

FORGOTTEN REALMS ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS: ISSUE II

Editorial

Welcome to issue II of the Forgotten Realms Alternate Dimensions Webzine. My intention is for this to become a home for people who wish to publish material about their own versions of the Forgotten Realms. The content presented within these pages should in no way be considered canon material and is meant to represent a glimpse of the possibilities available to people running a campaign world in the Forgotten Realms setting.

I would just like to say a brief thank you to all the scribes at Candlekeep and everyone who has worked on the Forgotten Realms for the past few decades. Thank you for inspiring me and giving me many years of enjoyment with the Forgotten Realms.

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Dragons of the East: Telos "The Lost Primordial"

Telos' origins are lost to antiquity, and until very recently he was a complete unknown to the people of Faerûn.

Sages speculate that this colossal dragon-like being fell to Toril from the stars above and the impact buried him deep beneath the land known as Vaasa, a land that would spend untold millennia covered by the *Great Glacier*. However his origins may be even older than this. His powers and former location among the stars suggest that he was born of the same conflict that birthed *Mystryl*; in fact he could be considered a sibling of hers. Whereas *Mystryl* contained more *Selûne* than *Shar*, Telos is composed more of darkness and shadow.

One possible explanation to his arrival on Faerûn is that Telos was sheltering inside a piece of space debris that orbited *Abeir-Toril* long ago. When *Asgoroth* hurled *Zotha* at *Abeir-Toril* this also carried along with it a number of smaller space objects (including the children of *Asgoroth*), one of which may have contained the miniscule form of Telos.

Trapped miles beneath the earth, Telos very slowly grew in size and power as he leeches magic and life force from the rocks and the life-forms around him. However this tiny morsel of sustenance was not enough to awaken the growing primordial and he spent the ages in perpetual slumber.

Telos remained undisturbed by the world around him until the year 1347 DR when a wandering lich called *Zhengyi* discovered his location beneath the *Clefts of Razack* in the land of *Vaasa*.

Zhengyi used ancient rituals to link himself to this powerful creature so that he might draw upon Telos' power, *Zhengyi* then used this power to work incredible feats of magic. He created the fortress known as *Castle Perilous* in a single day and summoned hordes of undead and demonic servants to do his bidding.

Zhengyi then conquered the neighbouring land of *Damara* and was poised to establish a vast kingdom with himself at the helm. Fate however had other plans and dealt *Zhengyi* a poor hand that spelled his doom.

The *Time of Troubles* hit in 1358 DR and Telos was awoken by the death of *Mystra* and disruption in the *Weave*. A similar event had occurred hundreds of years ago when *Vaasa* was still covered by the *Great Glacier*; however it was the combined drain

of Zhengyi and the disruption of the Weave that roused Telos from his slumber this time around.

Furthermore a band of adventurers, led by the paladin Gareth Dragonsbane rose in the land of Damara and foiled Zhengyi's plans, ultimately slaying the lich.

Zhengyi's soul tried to retreat to it's phylactery but Telos was awake and angry. Using the link Zhengyi had created between the two of them; Telos pulled on the lich's soul and drew it to him. Zhengyi was now the slave of Telos.

Telos then set about releasing himself from his rock prison. His form had grown so massive that it extended for many miles beneath the surface of Vaasa. Yet even Telos' colossal strength was not enough to lift the thousands of tons of rock above his head.

So when a group of Red Wizards came exploring; looking for Zhengyi and his legacy, Telos slew them all in an instant bar one. That wizard he saved and burned all traces of his soul and former personality from the now empty shell, he then forced Zhengyi's soul into this new body and sent him out into the lands above.

Using Zhengyi as the "Voice of Telos", Telos has been steadily building up a cult of worshippers. These worshippers have formed a settlement on the Clefts of Razack named Telos, after their god. Here they mine the depths for a dull metal ore that they call shadesteel (a waste product of Telos) that they fashion into armour weapons and strange golem like creatures.

Telos is busy creating an militant order called the Warlock Knights that he allows to have access to his near limitless reserves of power. With this force he intends to conquer Vaasa and use its population to release him from the depths so that he may consume the world and everything in it.

Telos' Lair

Telos currently dwells beneath the Clefts of Razack with his head roughly below the settlement of Telos and his tail somewhere in the Bottomless Bogs.

Telos is trapped by the rock that envelops him and his long serpentine form winds through the gaps and tunnels in the rock, taking up all the space available to him.

The only entrances to reach Telos are in a secret tunnel off the main mine shaft beneath the settlement of Telos that the Warlock Knights have hidden and guarded

using powerful magics. Other entrances exist in the Bottomless Bogs through the hot springs (the ones with magical healing powers) that bubble up into the swamp in places (another waste product of Telos), but none would suspect their true nature or source.

Telos' Domain

Telos regards the entire land of Vaasa as his, but has designs for the whole of the planet. His hunger is all consuming and he has a single-minded desire to feed upon every living thing that exists.

His Warlock Knights are just beginning to exert their influence in the lands above and will, if unchecked, dominate most of Vaasa using the powers that Telos grants to them. From there Damara is the next logical conquest before they gain access to the entire Vast region and the Sea of Fallen Stars.

Deeds of Telos

Other than being the secret source of power behind Zhengyi's dominion over Vaasa, Telos has not actually affected the land of Faerûn in a meaningful way as yet. His Warlock Knights are beginning their rise to power in Vaasa and are contesting that land with other powers in the area.

Should Telos ever free himself from his natural prison then the deed he is most remembered for could well be destroying, or coming close to destroying the entire planet.

Telos' Magic

Telos has a natural ability to drain anything and everything around him of its life-force and magic. Those wandering within range of this drain quickly find themselves aging rapidly, their spells cease working and their magic items and magical abilities misfire and become non-functional.

This drain effect is one of the reasons why Vaasa is such a barren, poisonous, wasteland. Telos is slowly draining the life out of the very soil, and his waste products are poisoning everything around him.

Telos has the ability to finely control this draining effect, he can alter the amount of energy he drains and even who he drains or not. At the moment he has made sure not to drain so much that the land of Vaasa becomes completely lifeless and cause him to starve, yet it still yields enough energy each year for him to grow ever larger.

It is possible that this draining ability may be the reason he appears as a draconic form. His proximity to Asgoroth many millennia ago as the first living being he encountered may have caused him to adopt the form of the great dragon primordial when he began to drain his life-force before being hurled into the planet.

The Pact: The Warlock Knights have entered into a pact with Telos. Telos allows those who serve him to draw upon his energy reserves to fuel their magical abilities and in return he secretly drains their life-force over time no matter the distance from his physical form (although travelling to another plane will interfere with the link).

This pact manifests in the increased potency of spells cast by the Warlock Knights and also allows them to cast magic when they otherwise would not be able to do so (such as when they have cast their limit of daily spells). However such use comes with a price and for each boost of magic they age one day as Telos steals their life force.

The Shadesteel Golems: The dull grey metal dug up out of the Clefts of Razack is another waste product of Telos. His skin secretions seep into the rocks around him and transform them into a metal capable of draining life in the same way as he does.

Using this metal the Warlock Knights craft scary looking golems to supplement their forces, these golems are capable of draining the life of anything they attack, although they do have an increased tendency to run amok than do normal golems.

Telos' Allies

Telos' true allies are non-existent, Telos seeks to consume everything and he has the power to accomplish this goal. The Warlock Knights that perform acts in his name and take land and prisoners for his greater glory are mere pawns to Telos, useful tools that he will consume at the end like everything else.

Telos' Enemies

Among Telos' enemies should be counted everything that lives and breathes. It is unknown how Telos feels about the undead, but one would imagine he will not allow anything else to consume the food he so desperately desires.

Telos' Fate

Telos' fate will be determined by how secret his existence remains to the world at large. Should he remain unknown until he is able to be released from his rocky prison

then his fate is counter to everything. He will continue to exist and grow as he consumes every other living being on the planet.

Should Telos be discovered by brave adventurers or those secret organisations working for good that are likely to encounter and infiltrate the Warlock Knights, then who knows what will happen. Maybe a way will be found to imprison Telos permanently, or banish him to another dimension; perhaps he cannot truly be slain but could be diminished to a size that is manageable.

One theory to combat this being is to expend his power. If he grows by draining life force and magical power, then perhaps the opposite is true and he will diminish by using up that same power. If so, then a protracted and costly war with the Warlock Knights could spell salvation for everyone.

Ryan Rahuba Presents: Lycanthropy - Origins

A treatise taken from the works of spell slinger and courtly sage; Aytros Falconwing.

Many are the tales and legends claiming to tell of the origins of this terrible affliction and how it came to affect the races of Toril. Some claim the intervention of Malar, the Beastlord, who gave his blessing to barbarian tribes of old who revered predatory species of the wild. Others invoke the name of Selûne, the Moon Goddess, and say it was her gift to children alone in the wilds so that they might survive.

Come now! Harken unto me for I come to tell you the truth of the matter...

It began millennia ago. As the civilizations of the various races continued to encroach on the wilderness, druids around Faerûn beseeched their gods for help in slowing that advance. But the gods were as powerless to stop the advancement of civilization as they were in stopping the flow of time. As a compromise, these wilderness deities called their followers who asked for aid and bid them go forth.

From all over they came, led by vision and whisper out of the path of civilization to a promised land. A land under divine protection that would never know the touch of hammer and axe. There they would be stewards of this pristine wilderness and could spend their days in meditation and reverence. As the years passed their attunement to nature grew deeper still and they began to change. Their ability to take animal form became infused with their very being until it was no longer a part of their druidic ways but a natural ability.

And thus the Shifter Race was born. Over the next millennia their descendants carried these traits and their society developed in isolation from the rest of the world. Sometime later, a cleric of Malar heard tales of this land of beast-men able to take the shape and traits of the great predators of the world. Whether the Beastlord himself sent divine inspiration or a few shifters had left their sanctuary and spread the tales is unclear. However, the priest was determined to claim this ability in honor of his evil god.

The tales tell that after long years of searching, he came to the shifters' lands in the guise of peace and friendship. He begged of them to teach him this magic of change that they had mastered. When the shifter elders denied his request, saying the gift was not theirs to give, the priest hid his anger well and begged leave to stay among

them and learn their ways. Being naive in their isolation and knowing nothing of the visitor's heart the elders agreed.

Time passed before the priest learned of the Twilight Grove. An area of forest that was kept sacred as a shrine to the woodland gods that brought them to this place, the Grove was a holy place for the Shifters and was kept by those that still followed the druid's path. Seeing this as the source of the shifters' abilities, and unable to wait any longer, the priest went to the Grove the very next night under the light of the full moon.

At the center of the Grove he found a tree of singular kind, not found anywhere else in all of Faerûn. Its base was hollow and large enough to hold several people at once. Moving into the hollow, he began a desecration ritual thinking to claim it for Malar and the shifters' abilities for his own.

The gods of nature whom the shifters followed became aware of his plan and grew enraged and moved to strike the priest down. However, Malar came to the man's aid and lent his servant his divine power. A great struggle ensued as druids were drawn to the shrine and joined in. When it was over, the tree was hallowed once again; however the priest had gotten what he came for. But since he had tried to take it by force, the gift had twisted into a curse and, combined with the will of Malar that had flowed through him, had driven him mad.

His form shifted to that of a great wolf but he was unable to change back and his madness left him little more than a savage beast. He became the first lycanthrope. In his rage, he struck out at the nearby druids. Those who were not killed contracted his curse. The new lycanthropes chased the remaining druids from the Twilight Grove and fell upon the surrounding settlements of shifters.

Many were turned before the monsters were driven back. The lycanthropes retreated back to the Grove which they now held for themselves. From this new territory, they sent raids out pushing the shifters further and further away. With their sacred site lost and losing ground, the shifters abandoned their home and joined the others lands of Faerûn for the first time in more than a millennia and the lycanthropes soon followed.

Thousands of years and many miles from the Grove and their homeland, the shifters

have diminished. No longer able to change to resemble specific animals, instead modern shifters manifest wider bestial traits such as sharp teeth, claws, fur, etc. However, every now and then the trait runs true and a shifter is born with this ability intact.

For their part, time and distance had lessened the savagery and rage of the lycanthropes and they began to control their curse. Eventually, they were able to change between bestial and human form. They began to blend in with the growing civilizations of Toril where they would further infect other races. Angered by this, Selûne; the moon goddess, altered the curse to make the moon a bane to the lycanthropes and would reveal their nature by its light.

Laerakond: Timeline of an Alternate Abeir

This is a brief timeline of my re-imagining of Laerakond which has much closer ties to Toril.

- **-31,000 DR: The Tearfall:** Asgorth hurls Zotha at the surface of Abeir Toril and Ao separates Laerakond and Faerûn into their own planets.
- Smaller meteorites strike the surface of both Abeir and Toril and from these impact craters crawl the first draconic creatures of various forms. These tiny harmless lizards are ignored by all on Laerakond.
- The primordials on Laerakond soon enter a catatonic slumber from which they struggle to awaken due to the low magic density of Abeir. The Sharn and Phaerimm quickly retreat from Laerakond and Abeir into their own dimensions between the two worlds.
- Orcs come to dominate the surface and subsurface of Laerakond, driving the primitive humans into unwanted lands. The orcs take to worshipping at the feet of the orc primordials; Gruumsh, Baghtru, Ilneval, Luthic, Shargaas and Yurtrus in the depths of the great forest of Laerakond. They soon discover that ritual sacrifices are sufficient to awaken the mighty orc titans for brief periods. As a result humans are driven to the brink of extinction over the next 100 years.
- **-30,000 DR:** The tiny draconic lizard-like creatures that arrived with the Tearfall, through a fluke of evolution, have come to resemble the creatures known as dragons on the twin planet of Toril. These dragons quickly grow into titanic behemoths of destruction with a near limitless growth potential and a fierce Intelligence. With nothing to stop them, the oldest and therefore most powerful dragons come to dominate the lands around them.
- The first dragon Xcorv'inara'dalace claims the grassy plains north-west of The Barrier Mountains. He calls his land Scoareindvir and begins enslaving roaming orc bands.
- The Adamantine Dragon Mai'relin'ziord claims The Barrier Mountains on the eastern edge of Laerakond.
- Avbel'iorken'arc the Shining Dragon claims the great Datrelen Forest near the centre of Laerakond

- Azkarbentil'oth the Blue roams the southern dusty plains of Laerakond
- **-29,500 DR:** By this time Xcorv'inara'dalace has subjugated Mai'relin'ziord using his armies of orc slaves. Avbel'ior'ken'arc has vanished, presumed slain by some unknown creatures in the great forest of Laerakond as he attempted to clear land to build a lair and monument to himself. Azkarbentil'oth and a number of lesser dragons take to enslaving orcs in an attempt to combat Xcorvin.
- **-29,450 DR:** Xcorv'inara'dalace subjugates or destroys all other dragons on Laerakond and declares himself "Emperio Draconis". He orders the construction of a vast palatial fortress on the western edge of The Barrier Mountains.
- Xcorvin the Dragon Emperor inscribes the laws of dragon-kind into the rock-face of The Barrier Mountains. With a sacrifice of over one hundred thousand orc slaves (and not a few troublesome dragons) he binds the beings of Laerakond to his will. The codified laws are called Xorvinthall and determine how dragons may interact with one another in disputes over territory, mates, and treasure.
- **-29,000 DR:** After hundreds of years of work the capital of Scoareindvir is completed. As Xcorv'inara'dalace lands atop the dragon sized fortress the mountains around him seem to rise up and crush the dragon where he stands. The gigantic primordial Maush whose crag covered body made up part of The Barrier Mountain range is responsible for Xcorv'inara'dalace's death. Slowly drawing power from the enspelled laws inscribed upon his back, Maush is able to awaken long enough to crush the unsuspecting Dragon Emperor before falling back into slumber.
- The dragon vassals of Scoareindvir do battle with Maush but only succeed in him expending his energy and again entering a period of long slumber. His body forms the Lonely Mountains in the centre of the plains of Scoareindvir. Seeking a way to prevent future awakenings of Maush, the dragon Overlords each delve into pact magic (already in use by their orc slaves) with the primordials to gain access to magical abilities, thereby using up the primordial energy reserves and keeping them asleep.
- **-29,000 DR - -1076 DR:** The dragons of Laerakond war unceasingly with

each other, following the laws of Xorvinthall and using armies of orc slaves they attempt to conquer the lands owned by other dragon lords and overlords. Each one trying to become Emperio Draconis but none succeeding.

- **-17,600 DR: The Sundering:** The continent of Laerakond is shifted thousands of miles to the west, although this does not have any affect on the land of Laerakond itself. This change is only apparent when Laerakond and Abeir rejoin with Toril in its new position.
- **-10,500 DR: The Dark Disaster:** The high mages of Aryvandaar unleash the killing cloud on Miyeritar. The high mages of Miyeritar transform themselves into the Sharn by opening a portal to the extraplanar dimension and merging with the essence located therein.
- **-8,000 DR:** The Imaskari open portals to Abeir, their they find a long abandoned body of a Phaerimm, perpetually comatose by the lack of magic in that land it soon awakens when brought to Toril through the portal.
- **-1,509 DR: The First Shalarin Passing:** Dagon long ago discovered a rift in the Trackless Sea (the location of where Laerakond will be when it returns to Toril). Using that Rift he travelled to Laerakond and began a plan to subvert worship of the Shalarin to him. He uses the energy of the rift to open up a portal that whisks away portions of the Shalarin people in the oceans around Laerakond and transports them to the Sea of Fallen Stars.
- **-1,076 DR:** Rebel Mulhorandi wizards open a portal to Abeir using Imaskari magic. The orcs of Laerakond discover the portal and quickly send word throughout the land about a means to escape the dragon overlords. Hastily arranged sacrifices and tens of thousands of ritual suicides are performed to awaken Gruumsh and the other primordials who then lead the orcs through the portal to salvation.
- **-1,069 DR:** The grey orc migration to Toril ends as the Orcgate is destroyed by the humans of that land. Those orcs remaining in Laerakond are persecuted and retreat into hiding in the great forest of Laerakond. Seemingly abandoned by their "gods" they turn to other powers for protection.
- The dragon overlords of Laerakond look to humans for their next slave race. The humans erect great and beautiful cities filled with gargoyles and fiendish

decorations. For many a long year the humans had entered into pacts with the primordials and evil beings, such as Dagon, for protection and power. The humans take great pleasure in exacting their revenge upon the outcast orcs and drive them into inhospitable lands.

- **-339 DR:** The goddess Mystryl is slain when a Netherese arch wizard named Karsus tries to take her power. Mystryl's death causes the Weave to collapse for a few moments. With the Weave gone Abeir and Toril are rejoined and Laerakond reappears far to the west of Faerûn beyond Evermeet.
- Gradually the beings of Laerakond, starting with the dragons, discover some of the beginnings of arcane magic. By the time of the discovery of Laerakond, magic is available but it is an underground resource that is stigmatised and persecuted by many of the creatures of this land.
- **211 DR:** The surviving dwarves of Clan Melair begin an epic journey west beneath the depths of the Trackless Sea, they are pursued by drow eager to slay the fleeing dwarves and steal their treasures. It will be nearly a thousand years before they finally see daylight again in the continent of Laerakond.
- **400 DR:** A large meteorite slams into the western portion of Laerakond causing the collapse of part of the land upon which it rests. Most of western Laerakond sinks into the ocean and those survivors who were not obliterated by the impact of the meteorite are quickly drowned.
- From the newly formed Sea of Fire crawls a gigantic maggot like creature called H'Calos which emerges from the water to feed upon anything it can find. The southern plains of Laerakond become a desert wasteland devoid of life with sand as black as night, as H'Calos devours everything in his path. Once the land is depleted H'Calos burrows beneath the desertification that sweeps the land around him. The Dusk Desert is formed and expands over several hundred years.
- The water rushing in to the sunken land that now forms the Sea of Fire also floods portions of what remains of Datrelen Forest at the centre of Laerakond. The Bay of Sunken Forests is formed in Laerakond's middle and now divides the northern and southern portions of Datrelen Forest. The trees soon rot and collapse and the whole bay becomes a vast swampy mangrove-like area full of carnivorous monsters.

- **955 DR:** A number of gates open across Laerakond and Faerûn. Thousands of mountain orcs are deposited across Laerakond and bring with them the worship of the orc gods. Clerical magic begins to spread among the orcs once again and orc numbers swell quickly with the influx of new breeding stock.
- **1,018 DR: The Rage of Dragons:** Every dragon on Toril is driven mad by the appearance of the King Killer Star. The dragons of Laerakond are also affected by this ancient mythal and attack everything in sight. The draco empires of Laerakond are destroyed by the overlords themselves as they rampage through the cities their human slaves built for them.
- The Xorvinthall, written into the rock-face of The Barrier Mountains shatters in a violent magical explosion. Maush is suddenly awakened and enraged with the pain caused by the explosions. His rampage destroys many dragons and cities of Laerakond.
- By the time the rage comes to an end every major settlement on Laerakond is destroyed and all but 3 former dragon overlords are slain. The laws binding the dragons of Laerakond are gone and they are free to act as they wish.
- The primordials of Laerakond begin to awaken, called by their orc and human servants to save them from the evil of the dragon overlords.
- **1,051 DR:** Dwarves from Toril finally reach the surface in The Barrier Mountains on the continent of Laerakond. Founding a settlement in a cove on the far eastern shore of the mountain range they name their new home Bandaerl's Hope.
- **1,058 DR:** The few remaining drow that pursued the dwarves of Bandaerl's Hope for so long on their epic journey beneath the Trackless Sea surface in the Dusk Desert where they encounter tribes of nomadic orcs. The nation of Kanorthalshim is established.

The Xorvinthall: The Xorvinthall are a set of laws created by the Dragon Emperor Xcorv'inara'dalace. They govern the behaviour of every dragon on Laerakond and determine how they interact in disputes over things such as territory and hoards.

Any dragon intentionally breaking the Xorvinthall is wracked with pain for 24 hours which hampers their ability to defend themselves against other dragons. That dragon

is also not subject to the protection the Xorvinthall provides them and they can be assailed by any other dragon without punishment for one year.

The laws of the Xorvinthall are as follows:

- No dragon may combat another without both parties being in agreement. This makes all dragon disputes take the form of duels with both parties agreeing on a time and place and the means of the dispute to be settled (not necessarily through combat).
- All disputes must be settled on neutral ground or a place agreed upon by all parties (including the dragon that owns the land).
- A dragon may act contrary to the rules in defence of himself, his hoard, his lair, and his children.

Over time the rules of the Xorvinthall were elaborate by draconic customs to turn it into an elaborate game of conquest and dynastic chess but only the original rules above are the ones bound by the magic laid down by the Dragon Emperor.

Many crafty dragons found ways to subvert the rules by manipulating events so that they could act in self defence such as manipulating a dragon into attacking them (although they may not have realised it was the dragon they were attacking the intention was to attack), or planting treasure or children into the lair of another dragon.

Also non dragons were not subject to the laws or protection provided by the Xorvinthall and so the use of slaves to slay rival dragons was allowed (although rarely successful).

With the coming of the Dracorage in 1018 DR, the mass destruction wrought by the dragons overloaded the Xorvinthall and caused it to shatter into many pieces in a series of explosions that awoke the primordial Maush.

Some of the remaining dragons of Laerakond (and many of the lesser races) worry about the level of destruction now inflicted by the dragons and the possible extinction of dragon-kind on Laerakond because of their incessant conflict, these beings search for a way to reinstate the Xorvinthall and possible enhance it to nullify the effects of the Dracorage mythal.

Rulesword: Trimming 3rd Edition One Step at a Time

Step two of making 3rd edition simpler and friendlier takes an idea or two from 4th edition and makes the various actions a player can take in combat more consistent.

At the moment physical attacks (melee and ranged) involve a d20 roll from the instigator. Whereas spells and special abilities, even if they attack another person are a static difficulty from the instigator compared against a d20 roll from the defender.

So my second suggestion in simplifying third edition is:

2. **Attack, Attack, Attack.** Everything a character does to another person should be in the form of an attack roll against a static defence score.

Now this rule requires a bit more effort on the part of the DM since all the spells and special abilities need converting so that they take the form of a 1d20 attack roll plus ability modifier bonuses (no level based bonuses remember suggestion number 1). However it does make things speedier in combat since the defender no longer makes any rolls in defence.

So convert AC, Fortitude, Reflex, and Willpower into a static score by taking the final bonus from all ability, feat, spell, magic item, and other modifiers and add 10. These defence values should change very little now except for situational modifiers from feats, racial abilities, and spells which expire.

Next comes the hard part of converting spells to attack rolls. First thing to note is that if you followed step 1 of Rulesword there should be no need for a ranged touch attack (you could go one further and rule out all touch attacks) since an attack against the Reflex defence value would be the same.

So every caster uses their primary spellcasting ability modifier as part of their attack roll bonus (in the same way that a fighter use his Strength modifier for melee attacks). Then add any other bonuses from feats, spells, magic items etc. In general if something improved the DC of a spell by +2 then convert it so it grants a +1 attack bonus to the caster.

All you need to do next is determine for each spell what defence value they are attacking, you can use AC, Fortitude, Reflex, or Willpower and generally they should be the same as they are now but just use your common sense. If armour can stop the impact of the spell then its AC, if the spell can be dodged its Reflex, if it affects the

body its Fortitude and if it affects the mind its Willpower.

There are a number of extra rules you can utilise with this new system of attacks which I will summarise.

House Rule 1: Allow critical hits for spells. As spells are now similar to weapons, consider using the critical hit rules for spells. On a confirmed critical add an extra 1d6 or whatever damage dice the spell uses.

House Rule 2: Allow wands, staffs, and holy symbols to be enchanted. As spells are now similar to melee attacks, consider allowing a spellcaster to use a spellcasting focus which enhances the attack like a magic sword would. So wands, staffs, and holy symbols could be enchanted from +1 to +5 bonus which grants this bonus to attack and damage rolls made by the caster.

House Rule 3: Allow Weapon Focus to be used with spells. As spells are now similar to melee attacks, consider allowing the feats that apply to weapons such as Weapon Focus, to be applied to spells.

House Rule 4: This house rule relies upon house rule 2 being in use. Consider a Spell Focus magical property that can be applied to weapons. This property is the equivalent of a +1 bonus and allows the caster to use the magic weapon to cast his spells (in the same way as a hand, wand, staff, or holy symbol) as such the magical bonus of the weapon can be used to augment the attack and damage rolls of the spell in the same way as a magic wand, staff, or holy symbol.

Thus a warmage for instance could use a magic sword to cast his spells with better results as well as use it to attack in melee for better results.

The next issue will detail suggestion number 3: "Multiple Attacks Without a Super Computer to Calculate the Attack Roll."

Alternate Dimensions Presents: Damara - An Alternate Timeline

- **991 DR Year of the Breaking Ice:** The kingdom of Sossal [331, 1319] is rocked by a series of earthquakes. The tremors create fissures in parts of the Great Glacier, unleashing several powerful demons trapped there since the fall of Narfell. Led by their ruler Londraeth, the warriors of Sossal manage to vanquish the rampaging fiends.
- The marilith Vaas is released from a demoncyst beneath Vaasa by earthquakes. She slowly begins calling her allies to the lands beneath Vaasa where she was imprisoned.
- **1038 DR Year of Spreading Spring:** The Great Glacier retreats from the lands of Damara, Vaasa, and upper Narfell. Many folk from Impiltur and Thesk migrate north to the newly uncovered lands.
- The Great Glacier is entirely absent from the lands of Damara, Vassa, and upper Narfell by spring of this year and does not return in winter. This prompts a wave of migration of Impilturan and Narfelli settlers that claim the lands of Damara for their own. The orcs and other monsters claim Vaasa.
- **1064 DR:** Feldrin Bloodfeathers is accused of piracy by a fellow noble house of Sembia and is found guilty. The young man in his early twenties flees with the entire wealth of his family to the settlement of Ravensburg in Damara, where his family has owned land for centuries since before Sembia existed.
- **1075 DR:** Feldrin Bloodfeathers establishes the realm of Damara with himself as King Feldrin I by conquering the settlement of Heliogabalus and ousting the Nar tribes that lived in the north western lands of Damara. His first act is to ennoble a number of his financial and military supporters.
- **1076 DR:** Bellathar Maris, associate of Feldrin Bloodfeathers and newly established noble of Damara begins construction of a castle upon the site where Trailsend now stands.
- **1077 DR:** At the urgings of Higenzi the Witch, Damara mounts a campaign to free Bloodstone Pass from the clutches of the monsters of Vaasa.
- **1079 DR:** Bloodstone Pass is secured and prospecting expeditions extract large numbers of precious gemstones named Bloodstones in honour of the king.
- **1080 DR:** Feldrin Bloodfeathers three sons are born; Feldrin, Banacath, and

Tranth. Feldrin is named heir apparent, Banacath is granted the Barony of Morov and Tranth is granted the Barony of Bloodstone. Feldrin's wife dies in childbirth.

- **1095 DR Year of the Dawndance:** War-Captain Imphras Heltharn of Lyrabar using the swords of Soargar's Legacy and wielding Dornavver, personally unites the city-states of the Easting Reach and leads them to victory over a hobgoblin horde from the hobgoblin nation of Naratyr in the Giantspire Mountains which was sent by Soneillon.
- King Feldrin Bloodfeathers of Damara is slain in battle against the hobgoblin horde of Naratyr. Higenzi becomes regent for several months until Feldrin II comes of age.
- **1096 DR:** Feldrin II is crowned King of Damara at the age of 16.
- **1122 DR Year of the Rose Pearls:** Princess Ilmara of Impiltur founds the fortress-city of Ilmwatch to guard against the return of the hobgoblins.
- Queen Sambral dies, and after grieving for her, Imphras I soon passes as well. Their son and eldest child Imbrar takes the *Crown of Narfell* as the ruler of Impiltur. Princess Ilmara, Imbrar's sister, becomes a sorceress under Mhilra of Milvarune and finds the scrying stones of Myth Drannor before founding Ilmwatch to guard against the return of the hobgoblins of Naratyr.
- The aging and addled King Feldrin II of Damara takes offence at the creation of Ilmwatch as he believes it could be used for an invasion of his country.
- **1127 DR Year of the Luminar Procession:** Using the scrying stones of Myth Drannor, Ilmara sees the hobgoblins stirring in the Giantspire Mountains and alerts her brother. King Imbrar of Impiltur foolishly leads an army into the Giantspire Mountains to eradicate the hobgoblin menace accompanied by his Royal Guard and carrying with them many of the royal blades of Impiltur; Soargar's Legacy including some say Dornavver wielded by King Imbrar himself. His warriors are murdered and the succubus Soneillon corrupts the king into a death knight. Imbrar's sister Ilmara takes the crown of Narfell and is crowned queen of Impiltur.
- Ilmara Heltharn accedes to the throne of Impiltur upon the death of her brother and gives up a life of adventure and travels.

- King Feldrin II of Damara severs diplomatic ties with Impiltur over the army amassing on his border with Impiltur. His last message delivers an ultimatum that should Impiltur's army cross Damara's borders there will be war. This influences King Imbrar's decision to deal with Soneillon accompanied only by his royal guard and Soargar's Legacy.
- **1150 DR:** An insane and almost incapable Feldrin II of Damara declares war on Impiltur. He is slain on the same day by his eldest son Feldrin who is promptly imprisoned and convicted of treason. Feldrin is exiled from Damara forever and moved in the line of succession. His younger brother, Veldrin I is crowned King of Damara at the age of 37.
- Higenzi falls out of favour with the Bloodfeathers dynasty and disappears from court life.
- **1152 DR:** Orcs pour out of Vaasa through Bloodstone Pass and lay waste to much of northern Damara. The disparate orcs are quickly eliminated but the people call for Vaasa and the Bloodstone Pass to be secured for the future prosperity of Damara.
- **1153 DR:** King Veldrin I declares the land that will later be known as Vaasa to be crown property of Damara. The land is open to settlement to all that can keep and hold an area of land for a year with appropriate proof provided of continued dwelling to the crown. This attracts adventurers and settlers from across Faerûn.
- **1154 DR:** A noble scion of House Belmaris is one of the first to enter Vaasa and claim land along the river running through the centre of Vaasa. The name eventually becomes corrupted to Beaumaris River.
- Settlers and adventurers in Vaasa endure nightly attacks by demonic forces that severely hamper growth and settlement in the region.
- Late in Nightal all the settlers in Vaasa disappear over the course of a week. Secretly they are enslaved by the forces of Vaas, a marillith demon released from her imprisonment nearly two centuries earlier and has been busy building her tanar'ri forces and enslaving the local grey orc tribes. The humans are kept with the orc slaves which quickly creates a large population of half orcs.

- **1158 DR:** Scouting expeditions into Vaasa all disappear without a trace. A demonic envoy proclaims that Queen Vaas of Vaasa now rules the lands beyond Bloodstone Pass. The heads of the Damaran scouting expeditions are delivered to the Damaran Court on gigantic platters.
- **1160 DR:** Beginning in this year groups of twisted demonic orcs from Vaasa attack Damara in ever greater numbers. Damara beseeches Impiltur for aid using the exiled Feldrin as an ambassador. Queen Ilmara is reluctant to engage in a war on foreign soil after what happened to her brother Imbrar.
- Impilturan Holy Orders dedicated to Ilmater venture into Damara to aid those under siege by the demons from Vaasa.
- **1171 DR:** With aid finally arriving from Impiltur the forces of Damara and Impiltur march on Vaasa. The human armies are met with innumerable hordes of tanar'ri and twisted half demon spawn.
- The battle quickly turns in favour of Queen Vaas until Higenzi arrives behind Vaas' forces with several thousand half orcs. Together the forces of good win the day and Vaas is forced to flee the field of battle.
- Damara claims Vaasa as crown land and then awards the half orcs the land around the former settlement of Cinnabaran. The orcs quickly rebuild the ruin into a fortress which they call Palischuk. Higenzi once again gains favour with the Damaran court.
- As part of the newly formed alliance between Impiltur and Damara, Crown Prince Veldrin is married to a great grand niece of Imphras the great of the Heltharn dynasty.
- **1172 DR:** Crown Prince Veldrin's wife dies following a difficult birth. His son is born and also named Veldrin.
- **1175 DR:** King Veldrin I and his son Veldrin II are both slain under mysterious circumstances on consecutive days. Veldrin II's son is crowned Veldrin III king of Damara at the age of 3. The boy always seems to have a vacant expression and never leaves the side of Higenzi the Witch who acts as his regent.
- **1242 DR Year of the Yellow Rose:** The Monastery of the Yellow Rose [1373] is founded in Damara.

- **1281 DR:** At the impossible age of 109, King Veldrin III, also known as King Veldrin the Immortal, sires a son Beldrinar.
- **1319 DR:** Despairing of ever inheriting the throne, Beldrinar of Damara finally manages to slay his father King Veldrin III by hiring a coterie of mages to cover the entire palace in an anti magic field. Veldrin III ages rapidly and quickly turns to dust. The anti magic field also reveals secret passages in the palace and the hidden plots of Higenzi the witch.
- Higenzi the Witch is found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. She flees the country into exile and is never heard from again.
- Beldrinar is barred from the succession and exiled to Vaasa for slaying King Veldrin. His ten year old son Viridin is made heir apparent and his mother acts as regent until his accession.
- **C. 1347 DR Year of the Bright Blade:** Zhengyi the red wizard lich who studied the Black Star artefact for years arrives in Vaasa directed by Orcus to locate Telos and use the primordial's power to perform powerful magical rituals. His first test is raising Castle Perilous using this new source of power.
- **1348 DR Year of the Spur:** Zhengyi invades Damara, skirmishing with the forces of Damara for 10 years.
- **1357 DR Year of the Prince - The Time of Troubles:** Zhengyi conquers Damara. Telos is awakened by the disruption in magic with the death of Mystra and also because Zhengyi has been tapping him for power.
- The forces of Vaasa slay king Viridin of Damara. Zhengyi now controls both Vaasa and Damara through his puppets installed as rulers of the duchies and baronies of Damara.
- **1359 DR Year of the Serpent:** Zhengyi is slain; the flow on the power tap with Telos reverses and Zhengyi's soul is drawn into the primordial instead of his phylactery. Castle Perilous crumbles into ruin and is occupied by an avatar of Tiamat.
- **1360 DR Year of the Turret:** Sylvia and Dimian Ree marry, uniting the baronies of Ostel and Morov. Within a year a son is born named Feldrin Ree.

- An attempt is made on Christine Dragonsbane's life by Cat One-Eye. The assassination attempt fails but Cat One Eye escapes.
- The Red Wizards of Thay open another enclave in Praka in Ostel and use this as an early platform for supplying the expedition into Vaasa. The Red Wizard Enclave also aids Baroness Sylvia by arranging the secret kidnap and enslavement of those that oppose her in Ostel. The coins from the Red Wizards also enrich Sylvia's funds.
- **1361 DR Year of Maidens:** The Gates of Bloodstone Pass are finished; adventurers begin to venture into Vaasa thanks to Damara's bounty on monstrous humanoids.
- Cat One-Eye makes an attempt on Dimian Ree's life but is foiled by Spysong who are tipped off about the meeting by Baroness Sylvia, instead the Baron of Morov is rendered incapacitated (a condition that is perpetuated by Baroness Sylvia's magic which foils clerical attempts to heal him).
- Baroness Sylvia becomes acting Regent of Morov until Feldrin Ree comes of age. Helmont 15th Duke of Carmathen formally allies himself with Baroness Sylvia of Ostel and Morov, the people of Carmathen no longer object now that Dimian Ree is incapacitated..
- **1362 DR Year of the Helm:** Duchess Sylvia declares her intention to press the claim of her son Feldrin Ree to be proclaimed King of Damara, Gareth Dragonsbane counters this claim with his own. With the duchies of Morov, Ostel, Carmarthen and Polten on one side and Bloodstone, Arcata, Brandiar, and Soravia on the other, the country of Damara prepares for civil war.
- Donlevy the younger is convinced to side with Baroness Sylvia by Zorth his advisor to keep the old dynasty of Damara alive as his father would have wanted.
- **1363 DR Year of the Wyvern:** The armies of Damara meet at the ford of Goliad and a stalemate ensues, some lives are lost by low level skirmishing, but the people of Damara have no real stomach for another war.
- Tarkos Ree, leader of the Tightpurse thieves' guild in Heliogabalus exposes Sylvia's plots and schemes when his agents discover her using magic to continue Dimian Ree's confusion and illness. Sylvia orchestrated the assassination

attempt of Christine Dragonsbane using her new husband's connections to the citadel of assassins. She then arranged a second assassination on Dimian Ree and deliberately informed Spysong of the meeting to throw them off her trail. Then she could press her son's claims on the kingdom of Damara with the richest duchies behind her.

- Gareth Dragonsbane quickly declares Sylvia a traitor and all the duchies of Damara (except Ostel and Morov) declare Gareth Dragonsbane king of Damara.
- The armies of Damara besiege Bloodfeather Palace; they are unopposed by the merchants and their mercenaries. Sylvia is captured and imprisoned. The child baron Feldrin Ree remains baron of Morov.
- Sylvia escapes imprisonment in Bloodfeather Palace and wanders the realms for a means to seek her revenge.
- King Dragonsbane is crowned in Heliogabalus which he names as capital of Damara. He quickly cracks down on the Tightpurse thieves' guild in Damara because of its links to the citadel of assassins.
- The Barony of Morov's capital is moved back to Morovar with Feldrin Ree in charge and a regent loyal to the crown appointed to him. Dimian Ree recovers from his illness and is appointed the newly created title Baron of Heliogabalus which currently has no lands while King Gareth Dragonsbane has his capital at Heliogabalus. Dimian Ree is not so politely informed he will only be in charge in the King's absence which is a situation that should only occur on the King's death and so a new King would be appointed.
- King Dragonsbane is unable to undo the legal contract between the Barony of Ostel and the Red Wizards of Thay so the enclave remains so long as it breaks no laws. The enclave is careful not to pursue its secret slaving activities for many years.
- **1364 DR Year of the Wave:** Sylvia of Ostel returns to Damara claiming to be a noble relation of House Praka that moved to Ravens Bluff many centuries ago. In her travels Sylvia discover a girdle of masculinity and femininity and is now passing herself off as Edelbard Prakos of Ravens Bluff. Due to the recent troubles with Duke Belmont, King Dragonsbane immediately asks the Monastery

of the Yellow Rose and the Heralds to check Edelbard/Sylvia's claim of descendant and he contacts ambassador Carrague in Ravens Bluff as well.

- **1365 DR Year of the Sword:** Following falling returns from the Tightpurse thieves' guild after the crowning of King Dragonsbane, Banak strikes against Timoshenko the Grandfather of Assassins whose popularity has begun to wane. Timoshenko is slain and animated as an undead creature that serves Banak without question. Banak and Knellicht now rule the Bandit Army jointly in an uneasy truce with neither one able to easily defeat the other.
- Duke Belmont the 15th of Carmathen is exposed as an impostor by the monks of the yellow rose. He is quickly ousted by his own subjects and imprisoned before paladins from Heliogabalus, sent by King Dragonsbane, arrive.
- The Monastery of the Yellow Rose and the Heralds both verify Edelbard Prakos' claim of descent from House Praka. Ambassador Carrague of Ravens Bluff likewise verifies Edelbard's story but does not bother to check on the noble's current status within the city. The real Edelbard Prakos is still living in Ravens Bluff partying his way through society and dulling his wits with too much ale. For a significant sum of money Edelbard Prakos is awarded the title of Baron of Ostel and Sylvia returns to power.
- **1371 DR Year of the Unstrung Harp:** Orcs from Thesk still loyal to the Zhentarim begin migrating towards Vaasa.
- **1373 DR Year of Rogue Dragons:** The Rage of Dragons causes the flight of dragons around Castle Perilous to destroy itself.
- **1374 DR Year of Lightning Storms:** Warlock Knights are voted into ruling councils in settlements across Vaasa - even non human settlements- thanks to the warlock knights open recruitment policies and their efforts in combating the Rage of Dragons. The warlock knight rulers of Palischuk soon meet with fatal accidents orchestrated by the Banites.
- **1375 DR Year of Risen Elf Kin:** The Warlock Knights declare open rule in Vaasa from the Ironfell Council in Telos. Zhengyi the Voice of Telos once again rules Vaasa (even if he is not in control this time). The Warlock Knights immediately begin cracking down on all forms of deviant behaviour - not

worshipping Telos being the primary deviance. Thousands of people are thrown into the Clefts of Razack and sacrificed to Telos.

- King Gareth Dragonsbane of Damara, watching events unfold in Vaasa, decides to seal the Vaasan Gate isolating Vaasa from the rest of the Bloodstone Lands.

The Bloodstone Lands: Adventure Path - Episode 1

This Adventure Path is a rework of the original Bloodstone Adventures H1, H2, and H3 using an alternate timeline.

Overview

This adventure begins in the spring of 1356 DR, one year before the death of King Virdin at the Ford of Goliad. Damara has been at war with Vaasa for nine long years ever since Zhengyi the Witch King appeared and claimed that land as his own.

Quickly amassing an army of monsters and demons, Zhengyi marched his army on the lands of Damara through the Bloodstone Pass. Damara quickly assembled its armies and fought back the savage hordes, closing off Bloodstone Pass and severing contact between the two kingdoms.

This did not stop Zhengyi. Every year as the snows thawed he attacked Damara, overwhelming the hastily erected fortifications and marching his armies into Damara once again. Every year the ever dwindling forces of Damara beat them back and repaired the fortifications in Bloodstone Pass.

In the ninth year of war things look bleak. Trade with the Moonsea has stopped, unable to get through Vaasa and the Bloodstone Pass. The Treasury coffers are shrinking, and the army is now mostly made up of mercenaries paid for by the revenues from the Bloodstone mines and the rare gemstones they unearth.

When spring arrives in 1356 DR the miners march to the Bloodstone Mines; to join the dwarves living there, and begin work but they are chased off by monsters. The mines have been overrun and Damara is in grave danger.

NPCs

Gareth Dragonsbane (LG hm Paladin 2): A paladin of Ilmater sent from Heliogabalus by King Virdin himself. He entrusts the paladin to resolve the issue in the Bloodstone mines and have them reopen as soon as possible.

In truth, King Virdin sent the inexperienced paladin because he feels he can trust no one else in his court. He feels he is being watched all the time and his secret endeavours always seem to fail. By sending an inexperienced member of the Royal Guard on a suicide mission he is certain no one will try to sabotage his attempt to reopen the Bloodstone mines.

Gareth Dragonsbane is brave and true. He is the youngest member of the Royal Guard of Damara and is dedicated to his king and the people of Damara. He is vaguely aware of something evil at the heart of Damara but is unsure of who, or what may be the cause. He will begin by hiring the party to help him clear out the Bloodstone mines.

Beginning the Adventure

The adventure should begin with Gareth Dragonsbane wandering into Bloodstone Village and whatever establishment the party is staying in and asking the owner if he knows of any capable sellswords in town.

Gareth can offer the party a fee of 1 gold piece per person per day for their efforts, and his eternal gratitude. He also mentions that the party will receive an audience with Baron Tranth if they are successful and that noble contacts can bring many benefits.

Once the party agree they can outfit themselves at the local store which should have most mundane equipment under 1 gp in value.

A Gather Information check will reveal the following information from the local population.

Roll Result

- | | |
|----|--|
| 10 | The mines are a half days travel through the Bloodstone Pass towards the lands of Vaasa. |
| 12 | Because of the war with Vaasa the wolf population has exploded. Only travel in large groups and always be on your guard. |
| 15 | Dwarves lived in the Bloodstone mines working all year round. What could have happened to them? |
| 20 | The miners that escaped said they were attacked by the dead come back to life. When they escaped the mines they were chased by wolves with black fur and red eyes. |
| 25 | Several miners that perished while escaping the mines have been seen wandering the pass with rotted skin and gaping wounds. |

Journey to the Mines

The journey to the mines is not so important. The weather is cold and wintry, but travel through the pass is possible at this time of year. A number of possible

encounters include a blizzard, a pack of wolves (3-5 depending on party size), a group of 4 zombified miners, or a band of goblins (8-10) from Vaasa that snuck past the defences at the Vaasan end of Bloodstone Pass.

The Mines of Bloodstone

The mines are reached by a shaft in the foothills of the Galena Mountains. It is easily visible from the valley floor as the dwarves have fashioned a stone entrance to the shaft into the mountainside and a trail leads up the eastern slopes to the mine.

1-The Entrance: The entrance to the mines is a stone archway that opens onto a tunnel leading steadily into the ground. Normally this entrance would be sealed by a stone hatch from the inside during the winter time and guarded the rest of the year by two or more dwarves.

Now however the hatch is open and the dwarves are nowhere to be seen.

A DC 15 Perception check reveals signs of a struggle and some dried blood stains on the hatch and on the rocky floor around the entrance. There are however no bodies to be found.

Descending through the entrance leads to the Central Shaft.

2-The Central Shaft: This ten ft wide shaft is equipped with mine-track sleepers running down the centre of the tunnel. Water from the surface drips into the tunnel from the ceiling in irregular places and rivulets of water wind their way down into the depths.

There are a number of torch sconces on the wall but all the torches have been extinguished (the torches are still present and usable though).

The central shaft slopes down gently for hundreds of feet out of distance of the torches. Every 30 ft or so is a side room or branching shaft extending to the left or right.

3-Storage Room: This room was one of the original exploratory shafts and was later widened to serve as a storage room. Mine carts, pickaxes, shovels, rope, torches, and other essential mining equipment can be found here.

Apart from a few rats it doesn't look like this room has been disturbed since the miners fled the mine a month ago.

4-Abandoned Shaft: Another exploratory shaft delved early by the humans, it

was abandoned after several hundred feet as its yields were non-existent.

Sheltered at the far end is a dwarf in torn chain-mail armed with a heavy steel shield (he dropped his axe in his last fight). He is badly wounded (1 hp) and attempting to hide from all creatures in the mine, he will retreat from the party as they approach until they can assure him they are not zombies or in league with the priest.

He was a member of an attack squad that attempted to liberate the mines last night. They were overwhelmed by the power of the priest and his zombie and orc servants. This should give the party a clue that the priest has been involved in combat and used up many of his spells already, therefore it is a good time to strike before he can rest.

If the party can heal the dwarf and give him a weapon then he will gladly join them in liberating the mine. If the party are all non dwarves then he introduces himself as Gharrin of Orothiar Hold. If another dwarf is present then he is Gharrin of Clan Orothiar of Orothiar Hold.

5-Abandoned Shaft: Another exploratory shaft abandoned by the humans. This shaft contains a zombie shambling along its length searching for a way out. This zombie is the animated remains of one of the miners that were killed by the monsters inhabiting the mine. He was animated by the priest that now lives in the bottom of the mine, and was sent to menace the surface lands of Bloodstone Pass. Fortunately for the people above this zombie got lost and cannot find its way out.

The zombie has a single silver piece in his pocket and a rusted dagger at his belt.

6-The Slag Pool: The water from the surface gathers in this large cavern halfway down the Central Shaft. Here the miners clean the ore and gem lodes brought up from the working shafts below before they are carted to the surface.

The room also serves as a meeting point and eating area for the dwarven and human miners that work here.

Scattered around the floor are picks and shovels, some of them broken. Dried blood stains the floor, but again there are no bodies. This is evidence of

numerous battles that break out between the miners and the monsters that lurk in the mines as the dwarves attempt to reclaim them. A single serviceable dwarven waraxe can be found with a DC 15 Perception related check, this axe belongs to Gharrin

After 5 rounds in this room a group of 8 zombies crawls out of the slag pool and attacks the party. 5 of the zombies are human and are unarmed and unarmoured. 3 of the zombies are dwarven and are wearing leather armour (which is badly rotted from spending so long underwater).

Branching off the Slag Pool is a shaft descending deeper into the miner. Another shaft on the opposite side of the room (next to the Central Shaft entrance into the room) leads towards the dwarven settlement in the opposite side of the valley, but this shaft has been collapsed by the dwarves after they were attacked in the mines.

7-The Deep Shaft: This shaft is now the working section of the mine. Minetrack sleepers only extend partway down this shaft and an upturned ore cart lies at the end of the sleepers. Wooden beams help prop up the ceiling and parts of the shaft are in a state of semi-collapse after some of the beams have been broken.

The shaft is much steeper and contains large volumes of water dripping from the ceiling and running down into the depths.

8-Orc Guardpost: This wide mine shaft has been altered by the orcs that now lair here to serve as a guard room. Two orcs and two wolves will be on guard here at all times. However 50% of the time the orcs are arguing or eating or sleeping and so the party may be able to surprise them or sneak past. The wolves however are always alert and so make active Perception related checks for these if the party enter the room.

The orcs are level 1 warriors and are armed with battleaxes and wooden shields, they are wearing leather armour and carry between them 6 silver pieces and a bloodstone gem they found on a miner worth 20 gp.

9-Orc Lair: This hastily hollowed out room was constructed by the orcs following their capture of the mine and now serves as living quarters for the group.

Its construction was not well executed and any combat in the room has a 10%

chance of triggering a cave-in (8d6 damage, Reflex DC 15 for half damage). A Perception or appropriate Knowledge check at DC 20 will allow a PC to recognise the danger of a cave-in which they may then try and trigger deliberately if they wish.

At any point in time there are 1-5 orcs in this room. They are level 1 warriors and armed with battleaxes, wooden shields, and leather armour. There is a 50% chance that each orc will be asleep and so will be unarmed when the party arrive.

There are 3 chests in this room taken from the dwarves that the orcs now use to store their personal treasures. They are not locked (the locks are smashed) and contain a total of 26 gp, four bloodstones worth 15 gp each and a suit of chain-mail that needs repairing before it can be used.

10-Natural Cavern: The latest working shaft of the mine opened up into a large natural cavern of over 100 sq ft. In the centre of the cavern floor was a huge geode of bloodstone gems. The dwarves were working here when they were ambushed and their corpses now guard this room.

At the opposite end of the cavern is a newly constructed opening and room beyond it that serves as a shrine to Orcus.

Inhabiting the room are 20 dwarven zombies. They are armed with picks (1d4 damage, x4 crit modifier) and wearing leather armour.

11-Shrine of Orcus: Beyond the natural cavern is a newly constructed room that houses a shrine to Orcus. In the fair corner opposite the entrance is an altar to the demon lord which consists of a stone plinth with a bowl shaped depression at the top used to catch the blood of victims sacrificed over the altar. Around the top of the altar are the skulls of victims sacrificed to Orcus (currently the skulls of 3 dwarves and 2 humans, all miners).

In this room resides Duarthel, the priest of Orcus who invaded the mines and slew the dwarves inside with his orc and undead servants. He is a level 5 priest and his spell roster should focus on cursing opponents and raising the dead, Fortunately for the party he has cast animate dead today, used up all of his third level spells and half of his second level spells and only has 1 turn/channel energy ability use left for today.

Duarthel is armed with a masterwork mace (a black mace with a head that resembles a skull) and is wearing chain-mail. In the room is a locked chest (DC 20 to open) that contains some personal effects; a dried heart from one of the victims, a jewel encrusted skull (worth 50 gp) and a letter.

The letter text is as follows.

Duarthel,

For the glory of the Blood Lord you must travel to the Bloodstone mines in Bloodstone Pass and ensure not another gemstone leaves that place. I am sending a band of warriors to aid you, use them wisely and do not fail me or our lord lest you suffer an eternity of pain and suffering.

And do not let me catch you storing these letters again or I will have your tongue replaced with a blood-sucking lamprey.

Lucky

Alternate Dimensions Presents: Vaasa - Zhengyi the Witch King

Zhengyi the Witch King seemingly appeared from nowhere in the Year of the Bright Blade (1347 DR) in the frontier land of Vaasa.

Rumours abound that Zhengyi was a Red Wizard fleeing from the lands of Thay, perhaps a peer of Ythazz Buvaar himself and there at the founding of Thay.

What Zhengyi's past was until 1347 DR remains shrouded in mystery and rumour, but it is clear that Zhengyi was a devoted follower of Orcus and some whisper he held a direct line of descent to the Demon Lord who aided his bid for lichdom.

Is it coincidence then that Zhengyi arrived in Vaasa, a land of demons and monsters just at a point in history when humans had begun to tame its dangers? Perhaps Zhengyi had a hand in the land of Vaasa from the beginning and has been steering it towards its present course for centuries.

If so his motivations for doing so are unclear. As a worshipper of Orcus his goals are surely those of Orcus himself, who like most demons desires nothing more than the destruction of everything. Orcus may well have been aware of the ancient primordial slumbering beneath the *Great Glacier* in the lands that would become Vaasa. As the glacier retreated and these lands opened up Orcus may have directed his servants to the area for the purpose of stealing the power of such an ancient and powerful being.

Unfortunately such a land was quickly claimed by the orcs that plague the east, and demons that have slumbered beneath the earth since the fall of ancient Narfell. Once the land was clear of these threats a man of power such as Zhengyi could easily have dominated Vaasa and forged a kingdom of evil.

Zhengyi was also perfectly poised with the knowledge to "tap" power from items or beings of power. As one of the original wizards of Thay it is likely he had some experience of the Black Star artefact of Escalant which was used by all Red Wizards of Thay for many centuries to boost their magical abilities. Furthermore, the nearby ruins of Narathmault; an ancient Narfelli ruin, may contain clues to binding powerful individuals such as the Demon Lord Eltab and other unknown horrors.

What we know for certain is that Zhengyi's rise to power was swift and absolute. From 1347 DR he forged Vaasa and then conquered Damara ten years later. If not for the actions of a few stubborn adventurers he could have become a threat to Impiltur and the lands beyond.

Zhengyi's power and phylactery were tied to a powerful artefact that he had constructed to draw power from Telos and had fashioned to resemble the wand of Orcus. It could only be destroyed by plunging it into blood from the heart of Tiamat, and once Gareth Dragonsbane did so, Zhengyi should have been destroyed.

Fortunately for Zhengyi, or perhaps unfortunately, Telos had awoken and become aware of someone stealing his powers and so when Zhengyi was killed and his wand destroyed Telos took his revenge and absorbed Zhengyi's soul.

Now Zhengyi persists as Telos' slave, inhabiting the body of a Red Wizard of Thay that Telos cleaned out for his new pet. Zhengyi the Witch King is now Zhengyi the Voice of Telos.

As the Voice of Telos, Zhengyi wanders the lands of Vaasa converting those he meets to the worship of Telos with displays of miraculous powers and feigned benevolence. The converts are brought to the Clefts of Razack and inducted into the worship of Telos using strange rituals and then branded with arcane tattoos.

From these converts he has forged the Warlock Knights, which at first seemed a force for law and order in Vaasa, but the organisation has a dark and secret agenda to conquer the Bloodstone Lands and sacrifice everyone to the glory of Telos.

Zhengyi's Lair: Between 1347 DR and 1358 DR, Zhengyi lived in Castle Perilous, a black stone fortress in the north of Vaasa filled with all manner of traps and fiendish servants.

For reasons unknown, Zhengyi created the fortress atop a site that was previously sacred to Tiamat; the Chromatic Dragon. Long ago in ancient times, Tiamat created a gate to her home on Avernus and from it unleashed hordes of devils against her foe Bahamut (whose palace, The North Wind, frequented this area). Bahamut destroyed her fortress at the expense of much of his power, but he could not destroy the gate and so he buried it deep in the earth.

Zhengyi may have found a pact with the Dragon Queen was also to his liking and it helped bolster his forces with devils and dragons. However this choice of location would ultimately prove his undoing for his wand and phylactery could only be destroyed in blood from the heart of Tiamat, to which the gate provided easy access.

Since Zhengyi's "destruction", Castle Perilous was ruined and became home to a flight of dragons that protected the latest avatar of Tiamat; the Undying Queen. Beneath

Castle Perilous is the constantly expanding cavernous cathedral known as the Wings of the Queen Reborn where the Undying Queen made her home on several occasions. This lair is now filled with cultists and dragon spawn of all kinds making ready for Tiamat's conquest of Vaasa.

Following Zhengyi's return in 1365 DR, the Voice of Telos makes his home wandering the lands of Vaasa preaching the Will of Telos to all who will listen. Once the Cathedral of Shattered Souls is built in the city of Telos, Zhengyi resides there as High Priest of this new cult.

This new Cathedral is constructed entirely of shadesteel and is impervious to all forms of scrying and most magic (whether that is due to the large concentrations of metal or Telos' magic is unknown). Within his new base of operations Zhengyi has access to large numbers of Warlock Knights, and rumour has it shadesteel golems of colossal size. These fanatically loyal followers do his every bidding and protect the Voice of Telos from external (and internal) threats.

There are also tales of a passage in the Cathedral that lead into the depths of the Clefts of Razack and to Telos himself.

Zhengyi's Magic

Zhengyi has acquired many powerful magics in his lifetime. The creation of Castle Perilous in a single day was no small feat of magic and it is likely he drew on the vast reserves of power available to him from Telos. As such Zhengyi is likely to have access to many dark and ancient magics that few others in Faerûn possess.

Zhengyi's most famous magic is his wand, known as "The Wand of Orcus" because of its resemblance to its namesake.

The Wand of Orcus: This wand consisted of a skull mounted upon a thick obsidian hilt decorated with rubies. Rumour has it that the skull atop the wand was that of one of the kings of Damara, although the source of this rumour is unknown.

Zhengyi enspelled the wand with many powers and crafted it into a potent artefact able to draw power from the slumbering primordial Telos. Zhengyi also made this item his phylactery, since such an artefact was nigh impossible to destroy. However thanks to the efforts of Gareth Dragonsbane it was destroyed and Zhengyi should have been destroyed along with it.

The wand was rumoured to grant the wielder the ability to slay upon command and

raise creatures from the dead to serve the wielder. Such raised servants could vastly exceed the number of undead creatures the wielder would normally be able to command. Furthermore it was incredibly difficult for undead creatures to bring themselves to strike the bearer of the wand, only those intelligent undead of exceptional mental strength could do so.

The choice of the skull used to decorate the wand may have indeed helped save Damara from the hoards of demons unleashed by Zhengyi. The Boon of Bahamut bestowed upon the Bloodfeathers line was said, by the dragon that bestowed it, "to ward off evil and purify the blood". If so could it be that the skull of the king atop the wand purified the artefact upon its destruction and led to the creation of the Tree Gem of Damara.

Zhengyi's Allies

As Zhengyi the Witch King, Zhengyi had many "allies" whom he viewed as pawns to be used for his personal gain. His armies of orcs and demons were one set of pawns, as were the Citadel of Assassins and the Cults of Orcus that he had helped create throughout the lands of Vaasa, Damara and beyond.

However Zhengyi's only real ally was Orcus himself. Zhengyi was a true and loyal servant of the Demon Lord of the undead and was richly rewarded by his patron and possible sire.

As the Voice of Telos, Zhengyi's allies are the Warlock Knights who perform his every bidding. Telos might also be considered Zhengyi's ally, although the primordial is only using Zhengyi and the Warlock Knights so that he can consume more souls and escape his prison.

Zhengyi is fully aware of Telos' intended betrayal but is so completely under Telos' control that he cannot do anything about it.

Zhengyi's Enemies

As both Zhengyi the Witch King and Zhengyi the Voice of Telos, Zhengyi's enemies could be considered anyone that is not an ally or under his direct control.

Zhengyi the Witch King had a particularly strong enmity for the lands and the Bloodfeather dynasty of Damara, although the reasons for this hatred are as unclear as Zhengyi's origins.

Zhengyi's past as a Red Wizard of Thay means that the organisation to which he once belonged; and may indeed have had a hand in creating, will always seek to bring about his downfall in punishment for his betrayal.

Zhengyi's Fate

Zhengyi's fate might seem hopeless to some. His phylactery is destroyed and he is now completely under the control of Telos; a being of unspeakable power, who intends to sacrifice Zhengyi and everyone else in his service when the time is right.

However, all is not lost for Zhengyi. As Telos acquires more worshippers and his reach grows, his Warlock Knights will inevitably come into conflict with other organisations and nations from across Faerûn. When this happens Telos will be forced to donate considerable mental and magical resource to the conflict.

During such an event it is possible that his control over Zhengyi will lapse and at that point Zhengyi will be free to act. His first action will be to create another phylactery, his second may well be to commit suicide.

If Zhengyi the Voice of Telos is ever killed then his soul will be free once more. Without a phylactery, Zhengyi will undoubtedly pass on to whatever awaits him in the afterlife. With a phylactery, Zhengyi the Witch King will be reborn.

When Is a House Rule Not a House Rule: Skills

This is an alternative to the present skills system that should remove the number creep inherent with skill point, while at the same time presenting an alternative that is familiar to use and works in the existing rules.

Instead of using skill points, the alternative skill system uses feats to determine how accomplished a character is with a particular skill.

So here are the new feats for the skill system.

- **Skill Training**

Prerequisites: None

Benefit: You are considered trained in the skill chosen with this feat. You receive a +5 bonus on all checks made using the skill chosen with this feat.

Special: You may gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack, each time it is chosen it applies to a new skill.

- **Skill Specialisation**

Prerequisites: Skill Training (associated ability score of 20)

Benefit: You receive an additional +5 bonus on all checks made using the skill chosen with this feat. This benefit stacks with the Skill Training feat used for this skill.

Special: You may gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack, each time it is chosen it applies to a new skill.

- **Skill Mastery**

Prerequisites: Skill Specialisation (associated ability score of 25)

Benefit: You receive an additional +5 bonus on all checks made using the skill chosen with this feat. This benefit stacks with the Skill Training and Skill Specialisation feat used for this skill.

Special: You may gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack, each time it is chosen it applies to a new skill.

The number of skill training feats a character gains at first level should be scaled similarly to the current system but you only gain these feats from your first class.

Additional classes only expand your class skill list.

You gain another skill feat every 5 levels but the player may take either a Skill Training, Skill Specialisation, or Skill Mastery feat if they meet the requirements, but only from their class skill list.

Finally a player gains a number of bonus feats equal to their highest mental ability score modifier (Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma). These bonus feats can be spent on any feat they meet the requirements for but the intention is to use them for skill training and they can take them for any skill (including those not on the class skill list).

Now in order to streamline the skill system I have grouped together a number of existing skills under new skills to simplify things so the classes now have a different set of Class Skills.

The new Class Skill lists are as follows:

Barbarian: Athletics (Str), Craft (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Nature (Int or Wis), Perception (Wis), Ride (Dex). Begin with 3 trained skills

Bard: Acrobatics (Dex), Appraise (Int), Arcana (Int), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Discipline (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Insight (Wis), Knowledge (Any) (Int), Perception (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Linguistics (Int), Stealth (Dex), Streetwise (Cha), Thievery (Dex), Tinker (Int). Begin with 6 trained skills.

Cleric: Craft (Int), Discipline (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (Religion, History, the Planes) (Int), Profession (Wis), Religion (Int). Begin with 4 trained skills.

Druid: Athletics (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Discipline (Cha), Heal (Wis), Nature (Int or Wis), Perception (Wis), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex). Begin with 4 trained skills.

Fighter: Athletics (Str), Craft (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Nature (Int or Wis), Ride (Dex). Begin with 3 trained skills.

Monk: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Discipline (Cha), Insight (Wis), Knowledge (Arcana, Religion) (Int), Perception (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Stealth (Dex). Begin with 4 trained skills.

Paladin: Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Discipline (Cha), Heal (Wis), Insight (Wis),

Knowledge (Nobility) (Int), Nature (Int or Wis), Profession (Wis), Religion (Int), Ride (Dex). Begin with 4 trained skills.

Ranger: Athletics (Str), Craft (Int), Discipline (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (Dungeoneering, Geography) (Int), Nature (Int or Wis), Perception (Wis), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Stealth (Dex), Tinker (Int). Begin with 5 trained skills.

Rogue: Acrobatics (Dex), Appraise (Int), Arcana (Int), Athletics (Str), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Insight (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (Local) (Int), Perception (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Stealth (Dex), Streetwise (Cha), Thievery (Dex), Tinker (Int). Begin with 6 trained skills.

Sorcerer: Arcana (Int), Bluff (Cha), Fly (Dex), Discipline (Cha), Craft (Int), Profession (Wis). Begin with 4 trained skills.

Wizard: Arcana (Int), Discipline (Cha), Craft (Int), Knowledge (Any) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Profession (Wis). Begin with 3 trained skills.

Alternate Dimensions Presents: Vaasa - The Warlock Knights

The Warlock Knights are a rising power in the frontier land of Vaasa. While seemingly benevolent in its formative years, it actually harbours a dark secret and malign intent.

History of the Warlock Knights

The Warlock Knights are formed shortly after Zhengyi the Voice of Telos takes to wandering the lands of Vaasa preaching the Will of Telos. His benevolent acts towards the people of Vaasa; saving families from monstrous attacks and helping crops to grow, as well as the feats of magical power he displays, help to cement a growing belief in Telos as a guardian force in the frontier.

The Warlock Knights form late in 1365 DR and quickly gain more converts from those desperate folk in Vaasa helped by the servants of Telos.

By Mirtul of 1366 DR the first armoured Warlock Knights make their appearances in the major settlements of Vaasa. These emissaries volunteer as guardians, law enforcers, and protectors of the common people. Their numbers are particularly strong around the growing settlement of Telos above the Clefts of Razack.

When the Rage of Dragons strikes it is the Warlock Knights in many settlements that are first to take up arms in defence of Vaasa and its people. For this act they are rewarded positions of influence within the settlement.

Shortly afterwards the Warlock Knights use various nefarious methods to ensure they are in charge of these settlements and then militarily occupy them and declare themselves the rulers of Vaasa.

Since taking over Vaasa the Warlock Knights have seen their numbers swell with converts across Vaasa, some looking for power, others looking to escape persecution from the growing intolerance of the Warlock Knights themselves. The organisation is turning itself into an army full of armoured, magic using humanoids backed by shadesteel golems. Its next target is the Zhentarim that also contests the Vaasa region and then afterwards, Damara.

Organisation

The Warlock Knights exist as a feudal organisation with the rank and file troops reporting to "Counts" who report to regional "Dukes" who in turn report to trusted "Lords" who report directly to The Voice of Telos. As well as being the structure of

the Warlock Knights this is also becoming the structure of Vaasa in territory owned by the Knights.

Members: 5,000+ as of 1375 DR

Hierarchy: Feudal

Leader: Zhengyi "The Voice of Telos" (Telos himself controls Zhengyi)

Religions: Telos

Alignment: Any evil

Secrecy: Low

Symbol: A black orb in the jaws of a serpentine maw.

Hierarchy

The hierarchy of the Warlock Knights is strictly controlled and enforced. Promotion is by appointment only which must go through the next highest ranking member.

The Deep Shadow: This title is the leader of the Warlock Knights and perceived ruler of the Vaasan region under Warlock Knight's control. The Deep Shadow is believed to be Zhengyi the Voice of Telos but actually refers to Telos himself. Zhengyi spends all of his time in the Cathedral of Shattered Souls in the settlement of Telos and is guarded at all times by two advanced shadesteel golems.

The Deep Shadow (Zhengyi) appears from the cathedral only during times of ritual sacrifice, or for a prominent execution. Otherwise he can only be seen by appointment and these are only given to the Lords of the Warlock Knights.

Twilight Lords: This title belongs to the ruler of a nation. At this moment in time The Voice of Telos has decreed there are only two positions of Twilight Lord, one for Vaasa and one for Damara. Only the Twilight Lord of Vaasa position has been filled, by the first convert to Telos.

- *Griphlek, Twilight Lord of Vaasa (CE goblin Warlock 5/Fighter 5):* Strangely enough, the first convert to Telos was not a human but a goblin of enormous size and keen intellect (by goblin standards). Outcast from his home in the Bottomless Bogs he was quickly set upon by a pack of worgs when the Voice of Telos found and rescued him. Griphlek was glad to embrace Telos' teachings and revelled in the power it brought him which magnified his own considerable strength.

Griphlek is still the consummate coward, and vicious backstabbing snake that all goblins are, but he cannot bear to see the weak being abused by the strong and it enrages him enough to help even the odds. This trait earned him the respect of many a Vaasan loner or farmsteader under attack by the monsters of the wilderness and so he has amassed a great many converts over the years.

Griphlek has kept his position thanks to the rigid structure of the Warlock Knights and also because he is incapable of trust. Should any underling become too powerful or ambitious they are often sent on dangerous missions from which they will not return.

Griphlek is always covered in the dull shadesteel armour of the Warlock Knights (even his face) so given his enormous size (for a goblin) most consider him to be a short human or perhaps a dwarf. Among the Warlock Knights he is known as Griff and his true identity remains a secret.

Griphlek's enormous size and intellect stem from his over exposure to the magical springs in the Bottomless Bogs. As a child he was often left to swim in these springs and it augmented his growth considerably, he now stands just short of 7 ft tall. It also had the curious effect of extending his life and rendering him nearly immune to Telos' life drain, almost as if his over exposure to Telos in his early years has allowed his body to adapt to prevent Telos' influence.

Dusk Dukes: This title belongs to a regional ruler of the Warlock Knights. These individuals are in control of one of the four regions of Vaasa and every Warlock Knight Count in the appointed area reports directly to a Duke of Dusk, they in turn report to Griphlek the Twilight Lord of Vaasa.

As of 1375 DR, there are four Dukes controlling the following regions; the Cinnabar Wastes, the Bottomless Bogs, the Sunderland and the Bleak Steppes of Haatar Baen. These titles are largely symbolic in terms of settlements under Warlock Knights control. The Warlock Knights only control the Bottomless Bogs in its entirety and only Telos in the Cinnabar Wastes. The other settlements in the regions are controlled either by the Zhentarim or by independent forces.

- *Dresklor Marne, Duke of Haatar Baen (LE Vaasan human Ftr 7):* Dresklor is a fairly recent convert to the Warlock Knights and the third Duke of Haatar Baen. As the local representative of law and order (such as it was) in Maur

Eturo, Dresklor was seen as an essential but unimportant part of that town. His work mostly involved being paid by the local traders to track down thieves or cattle rustlers.

When the Zhentarim arrived Dresklor was no longer needed and quickly became destitute. After being approached by a Warlock Knight in disguise he travelled on foot to Telos and for his troubles was granted entry into the organisations. He quickly rose through the ranks thanks to his background in law enforcement and his ability to protect the common man (although sometimes a bit too zealously) which gained him many converts to the Will of Telos.

After the previous Duke of Haatar Baen withered away and died of old age at 39, Dresklor was appointed as his successor and given the task of combating the Zhentarim. Dresklor hopes that his familiarity with the people and place will give him an advantage but in truth Dresklor is out of his depth and Haatar Baen has changed so much he would not recognise it anymore. Instead he must rely on his ability to lead to help him survive.

Shadow Counts: These are typically the rulers of settlements within a region controlled by a Duke of Dusk; however a number of these counts exist for settlements outside Vaasa where the Warlock Knights are beginning to gain converts or have sent agents. They can reside either in the settlement they represent or anywhere within the nearby area.

- *Teremmic Shaul (LE human male vampire Rogue 5):* Teremmic is an unfortunate individual that was once a Harper agent until; due to a speedy recall by his superiors, he was discovered by a vampire and turned.

At the time the Harper Inquisition was well underway and he knew he would no longer be welcome within their ranks as an evil blood sucking vampire; in fact it was quite likely he would be destroyed by his former allies. Luck however was with Teremmic and he was also being watched by one of the Moonstars who; with Khelben's blessing, brought him into the fold and sent him to infiltrate the Warlock Knights who so far had proved impossible to access.

Teremmic found no trouble in gaining entry to the Warlock Knights. His rare talents make him an excellent infiltrator and he quickly gained the position of Count of Darmshall, an independent settlement in the Sunderlands.

However Teremic is the only Warlock Knight in Darmshall and he has growing suspicions that he might be being deliberately kept at arms length by the Warlock Knights hierarchy.

Motivation and Goals

The motivation of all Warlock Knights is to gain more converts to the Will of Telos. Almost all do this out of the belief that it will help them advance in the organisation and gain them more power and respect.

Some however, particularly those in power who have been there the longest have realised the truth and the need for more converts.

As a Warlock Knight, each individual forges a link with Telos himself using the ritual and mysterious tattoos that adorn their body. This link allows a Warlock Knight to draw upon Telos' power to fuel whatever arcane magics they choose to perform. However the link works both ways and over time Telos slowly drains a Warlock Knight of his life force.

The drain is slow and can be slowed further by acquiring more converts or advancing in rank within the Warlock Knights, alternatively it can be accelerated by using the gifts bestowed by Telos. However there is no such thing as an old Warlock Knight and most perish by the time they are 40 years of age, a withered, dried out, old husk.

The organisation as a whole seeks to dominate Vaasa and forge it into a kingdom. Then they will march on Damara and the surrounding lands in the name of Telos.

To accomplish this goal the lay worshippers of Telos (those too weak to join the Warlock Knights) are busy mining the Clefts of Razack for shadesteel and busy forging weapons of war. Swords, armour, and shadesteel golems are pouring out of the city of Telos in their hundreds arming the Warlock Knights for the coming conflict.

Recruiting

The Warlock Knights are eager for recruits. All an individual has to do to join the Warlock Knights is be of sound health (Str and Con 11+) and renounce all gods but Telos. They are then touched by the tattoo of the recruiting Warlock Knight and an imprint is left on the recipient. They are then instructed to travel to Telos where they will be inducted into the order.

Those unable to join the Warlock Knights themselves but still professing a desire to follow the Will of Telos are instructed to travel to Telos anyway where they will be assigned work in the new order.

After 1375 DR those not able to join the Warlock Knights and not following the Will of Telos (or wishing to convert) are likely to be captured and sacrificed from the Clefts of Razack. Sacrifices are rather unceremoniously pushed off the edge where they fall to their deaths.

Equipment

The Warlock Knights wear their own trademark shadesteel weapons and armour. A weapon forged of shadesteel drains the life of anyone it strikes and conveys part of this life to the wielder (the rest is sent to Telos). A suit of armour forged of shadesteel provides protection from life draining magic but positive energy (such as healing spells) actually damages the wearer. These are properties of the material and are independent of any magical enchantments added later.

Shadesteel Golems: These creatures resemble dull metallic skeletons with sharp swords on the ends of their arms and spikes protruding from everywhere. They come in a variety of sizes and are especially lethal in combat where their melee strikes can drain the average human of all life with a single blow. They are also capable of emitting darkness to obscure an enemy's vision but they are not hampered by such an effect themselves.

So far the largest shadesteel golems ever seen are around 8-9 ft tall but there are rumours of enormous behemoths hidden within the Cathedral of Shattered Souls and the Clefts of Razack.

Tattoos: These emblems of Telos are stylised italic swirls with a serpentine look that can adorn anywhere on the body. These tattoos provide a small modicum of protection from physical attacks and the elements. They also allow a wearer to call on the power of Telos to boost the casting of spells although doing so will age the recipient by a whole day.

Touching a tattoo to the naked flesh of someone will brand them with a similar mark (although it is always unique) of raised slightly reddened skin that quickly turns black. This mark will fade within 1 month as the skin peels off but can be used to gain entry into the settlement of Telos without explanation.

Purple Coneflower: This curious little flower is native to the Bottomless Bogs area of Vaasa. This strangely coloured pine cone grows naturally in the magical hot springs of the Bogs but otherwise is only found in the Tortured Lands in any great number; where it has a faint analgesic effect once ingested.

The magic of the hot springs in Vaasa has amplified this pain killing effect and; thanks to efforts by the Cult of the Dragon in the area, a refined derivative of this plant makes a very addictive narcotic substance.

The plant however has another effect that a few in the Warlock Knights have discovered (largely by accident). The purple coneflower alleviates the rapid aging effect brought on by the link with Telos; the narcotic substance produced by the Cult of the Dragon stops the rapid aging altogether.

As a result growing numbers of Warlock Knights are deliberately becoming addicted to this substance which enriches the Cult of the Dragon and ensures its place in Vaasan society.

Like all drugs so, the effects decrease with continued use and after several years (depending on consumption) the anti aging effects (as well as analgesic effects) are negligible. It still remains a powerful addictive substance though that could cause significant problems for the Warlock Knights if its use becomes more widespread among their ranks.

The Knights Below: Adventure Path: Episode 2

Overview: The party are now inside the borders of the High Forest hopefully following the lead of Hawkeye as he attempts to lead them to his clan holdings. Nearing the area he stops to rest at a large shadowtop tree and relates a story of its history.

"Long ago before the forest was overrun with demonspawn there lived an elf champion who could supposedly shoot an orc in the eye from several miles away. He was slain in an altercation with barbarian tribes and buried where he fell. This tree was planted atop his resting place to protect him.

The Environment: As a forest, every square counts as difficult terrain and grants concealed because of the undergrowth. Perception distance is limited to 140 ft and any line of effect (including melee) that passes through part of a tree grants cover to the defending character.

Hidden in the base of the tree among the large overgrown roots of the shadowtop tree, is a secret door. A DC 20 Perception check (Spot or Search) will reveal the existence of the door. A DC 20 nature related check will reveal the type of tree and its importance in wood elven culture. Wood elves receive a +2 bonus on both checks.

A DC 22 Perception related check will allow the party to notice the tracks of several humanoids in the area that are several hours old. If the party beat the DC by 5 then they discover there were 5 individuals in the group. If the party beat the DC by 10 then they discover the tracks were made by orcs

The Tomb: The stairs lead down into an earthen chamber (20 ft by 20 ft) beneath the tree that is pierced by great tree roots in many places. Placed atop an earthen dais is the skeletal body of the ancient champion and in his hands rests a large bow.

The tomb is in complete darkness and so the party will need light sources or darkvision to see. A DC 20 Wisdom or Knowledge (History or Local) will allow the PC to deduce that this may be the elven champion mentioned in Hawkeye's story.

Should anyone touch the bow then the fell spirits of the high forest animate the bones of the champion who immediately attacks the intruders. Treat as a skeleton wearing masterwork chain mail and wielding a longsword.

The bow itself is named "Haeron i'Chui" and is a +1 composite greatbow of distance. It was fashioned from a branch of the darkwood tree and has slain many an orc for its

owner.

There is no other treasure in the tomb and the chain mail and sword wielded by the animating skeleton are rusted and pitted beyond use.

Once the party have finished exploring the tomb they are attacked on their way out of the tomb by a party of 5 orcs (the same orcs whose tracks they may have located earlier). The orcs are armed with throwing and battle axes and are wearing studded leather. All orc equipment has the fragile property because of poor maintenance or construction.

Unless the party discovered the tracks or succeed on a Perception check opposed by the orc's Stealth check, then the combat begins with a surprise round and the orcs have the advantage.

The Aftermath: Once the orcs are dealt with the party are free to move on. The dead orcs have little of value on them, a few rotted meat snacks and some poor quality equipment. A DC 15 Perception check will allow a PC to notice the different tribal markings (a red double headed axe) on these orcs as opposed to the orcs encountered on the barge (which had a red severed head daubed on them).

A DC 18 Knowledge (Local) check will allow the party to recognise these as members of the Axebiter clan of orcs.

The Knights Below: Campaign Journal

Our much expanded motley crew ventured under the boughs of the High Forest. Hawkeye led the way and pointed out useful bits of information regarding the forest, however we could tell he was frustrated by our slow progress and the noise we made as we crashed through the undergrowth.

Crag moaned almost continuously about having extra mouths to feed and he argued with himself about not getting the eight meals a day he sorely needed, all the while referring to an entity called "Brain" as though that were his own name.

After about 6 hours travel we came to a huge tree with a wide trunk, very much different from the other trees around it. Hawkeye was about to mention something when Tallyn spotted tracks around the base. Upon closer inspection we learned it was a party of about 5 orcs, and they had been here very recently.

Somehow Crag managed to find a hidden door in the base of the tree and fell through it into darkness. It took us a few minutes to notice he was missing and discover his location.

As we descending the steps into the bare earthen room we spotted Crag in the centre just reaching for a bow resting atop a skeleton. Before anyone could say "Don't touch that bow", he grasped it in his hand and waved it at us to show what he had found.

Almost immediately the skeletal former owner of the bow leaped from the platform upon which he lay and launched himself at Crag with an ancient rusted sword.

Quick as a flash we leaped into action. Chadwick drew steel and rushed to the aid of the surprised barbarian while Tallyn drew arcane symbols in the air with his hands and Wystan readied his bow.

In a flurry of blades, arrows and purple flashing missiles, the skeleton crumbled to the ground with Crag still holding up the bow to deflect his attacker.

Chadwick and Tallyn scolded Crag for his foolhardy behaviour, for surely everyone knows that ancient tombs are always guarded in some way. All the noise must have alerted the orcs to our presence because within moments they were standing in the stair well behind us.

There were five of them, they were big and mean looking with wicked looking axes in hand. They charged just as Crag and Chadwick stepped in line to protect the others.

Crag took an axe blow to the shoulder but his huge two handed sword cleft the attacking orc in twain.

Chadwick defended blows from no less than three orcs without taking a scratch.

Tallyn called a strange ape-like animal with a curiously reddened behind to the battle. Apparently this creature was called Beast and it flew at the nearest orc clawing and biting at the green-skin before disappearing in a cloud of smoke.

Hawkeye and Wystan were both excellent shots with their bows and riddled the orc facing off against Beast with arrows.

Mikhail and Markus charged to the aid of Chadwick and acting as a concerted team one caught an orc of guard with a slash of his sword while the other ran the creature through.

The remaining two orcs turned and ran, clearly outnumbered, and not expecting such a fierce resistance from a group of humans. Hawkeye chased after them and put both down with an arrow in the back before they could get 100 feet away. Then he spat on the ground and cursed them before dragging their corpses out of the tomb.

Hawkeye explained to us this tomb once belonged to an elven champion long ago who was famous for being able to slay foes with that bow before they were even able to see him.

We decided that it was no longer safe to leave such a treasure in the tomb, in case any orcs came looking for the others. So we took the bow and collapsed the entrance to the tomb.

Then with a warning from Hawkeye to tread quietly, we ventured further into the High Forest.

Credits

Dragons of the East - Telos: "The Lost Primordial"	G.Dallison
Ryan Rahuba Presents: Lycanthropy - Origin	R.Rahuba
Laerakond: Timeline of an Alternate Abeir	G.Dallison
Rulesword: Trimming 3rd Edition One Step at a Time	G.Dallison
Alternate Dimensions Presents: Damara - An Alternate Timeline	G.Dallison
The Bloodstone Lands: Adventure Path - Episode 1	G.Dallison
Alternate Dimensions Presents: Vaasa - Zhengyi the Witch King	G.Dallison
Alternate Dimensions Presents: Vaasa - The Warlock Knights	G.Dallison
The Knights Below: Adventure Path - Episode 2	G.Dallison
The Knights Below: Campaign Journal	G.Dallison

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Final Word

Just to note that this is in no way to be considered canon material; it is a fan-made representation of different versions of the Forgotten Realms. It uses some canon information as a base but may remove some pieces of the Realms, alter others, and add many homebrew ideas to develop it further.