives Thaerilon and Xanthon Cormaeril stumbled upon the Oeryl crypt. With them they had a vial of King Azoun's blood, a remnant of the failed assassination attempt described as the Abraxus Affair, and this heady substance awoke the sentience of Malaeor Oeryl.

Transferring his consciousness into Thaerilon, Malaeor used Azoun's blood to shape a new form for himself, destroying his host in the process, and more significantly, transforming Xanthon into a living *ghazneth*. He tasked his new acolyte with freeing the other *ghazneths* and thereby set into motion the events of the Devil Dragon War. It was Malaeor's magic that forged the link between the *ghazneths* and the trapped Nalavarauthatoryl and he masterminded the luring of Vangerdahast into the Stonelands and the Farsea Marshes, believing rightly that the Mage Royal's presence and magic would be the key to unlocking his chief lieutenant's planar prison. What Malaeor did not count on was the creation of a free-willed *ghazneth* in the form of Rowen Cormaeril. Rowen's coupling with Crown Princess Tanalasta and fathering of the future King Azoun V, had seen him become one with the blood of the Obarskyrs and when confronted by the other *ghazneths*, the magic that created and sustained them transformed him also, given his despair that he had betrayed the kingdom.

As the events of the Devil Dragon War unfolded, Malaeor became convinced that until Rowen came under his control, the fulfilment of the "Seven Scourges" prophecy could not come to pass and that Rowen was the key to finding the Nethelinnir. Given this, he was not dismayed by the other *ghazneths* being vanquished or the death of Nalavarauthatoryl at the hands of King Azoun IV. He decided that the Lalya Maurshanta needed

to be reborn, its ranks replenished and that his minions tasked with discovering the location of the last *ghazneth* so he could be captured and controlled. In the years since the Devil Dragon War and the defeat of Nalavarauthatoryl, the Lalya Maurshanta has focused on rebuilding its strength while Malaeer crafts ever more potent *scrying* magic in an effort to discover the whereabouts of Rowen Cormaeril and awaits the auspicious-sounding Year of Risen Elfkin.

Organization

The Lalya Maurshanta is a small organisation numbering some three-score individuals. Its membership is wholly elven, and while gold elves make up the majority of its membership, it does feature both moon and green elves also. No sea or winged elves are members, but Malaeer is known to have recently sent an envoy to Naramyr, the sea elven realm off the coast of Cormyr to recruit allies in their crusade against the Forest Kingdom. It is thought that progress in that regard is being made, albeit slowly, as Coronel Aravae Daudil is known to be a friend of Cormyr.

The re-formed Lalya Maurshanta is a two-tiered hierarchy in which Malaeer Oeryl's most trusted lieutenants form an inner circle of four Anlornorn (Oaklords) while the remaining rank and file refer to themselves as Maurthraenil (Dark Hunters). Each Anlornorn leads a cell of the Lalya Maurshanta and these are currently located in the Stonelands, the King's Forest, the Hermit's Wood and the Hullack Forest. All communications only occur within the various cells and through the Anlornorn, so the discovery of one cell does not risk exposing another. The Anlornorn in turn report to Malaeer through enspelled gems that allow the bearer to communicate as if using a *sending* spell with no word or time limitations.

The Anlornorn exercise a great deal of autonomy, and as long as they do not betray the organisation, withhold important information from the organisation, or work at cross-purposes to the dictates of Malaeer Oeryl, they may operate their cells as they please. This difference in approach and types of activities between the various cells means that the Cormyrean authorities are yet to discern any real indication of the Lalya Maurshanta's existence. When their activities have come to the notice of the authorities, their significance has been obfuscated by the reputation and ongoing machinations of the Eldreth Veluuthra.

The Ghazneths

The *ghazneths* numbered seven unique creatures of magic brought into existence by the twisted High Magic of the Aegisir Oerylii. The term *ghazneth* was created by the Lalya Maurshanta and means "bringer of prophecy" in the elven tongue, from *aghaz* (agent or instrument) and *neth* (fate or doom).

The most notorious of the *ghazneths* were the "five long gone" who were Suzara Obarskyr, Boldovar Obarskyr, Ryndala Merendil, Melineth Turcassan and Luthax Naaril. These five were created by a unique Ritual of Complement cast by the Aegisir Oerylii, which captured their souls on their deaths and transferred them to the Trees of the Accursed. The two remaining *ghazneths* were the cousins Xanthon and Rowen Cormaeril. Xanthon was transformed into a *ghazneth* by the magic of the awakened Malaeer Oeryl, while Rowen was transformed by a confluence of magic arising out of the presence of the awakened *ghazneths*, his adoption of the "blood of the Obarskyrs" and his betrayal of his duty to them.

All of the "five long gone" *ghazneths* were vanquished in the Devil Dragon War due to the actions and bravery of the Crown Princess Tanalasta, who managed to deduce the nature of the curse that empowered them. The two remaining *ghazneths* live on, although the continuing existence of Xanthon is one of the greatest secrets of the Crown. Imprisoned deep beneath the Royal Palace in a *dead magic zone*, agents of the Crown seek to unravel the secrets of the *ghazneths* and how they came to be through Xanthon.

Rowen Cormaeril remains in Cormyr also, but resides in an extradimensional refuge created long ago by the Sword Heralds. He spends his days in solitude and cares little for his own future or fate, believing himself a victim of the cruelty of the gods. He is visited with some regularity by the Sage Most Learned Alaphondar and Lady Laspeera (who feeds him magic when required), but exhibits no interest in the outside world.

Chain of Command

The Lalya Maurshanta is ruled with absolute authority by Malaeer Oeryl since the destruction of his baelnorn cohorts. Currently, the size of the organisation means that Malaeer is interested in most every activity that the cells under his control undertake. While he grants them their autonomy he demands constant updates as to what is happening, even on a day-to-day basis. This has created some

friction with the Anlornorn, but nothing overt. At the current time, the leadership of the Lalya Maurshanta is comprised as follows:

- Malaeear Oeryl (LN male gold elf baelnorn wizard 20; Int 21, Wis 17): Likely the last survivor of his house, Malaeear shows signs of instability of the mind, as he ruminates on his current situation and what the future holds for his and his followers' destinies. While his mood is highlighted by flashes of paranoia and megalomania, Malaeear holds no personal animosity to the humans of Cormyr and simply considers himself an instrument of fate, tasked with their elimination. He is dry and dispassionate and when he speaks it is to instruct and guide.
- Shaundyl Berethryl (LE male gold elf fighter 10/wizard 11; Int 19): An ancient elf who utilises a *stasis gem* to sleep for centuries at a time so as to retain his youth, Shaundyl remembers the earliest days of House Amaratharr. Awakening from his most recent slumber, he viewed the events of the Devil Dragon War with keen interest and was then recruited by Malaeear soon after as the Anlornorn in the Hullack Forest. He is by far the most capable of Malaeear's chief lieutenants and commands rare magics that compel beasts to his service (see Dragon#276).
- Daurauntyn Echorn (NE male gold elf fighter 11/rogue 8; Dex 20): Leader of the cell located in the Hermit's Wood, Daurauntyn gathers the most intelligence of all of Malaeear's subordinates and has several agents in nearby Suzail. Always wearing a hooded cloak, he visits Cormyr's capital on business as a purveyor of fine scents and cosmetics and has a large clientele among the nobles of the city. His agents are ordered not to slay any humans within the walls of Suzail and so his intelligence gathering garners good results.
- Larnassa Amberstar (CE female moon elf wizard 16): This scarred and emaciated wizard has a host of different appearances given her mastery of illusions. Situated in the Stonelands, Larnassa controls and manipulates several tribes of orcs and goblins, coordinating their unceasing raids against the settlements and people of Cormyr. Originally from Evereska but

exiled from that haven for poisoning a love interest who spurned her, Larnassa was captured by human slavers and tortured until she made her escape. She harbors an unrelenting hatred for humans and will slay any she encounters if to do so does not compromise her personal safety.

(The Anlornorn of the King's Forest is not detailed here so as to allow DMs the flexibility to insert an NPC suited to their own campaign).

Rank and File

The majority of the rank and file of the Lalya Maurshanta are existing citizens of Cormyr, who despite their elven heritage are accepted by their fellow Cormyreans. In that regard, the members from the Hermit's Wood and Forest Kingdom cells are the most subtle and keep the lowest profile, while the members of the Hullack Forest and Stonelands cells are the most pro-active in terms of actual raiding and slaying. Notable members of the Lalya Maurshanta's rank and file are:

- Ilshaera "the Wisp" (NE female moon elf watchghost): Slain in spellbattle when her woodland home of Rhasataar was raided by human pirates in the Year of the Black Boats (175 DR), Ilshaera was transformed into a watchghost and has hated humans ever since. Recruited by Shaundyl Berethryl, Ilshaera revels in harassing her opponents while unseen and giving them no rest or sleep. She longs to be returned to corporeal form and hopes that loyal service to the Lalya Maurshanta will see Malaeear craft a new body for her.
- Randatha "the Evenmoon" Archenstar (CN female gold elf rogue 8): One of the most exclusive hostesses of revels and balls in Suzail, she is famed throughout the city for her exquisite taste, and is one of the chief instigator of trends in food and fashion throughout Cormyr. Randatha hides an intense dislike for humans, having been indoctrinated against them as a child refugee of Myth Drannor. She reports directly to Daurauntyn and provides him with significant intelligence as she has become something of a mother confessor to a few dowager noble ladies, notably Dara Hawklin, Gantharla Emmarask and Boeryl Dauntinghorn, distasteful as this role is.

- Beredrar Hoarsilver (CE male green elf ranger 7/cleric 6 of Shevarash) and Parthalas Undiryl (CE male green elf wizard 6/rogue 8; Dex 21): Inseparable lovers who ostensibly roam the King's Forest as hunters-for-hire and guides for nobles keen on killing deer and other more exotic beasts. This duo are cold, calm killers who have buried half a hundred humans throughout the woodlands. They launch attacks of opportunity against lone humans or small bands of travellers, striking from hiding with arrows and magic. Parthalas controls at least three *charmed* wolves, which he uses to run down wounded prey.
- Orgalas Darthalon (NE male moon elf fighter 5/wizard 4/cleric 4 of Shevarash; Str 19, Wis 18): Formerly a resident of Deepingdale, Orgalas was married to a human who abandoned him to run off with a travelling minstrel. Orgalas tracked down and murdered the pair of them, adopted the faith of the Black Archer, and then wandered the Dales as an armsman for hire, occasional adventurer and caravan guard. Recruited by Larnassa Amberstar when she picked him out from a group of captured caravan guards in the Stonelands, he is now her most trusted lieutenant and occasional lover. Orgalas always wears dun leather and wields a *flame tongue* sword in battle.
- Faranth Soryn (LE male gold elf rogue 10; Dex 19): A scion of the notorious, militant elven family that took up arms against fellow elves that were content to live in peace with the humans of the Dalelands, Faranth is a travelling merchant who plies his trade between Sembia and Cormyr selling rare herbs and unguents. He is a skilled poisoner and is known to provide discreet services in this regard for large amounts of gold. He supplies poisons only to humans, believing it likely and quite rightly that they will be used against other humans. In recent times his activities have become bolder and more ambitious, after successfully killing over a dozen members of the Arabel Purple Dragon garrison with poisoned wine. Lord Myrmeen Lhal has ordered an investigation and Faranth is keen to find some likely dupes for the deed, including local adventurers.
- Vaegar Sunstone (NE male gold elf fighter 9/rogue 2): Vaegar is a recent recruit to the Lalya Maurshanta and resides in Immersea on the fringes of the King's Forest where he runs a tavern "The Lovelorn Lamia" and a festhall "The Tower of Comfort". He is never without his *ring of mind shielding* and is secretly a member of the Eldreth Veluuthra. Ambitious and unprincipled, Vaegar is yet to report the existence of the Lalya Maurshanta to his superiors, thinking that he may have more opportunities for personal power and advancement with this organisation. He is an enthusiastic slayer of humans and is often "away on business", which has him roaming the roads between Immersea and Suzail, wantonly slaying any vulnerable human targets.
- Nalvanna Neidre (CE female gold elf rogue 4/sorcerer 4; Cha 19): A famous actress and playwright who travels throughout Cormyr with the acting troupe known as the Silverspire Players, Nalvanna resides in Wheloon and is part of the Hermit's Wood cell. She is fascinated by tales of Lorelei Alavara and aspires to become a powerful presence in the Lalya Maurshanta, just as she was. She enjoys putting on plays that cast the Obarskyrs in a negative light or that highlight the wisdom and sophistication of the elves in contrast to humans, but as most of her works have a comedic bent, she remains popular with the populace at large if not the Crown.
- Yarathael Skyflame (CN female green elf druid 9 of Rillifane; Wis 19): Once a resident of Cormanthor, Yarathael was briefly a member of the Circle of the Moon Pools near Semberholme before quitting that group in disgust at their passivity regarding ongoing human encroachment into the forests. Now residing in the Hullack Forest, which she considers remains "unspoiled", Yarathael actively drives out any humans seeking to enter the woods and has recently manipulated the Bloodmoon Circle (see Faiths and Pantheons) into doing her bidding by *wildshaping* into the form of a dire bear and masquerading as an avatar of Malar. She is always accompanied by two hunting hawks that obey her every command and is known to wield a *staff of the woodlands*.

The Demiplane of Grodd

The fall of Netheril in -339 DR saw the fragmentation of that great empire into a few farflung and scattered city-states and settlements, the most storied of which are known to history as the Survivor States or Lost Kingdoms. Formerly the floating enclaves of Anauria, Asram and Hlondath of High Netheril, these flying cities were saved from the destruction brought about by the disruption of the Weave following the personal intervention of the newborn deity Mystra herself.

The Survivor States were situated in the present-day southeastern expanse of Anauroch, north of the Goblin Marches and the Stonelands. Then as now, the goblin races teemed in these inhospitable regions, marching forth with regularity to raid and plunder surrounding, more civilised lands. Following Karsus' Folly, the Survivor States bore the brunt of such attacks, no longer having the luxury of sailing the skies and avoiding contact with any potential threats from the lands below.

In the Year of Imprisonments (-250 DR) and in the wake of a bloody confrontation with a mixed orc and goblin horde, King Thausimbel "the Wise" of Anauria tasked his court wizard Mahazantul and his apprentices with eliminating the threat of the goblinkin. Drawing on the spell lore of lost Netheril they managed to craft an epic spell ritual that shifted the goblin cities of Grodd and Orgral and the orc citadel of Xûl Thaurak into separate demiplanes, sealing them off from the rest of Faerûn.

This great endeavor ensured that Anauria enjoyed relative peace from the depredations of the goblin races for well over three centuries, ere their strength was restored and with it a return to the blood-soaked days of unrelenting war that would spell the end for that ancient kingdom.

Methods and Activities

Like the Eldreth Veluuthra, the Lalya Maurshanta has the advantage of the patience of long years and the ability to operate strategically in a manner that is beyond the understanding of most humans. That said, the organisation is still in its infancy given its only recent re-founding and is hampered by the disconnect between its founding goals, current realities and the meaning of their defeat in the Devil Dragon War.

While that defeat and its ramifications greatly concern the Anlornorn, who away from Malaear question whether they are indeed the "instruments

of prophecy" as he maintains, they are prepared to build their organisation slowly and consolidate in areas of security and the gathering of resources. This outlook has meant that the focus on wanton slaying of humans in the immediate aftermath of the Devil Dragon War has now given way to a more restrained approach by the majority of the Lalya Maurshanta. The feral and driven Larnassa of the Stonelands is the only Anlornorn who disagrees with this shift in thinking, but as most of her activities revolve around the manipulation of the goblin races in the Stonelands and Goblin Marches, she has been given her head as to how she conducts her affairs. The sly Daurauntyn is more than happy for Larnassa to burn and slay in the far-off northern borders of the realm, believing that this gives him and his cell greater opportunities to embed long-term sleeper agents in and around Suzail and build a stable of *charmed* operatives.

The organisation is however beginning to already suffer from a lack of clear direction and central planning. While Malaear ostensibly oversees all activities and operations, he is not consulted other than to be provided with ongoing reporting. Secretly, the Anlornorn question whether time and resources should be committed to hunting down the elusive last *ghazneth* who for all anyone knows, has long since fled the realm. Similarly, Malaear has tasked many of the Anlornorn with following up on obscure lore concerning the fabled Nethelinnir, which the baelnorn is convinced are located somewhere in the Forest Kingdom. The Anlornorn are finding these "wild orblet chases" increasingly tiresome as they need to balance Malaear's commands against the security of their cells and maintaining the secrecy of the existence of the baelnorn from the rank and file of the Lalya Maurshanta. This ongoing friction may yet see elements of the Lalya Maurshanta break away from Malaear and join with the Eldreth Veluuthra or simply operate independently.

Other more senior elements of the Lalya Maurshanta, impressed by the sheer power of the *ghazneths* and the Devil Dragon and the devastation they unleashed on the Forest Kingdom, have questioned why steps aren't being taken to create more such foes of the realm. They suspect that Malaear is now unable to wield High Magic and even if he still has that ability, the loss of his fellow baelnorn means that he is restricted to casting Rituals of Solitude. The resulting lack of sheer spell might is a worry to the Anlornorn given the noted abilities of Vangerdahast and the War Wizards.

It must be noted that this lack of organisational cohesion and difference of approach does however benefit the Lalya Maurshanta. With no "signature" means of conducting its activities, the organisation is very much an unknown quantity to the Crown. The Steel Regent and the Mage Royal have no inkling of the threat the Lalya Maurshanta poses to the realm and this remains the organisation's greatest strength.

Lalya Maurshanta Abilities

Recruits to the Lalya Maurshanta receive training in archery and fighting stealthily given that much of its membership resides in or travels through the woodland areas of Cormyr or the wild Stonelands. They are also taught survival skills and several espionage techniques relating to secure communications. Skills common to the membership of the Lalya Maurshanta are Animal Handling, Arcana, Deception, Investigation, Religion, Stealth and Survival.

Resources

From its earliest days, the Aegisir Oerylii provided various magic items to members of the Lalya Maurshanta from the cache they guarded for their house. This trove has been supplemented by items scavenged off victims as well as the discovery of various other treasure hoards over the years, including that of the famed, long-ago pirate Morgain the Scarlet, found in the environs of the Hermit's Wood. As such, a typical fighter or rogue of the organisation possesses a magical weapon and armor as well as numerous potions and a minor item of magic such as a *periapt of health*, *boots and cloaks of elvenkind* or *dust of disappearance*. Spellcasters typically carry several spell scrolls and a magical wand. Rarer but highly prized items include *rings of mind shielding*, *bracers of archery*, *hats of disguise* and *arrows of human slaying*.

Areas of Operation

Naturally, the Lalya Maurshanta operate in and around the kingdom of Cormyr. Their leader Malaear continues to reside in his spell-shrouded crypt home in the foothills of the cluster of peaks north and east of Castle Crag. That crypt can only be accessed through a keyed *portal* involving human blood (a small amount carried in a vial or flask is sufficient but the bloody Lorelei Alavara would sacrifice a human captive when calling on

the Aegisir Oerylii in ages past). He possesses a number of *crystal balls*, which he uses to observe his surroundings and goings on in the kingdom. Malaear has not left his home since the fall of the great red dragon Nalavarauthatoryl and it is highly unlikely that he would do so unless discovered.

Very recently, the canny Shaundyl Berethryl has prevailed upon Malaear to agree to purchasing a few small, country estates just west of Daerlun through suitable intermediaries. These locations are now being used as safehouses, for arms and armor storage and for training, outside the reach of the Cormyrean authorities. The Stonelands and King's Forest cells of the Lalya Maurshanta have a series of cave network boltholes in the Storm Horns north of Eveningstar and west of Espar respectively, which are spell-guarded and warded against scrying magic. All members of the Lalya Maurshanta are under orders to flee the environs of Cormyr proper if they come to the attention of the Purple Dragons or the War Wizards.

Allies/Enemies

The enemies of the Lalya Maurshanta are of course the Crown of Cormyr and its agents, particularly the War Wizards and the Highknights of the kingdom. The activities of the group also will in time likely cause them to come under scrutiny from the Harpers. At this point in time however, the fledgling, reborn Lalya Maurshanta is relatively safe in its anonymity and able to operate without major hindrance.

While the Lalya Maurshanta has no allies within the Forest Kingdom its activities have come to the attention of the dryad realm of Aloushe in the King's Forest. The two groups are aware of each other but are yet to formalise any understanding or agreement regarding activities in the environs of Waymoot. The Anlornorn of the King's Forest has directed the Lalya Maurshanta to respect the territory of the dryad realm and in turn, Queen Radanathe has commanded her subjects to maintain their silence on the group's existence and activities in other parts of the forest.

It should be noted that the Lalya Maurshanta does have ties with the Vault of Unquenched Vengeance, the great temple to Shevarash in the woodlands of Cormanthor near Elven Court. Several of its recent recruits are acolytes of the temple and more than a few gravely injured elves of the Lalya Maurshanta have been *teleported* to the Vault for healing. The leader of that great

temple, Silent Arrow in the Darkness Jharthalar Mistrivvin is aware of some of the organisation's activities but as they relate back to the fabled Lorelei Alavara, considered to be favored of his god, he does not pry into their affairs. No lover of humans himself, Jharthalar is prepared to aid the Lalya Maurshanta given the motivation for its activities mirrors the tenets of his deity.

Status Quo

The Lalya Maurshanta is currently focused on building its strength and making attacks of opportunity against vulnerable targets. Its long term goal of driving the humans out of the Lythlorn remains far off given the recent defeat of Nalavarauthatoryl and the *ghazneths*. Malaear and the Anlornorn recognise that they need to recruit or create powerful allies before that goal has any chance of being fulfilled and so the quest for the Nethelinnir and a method by which more *ghazneths* can be created remains a focus. In the interim, the destabilizing of the Obarskyrs in a Cormyr that is still seething with internal turmoil presents as a more immediate goal and disaffected nobles and commoners alike are ripe for subversion and control. As always the shadows in Cormyr hold dangers galore and adventures await for the foolhardy and the brave.

The Sundering

This article provides details for using the Lalya Maurshanta in a campaign set after the Devil Dragon War and as such is appropriate for a timeline of 1372 DR onward. Of course the D&D game and the Forgotten Realms have progressed both in terms of game editions and the Realms timeline. This article does not propose to provide details as to the state of the Lalya Maurshanta in the Year of the Ageless One (1479 DR) other than to note that the rebirth of that organisation does not necessarily have to occur immediately after the fall of Nalavarauthatoryl and the Devil Dragon War.

For a 5E campaign, Malaear Oeryl may have taken over a century to decide what to do following the defeat of the Devil Dragon and the *ghazneths*, and ultimately re-forms the Lalya Maurshanta at a much later time in expectation of what the Year of the Awakened Sleepers (1484 DR) may hold. Perhaps he does so after discovering the whereabouts of the mysterious Nethelinnir, and puts into motion plans to return them to Faerûn in the wake of the Spellplague and the Sundering. Alternatively, Malaear may have found a means to return the soul of Lorelei Alavara to a new body, dragon or otherwise. As has always been the case in the Forgotten Realms, the possibilities are endless.