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# FOREWORD

**Y**OU'VE just arrived in the town of Solace, a town known far and wide across Ansalon for two things: its wondrous vallenwood trees, the likes of which grow nowhere else on the continent, and for the famous Inn of the Last Home.

As you stand on a hill overlooking the town, you see the smoke from the home fires rising into the twilight. Your own home is far distant, for you have left it behind to roam the world in search of adventure, fame, and fortune. Perhaps you feel a little twinge of homesickness, thinking of your own home fire, now cold.

That feeling vanishes as you start the long trek down the hill into Solace and you gaze up in awe and wonder at the golden leaves of the vallenwoods, shimmering purple red in sunset. As you admire the autumn colors, you are astonished to see that the branches hold in their mighty limbs the dwellings and businesses of the people of Solace, for Solace is a city built in the treetops.

Wooden plank bridges connect the homes and businesses in a web of stout rope. People of many different races—humans and elves, dwarves and kender and gnomes—traverse the swinging walkways, going about their business.

As you climb the stairs leading up to the Inn, some of these people eye you suspiciously, for times are troubled. You yourself have heard many dark rumors as you traveled the roads of Ansalon—rumors of armies of evil marching through the land, rumors of the return of the dread Takhisis, Queen of Darkness.

You have even rumors that dragons—creatures of legend—have returned to the world. Such stories make you—a seasoned traveler—smile. Children's tales, you think.

You had hoped that, in Solace, you would find safe haven from the dangers of the road, but you are startled to see goblins in armor strutting about, looking important. These goblins actually have the

nerve to stop to question you about a blue crystal staff! It's supposed to be magical and they demand that you hand it over. You know nothing of such a staff, and the goblins eventually march off. But the encounter leaves a bad taste in your mouth.

That taste is soon washed away by the legendary nut-brown ale served in the Inn of the Last Home. The inn is so large that it sprawls over several branches of the vallenwood tree and it is filled this evening with a great many people. A young mage wearing the Red Robes of the Order of High Sorcery huddles close by the fire. A merry kender weaves his way among the crowd and you check to make sure you still have your coin pouch. A tall barbarian, clad in deerskin, talks in a low voice to a beautiful woman, whose silver-golden hair gleams in the light. An old man tells tales of Huma and the fabled dragonlance. As you listen, a half-elf enters, accompanied by a dwarf and a knight in armor.

The half-elf sees you and calls out your name. You realize suddenly that you know these people, though it's been a long, long time since you last met...

You settle in at your table, enjoying the warmth of the fire and the company of friends. A barmaid with fiery red hair serves up a plate of the Inn's specialty—spiced potatoes. The smoke from the cook fire rises into the air and mingles with the mists of twilight.

There comes a thunderous crash on the door. An ugly hobgoblin charges into the room, accompanied by goblin soldiers. There is a flash of blue light.

The adventure of a lifetime is about to start.

You are about to find out that rumors of war are true. Dragons are not children's tales any longer.

The War of the Lance has come to you.

Tracy Hickman & Margaret Weis

# Chapter 1: CHARACTERS

**S**WEARING under his breath, Tanis could do nothing but stand and stare at the figure emerging from the shadows. It was seated on a small, furry-legged pony that walked with its head down as if it were ashamed of its rider. Gray, mottled skin sagged into folds about the rider's face. Two pig-pink eyes stared out at them from beneath a military-looking helmet. Its fat, flabby body leaked out between pieces of flashy, pretentious armor.

A peculiar odor hit Tanis, and he wrinkled his nose in disgust. "Hobgoblin!" his brain registered. He loosened his sword and kicked at Flint, but at that moment the dwarf gave a tremendous sneeze and sat up on the kender.

"Horse!" said Flint, sneezing again.

"Behind you," Tanis replied quietly.

Flint, hearing the warning note in his friend's voice, scrambled to his feet. Tasslehoff quickly did the same.

The hobgoblin sat astride the pony, watching them with a sneering, supercilious look on his flat face. His pink eyes reflected the last lingering traces of sunlight.

"You see, boys," the hobgoblin stated, speaking the Common tongue with a thick accent, "what fools we are dealing with here in Solace."

There was a gritty laughter from the trees behind the hobgoblin. Five goblin guards, dressed in crude uniforms, came out on foot. They took up positions on either side of their leader's horse.

"Now..." The hobgoblin leaned over his saddle. Tanis watched with a kind of horrible fascination as the creature's huge belly completely engulfed the pommel. "I am Fewmaster Toede, leader of the forces that are keeping Solace protected from undesirable elements. You have no right to be walking in the city limits after dark. You are under arrest."

Fewmaster Toede leaned down to speak to a goblin near him. "Bring me the blue crystal staff, if you find it on them," he said in the croaking goblin tongue.

Tanis, Flint, and Tasslehoff all looked at each other questioningly. Each of them could speak some goblin, Tas better than the others. Had they heard right? A blue crystal staff?

"If they resist," added Fewmaster Toede, switching back to Common for grand effect, "kill them."

*Dragons of Autumn Twilight*  
Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

## RACES OF THE AGE OF DESPAIR

The races of Ansalon are generally isolated during the Age of Despair and rarely interact. Suspicion and prejudice run rampant through each race and culture. Old alliances and friendships are only a memory. Elves have withdrawn into their respective lands and severed contact with the outside world. The mountain dwarves of Thorbardin sealed the underground kingdom, abandoning their hill

dwarf cousins. Human countries, cities, and towns are insular and distrust outsiders. Minotaur keep to the newly formed islands of Mithas and Kothas, establishing their own kingdom. Ogres celebrate the chaos and lawlessness brought on by the Cataclysm by raiding and conquering their neighbors. The gnomes continue their single-minded pursuit of technological perfection in Mount Nevermind. Kender now enjoy a world full of new places to explore.

The Age of Despair is a dark age for Ansalon, a time of fear and suffering. But these hard times will forge the strength the people will need to survive the War of the Lance and beyond.

## HUMANS

Early in the Age of Despair the humans of Ansalon abandoned all faith. The majority of humans felt betrayed by the disappearance of the gods, and many denounced the gods.

With their relatively short life spans, the humans soon forgot about the true gods, regarding them, as the centuries passed, as little more than myth and legend. The tales of the ancient deities are still passed down from one generation to the next, but, after nearly three and a half centuries they are considered kender tales. Gods are believed to be as real as dragons, fairy folk, and other childhood fantasies.

Generations without faith have led to a longing for some type of belief, and many humans turned to cult worship. False religions and the worship of idols has grown increasingly prevalent. Sometimes these religious movements last for decades before they are finally exposed as frauds. Although most humans no longer believe in the ancient gods, many still hunger for guidance in their lives and seek the solace of a higher being.

True healing has always been considered one of the gods' great powers. When the gods left the world, famine and plague spread throughout the continent. Thousands died in the wake of the gods' departure and, without the aid of the gods' healing powers, the suffering was catastrophic. Many people look for magical healing as a sign of a new, true faith. Many humans try to replicate healing with medicinal herbs and—in some cases—sleight-of-hand. These attempts at healing have never achieved miraculous results, though local medicine men and shamans use them to assist the people in a world bereft of healing.

The loss of the gods also marked a significant decline in civilized society. Many human communities disappeared, swallowed up by stronger nations. Lawlessness becomes the norm. The Knights of Solamnia, longtime champions of law and righteousness, are a common target of ridicule and scorn because of their inability to prevent the spreading chaos. Their lord cities fall into disrepair and anarchy. It takes decades for such communities to recover from the disaster of the Cataclysm and to begin to forge limited trading routes across an unmapped land. Other

# ABANASINIA PLAINS TRIBES

**T**HE plains of northern Abanasinia—especially the northern territories—have long been home to a number of plains tribes that take pride in living off the land. In appearance, the plainsmen tend to be tall and thin, with dark skin, muscular bodies, brown hair, and eyes of brown and green. After the Cataclysm, four primary tribes roam and rule the Abanasinia Plains. Countless smaller tribes make their homes in the area, as well—living safely apart from the four dominant tribes.

**Que-Nal:** Although this tribe no longer dwells on the Abanasinia Plains, the Que-Nal have not vanished. After the Cataclysm their best hunting lands were almost completely flooded, and thus they began to worship false gods of the sea. Fueled by a need to appease their new gods, they started a crusade to force all the tribes of Abanasinia to bow down to them. After countless fierce battles, the Que-Nal were driven from the plains and obliged to flee to the island of Schallsea, where they now thrive.

**Que-Shu:** The Que-Shu are the largest tribe of plainsmen in Abanasinia. They preserve a formidable warrior culture in which tests of strength are key to advancement within the tribe. Ancestors are highly revered and any major decision is first brokered with the spirits of the dead through communication with the tribal priestesses. The Que-Shu tend to be isolationists, and have few dealings with the other tribes. Such interaction usually occurs only when they need to obtain manufactured goods and weapons. Along with a small amount of sheep herders, the Que-Shu's skilled hunters and expert horsemen provide the majority of the food for the tribe's sustenance. Lately the Que-Shu have heard rumors that warriors of the Que-Kiri have been gearing up for hostile action, but they don't know which tribe is their intended target. Chief Arrowthorn (N male human nomad Bbn8) currently rules the Que-Shu tribe.

than the haphazard wanderings of kender, humans are the primary explorers of post-Cataclysm Ansalon. Yet even the bravest humans rarely range far from home. Many of the routes are dangerous to travel due as much to changes in the landscape, as bandits and other creatures even more evil.

## NOMADS

The “uncivilized” people of Ansalon have always felt a deep connection with nature. The destruction wrought by the Cataclysm confused and frightened them. To the barbaric peoples of Ansalon, who live daily by following the changes of season and the migration of beasts, the physical changes in the world proved devastating. Many “civilized” communities saw their nomadic neighbors as easy prey

**Que-Kiri:** The Que-Kiri claim a warrior tradition. Over the generations, they have often come into conflict with the other nomads of the plains, and continue to engage in war-like behavior against different tribes, depending on which chieftain has come into power and the personal grudges he may hold against other tribes. Renowned for their martial prowess, the Que-Kiri are raised from birth to be fierce warriors and some of the fiercest among them are their deadly mounted archers. Among the Que-Kiri, strength is valued over all other personal qualities, and the tribe holds regular contests of strength and combat to display their skills.

Que-Kiri horse traders have recently brought news of war in the east. Eagerly welcoming the excuse to exhibit their fighting prowess, the tribe has begun to make preparations to defend against any surprise invasion. Que-Kiri is ruled by a warrior named Blackfoot (N male human nomad Bbn10).

**Que-Teh:** The Que-Teh are traders who often bridge the gap between the civilized villages of Abanasinia and the barbarian tribes of the plains. Known as master hagglers, the Que-Teh also have a widespread reputation as druids and healers, and customarily deal in spices, poultices, and healing herbs, which they use for those in need of healing in a time in which magic and prayers provide no help. They are known to heal even their own enemies.

While they do not always agree with other tribes, they are much more approachable than the hot-headed Que-Kiri. Lately the Que-Teh have been suffering from a strange sickness that has spread among the people, something their healers cannot cure. The tribe is led by the Chieftain Chaosmoon (N male human nomad Ftr4/Exp3) and his mate, priestess Wychfire (N female human nomad Master 6).

and attacked them. Such actions served to heighten the suspicion and distrust between nomads and city dwellers.

Over the generations, the barbarians were able to establish fresh hunting grounds and track the new migrations of animals, their lives improved. Lacking the uniting force of the gods, however, many tribes splintered, while others waited patiently and chose to accept the gods' silence as the supreme test of their devotion.

Of the tribes that remained intact, most worshipped deities of their own invention modeled after familiar aspects of the true gods. The gods of these barbarians had their own names and identities. Worship of the gods of civilized men was expressly forbidden. The nomad tribes highly venerated the spirits of their ancestors who had gone before them, and eventually, the worship of ancestors



became a dominant form of religion. The absence of the true gods was not nearly as difficult for some barbarians to accept, as many tribes had their own eclectic pantheon. Because barbarian tribes had always maintained religious rituals and ceremonies that honored all the spirits.

## CIVILIZED

City life during the Age of Despair was chaotic. The Cataclysm flooded entire nations and landlocked others, destroying the trade routes for nearly every major city of Ansalon. Changes in the climate ravaged crops. What little food could be salvaged or grown—if it wasn't stolen—was hoarded. The meager amount of food that could be delivered to the cities was bought up by wealthy clientele for outrageous prices, leaving the poor to beg or filch whatever they could find.

Without healers, disease ran rampant and plague spread like wildfire. Most citizens lived in squalor, cowering amidst the ruins of buildings or hunkered down in wooden shacks. Over the course of centuries, the situation has gradually improved, but while some cities have prospered, others remain locked in despair, filth, and poverty.

In the east, the armies of the Dark Queen have taken control of major cities and towns through force, coercion, or trickery. In these places, life is still hard and those not willing to dedicate their lives to Takhisis quickly find themselves enslaved—or dead.

## ELVES

The elves of Ansalon, with lifetimes measured in centuries, have long witnessed the destruction and rebirth of the lands around them. Even they were appalled by the devastation caused by the Cataclysm. The loss of the gods has been especially demoralizing and marked the beginning of a downward spiral in elven society. Elves place full blame for the Cataclysm on the human Kingpriest and his foolish actions, even though they supported his crusade for good. The elves turned their backs on humanity and isolated themselves.

The elves harbor deep resentment toward the rest of the world for the loss of their beloved gods. They live apart, trying to avoid the famine, disease, and banditry that still occasionally invade their sylvan sanctuaries. The elves have reinforced their borders against human, goblin, and ogre raiders. They remember the gods of old, but no longer worship them, angered that the divine forces of good would abandon their chosen people.

## QUALINESTI

The elves of Qualinesti struggled to survive during the tumultuous first years after the Cataclysm, battling hordes of rampaging goblin tribes that penetrated Abanasinia and human mercenary raiders who were convinced that the elves were hiding great riches within the forest. The Qualinesti worked tirelessly to preserve their way of life, and in many ways they succeeded—though spiritually they were empty, bereft of the gods of good who had once watched over them.

The situation grew worse. Human warlords invaded the region and tested the resolve of the Qualinesti nation. Bloody clashes increased the hostility between the races. Yet the Qualinesti borders remained intact. The human marauders settled in the north and south of the elven nation. The Kharolis Mountains that border the elven lands on the west prevented any invasion through the territory of the hill dwarves. Thus the elves' isolation grew over the centuries until an elf was rarely seen outside their own lands.

Though the Qualinesti have remained isolated, they receive a few foreign visitors and welcome a handful of outsiders. Just as things seem to be improving and some elves look forward to a time when the borders can be fully opened to trade with other races, word comes of a large army of darkness in the east. The elves learn that the army has plans for genocide—the Red Dragonarmy is determined to wipe the Qualinesti elves from the face of Ansalon. The elves have sent out spies and are using magic to monitor the situation, while making plans for retreat and flight to lands deeper in the west.

Now the elves are on the verge of a great exodus from their homeland—only waiting for the right moment. The rumors of dragons have proven true, and the Qualinesti lack the strength to stand up against the might of the oncoming Dragonarmies.


## SILVANESTI

The high elves of Silvanesti suffered terribly during the Fall of Istar. Their homeland was Sundered. The great forests of their nation were uprooted and the lands of the east flooded as water rushed in from the Southern Courrain Ocean. Coastal villages along their eastern seaboard sank, and hundreds of elven lives were lost beneath the waves. For decades, the elves of Silvanesti struggled to recover from the horror, working to restore their forests and rebuild their cities.

The Silvanesti did nothing to assist those around them and refrained from asking for help from any other race or nation. As far as they were concerned, the folly of humanity brought down the wrath of the gods and caused the divine forces to abandon the world. Agreeing with the wisdom of the gods, the Silvanesti abandoned the world, retreating into their perfectly sculpted forests and pristine homes.

The Silvanesti used the powers of High Sorcery to protect their land against invasion and to monitor the events of the world as they evolved around them. Content to sit by and watch the world crumble around them—so long as it did not directly affect them—the Silvanesti watched day by day as the other races floundered and flailed in the wake of the Cataclysm. Busy dealing with their own problems, the Silvanesti felt that the humans had brought this travesty upon themselves and that it was only right that they should suffer for it.

Thus, after three centuries, when the elves first noticed a darkness gathering in the lands of the north, they made plans to safeguard their home. So as not to alert the general populace, House Mystic plotted in secret to gather



all magic artifacts of a defensive nature. House Protector increased its ranks as well, bolstering the number of trained fighters. But something unexpected happened.

After the dark armies spread north and east, emissaries of the Dragon Highlords swore to the elves that the Silvanesti need not worry about security of their realm. The Dragon armies had no intention of invading the ancient elven homeland. The enemy wanted only dominion over human lands. This suited the Silvanesti elves, the majority of whom had no idea what was occurring outside their own borders. But Lorac, the elven king, was no fool. He developed contingency plans for the day when his people would need to take action. He knew that the might of the forces arrayed against them would be too much to handle if the Dragonarmies decided to attack his kingdom.

The Speaker of the Stars notified every captain and ship builder of Silvanesti to gather ships and supplies in the southern city of Phalinost. The city was covertly prepared to carry all the elves of Silvanesti from their ancient homeland to a location far to the west. Unfortunately, when the Green Dragon Army attacked the northern borders, war came too soon, before they were prepared for it. And although the elves fought bravely, their king knew it was only a matter of time until the forests were destroyed and his people vanquished.

With a heavy heart, the elven king ordered his people into exile and prepared to use a dragon orb in a last ditch effort to protect his lands against the invading army. But this will end in dire consequences, as a magical nightmare caused by an evil green dragon encompasses the entire forest of Silvanesti.

## KAGONESTI

The Wilder Elves of Krynn have long lived apart from the rest of the world, not only avoiding the affairs of humans but, in most cases, also avoiding other elves. The tribes of the Kagonesti have maintained their idyllic existence, aloof and hidden from the world, protecting their beloved forests in which they dwell. There are scattered tribes all over the continent, each settling down into parts of the wild they saw as a gift from the gods.

Kagonesti lands were scarred and scoured during the Cataclysm. The great forests running along the east and west coast sank beneath water. Many tribes were lost to the terrible floods. Those that survived found themselves in forests only a fraction of their original size.

When the fiery mountain hurled down by the gods destroyed their land, every Kagonesti took it to be a sign of great import. But the meaning of that sign was not the same to all. Some Kagonesti took the event to mean the time had come for them to seize their native lands back from humans and the other races, and these elves lashed out at their neighbors. Others took the Cataclysm as a sign that their isolation was frowned upon by the gods, and they attempted to assist those outside their realm. Still other tribes felt that the gods had turned away from the mortal races and, in turn, they turned their back on the gods. The differing philosophies led to intertribal conflicts,

and Kagonesti warred against Kagonesti for the first time in centuries. Eventually these battles ended. The Kagonesti took stock of the world around them and tried to return to the lifestyle they had enjoyed before the devastation.

In Balifor, the wild elves who had dubbed themselves the Balinesti established a large village known as Balinost. In the forest known as the Beasts Run, other Kagonesti settled and worked to organize their new home against the outside world. Already fast allies with the kender of that region, the Kagonesti made mutual assistance pacts with the light-fingered folk and eventually allied with the Wendle centaurs of that region against the sligs and gnolls of the Laughing Lands to the east.

The invasion of the Dragonarmies into their land, nearly three centuries later, has met with little resistance. Wisely appreciating that they face overwhelming odds, the Kagonesti have gone into the woods, where they pick off small groups while fleeing the larger forces.

In Southern Ergoth, after the Cataclysm, the Kagonesti fought hard against ogres, humans, and the other races that sought the shelter of their forest highlands. Eventually, the interlopers moved away, and the Wilder Elves fell to fighting among themselves. Those elves who wanted to help the humans argued against the older Kagonesti who sought to maintain their traditional way of existence.

The arrival of the Silvanesti on their shores centuries later only aggravated matters. When the exiled Silvanesti came in their gold and finery, the younger Kagonesti were entranced with their beauty. They welcomed the newcomers and asked many questions about their lives beyond the forest. Tensions flared between the older Kagonesti and the Silvanesti, but the Wilder Elves eventually permitted the Silvanesti to remain.

On the isles of Sancrist and Cristyne, only the combined efforts of the humans and Kagonesti kept both their peoples alive. The elves and humans there continue to guard each other with newfound respect.

## HALF-ELVES

Half-elves have always been regarded with prejudice and distrust by both parent races. The Age of Despair has only amplified these problems, leading to abandoned, neglected, or abused half-elf children. The racial prejudice in the early Age of Despair forced many half-elves to attempt to hide their heritage from the world. Many lost their lives because they couldn't disguise their elven looks. Others learned to move about inconspicuously, and avoid places where humans congregate.

During the early years of the Age of Despair, human bandits and warlords ransacked many outlying elven towns that had fallen on difficult times. Many elven women were raped during these raids, leaving a legacy of half-elves who are condemned to a life of shame.

In the elven lands, half-elves found no sanctuary. Scorned for their human parentage, any half-Silvanesti was cast out as a mongrel. In Qualinesti half-elves were tolerated at best, but never fully accepted by polite society. Seen in public, they were often singled out for snide or



# THE EXODUS OF THE ELVES

THE outbreak of the War of the Lance caught most of the continent of Ansalon by surprise, and completely unprepared for war. Unlike most other nations, the Silvanesti and Qualinesti were forewarned and prepared. After the Dragonarmies invaded Nordmaar and Balifor in 348 AC, the Silvanesti brokered a deal to prevent the invasion of their homeland. Suspecting treachery, Speaker of the Stars Lorac Caladon, then sent messengers to the Knights of Solamnia and the Ergothian Empire; he positioned the armies of House Protector along Silvanesti's northern border and ordered the populace to begin preparing for the abandonment of the realm. Lorac's foresight paid off when the Silvanesti were betrayed by the Dragonarmies a year later, launching a massive invasion of the elven land.

Enchanted by the *dragon orb* that he had rescued from the doomed city of Istar prior to the Cataclysm, Lorac ordered the evacuation of Silvanesti. The elves fled to their new home on the island of Southern Ergoth. Elves of the noble houses sailed in their merchant and naval vessels, harried by the minotaurs of Mithas and Kothas during their protracted voyage, while the common elves began a long and dangerous trek westward across the Plains of Dust. On the final day of the year 349, Lorac commanded the *dragon orb* to destroy the invading dragons and their armies. However, the evil spirit residing in the orb, Viper, instead seized control of Lorac's mind and plunged him into madness. The orb projected Lorac's nightmares out onto the land that he loved, twisting the beautiful Silvanesti woodland into a hideous nightmare. The nightmare succeeded where the elves had failed, ironically, as the Dragonarmy abandoned its conquest when confronted with the nightmare that now was Silvanesti.

War did not come to the Qualinesti until the following year. With the advance of the Red Dragonarmy under Verminaard into the southern regions of Ansalon, the Qualinesti began preparing a fleet of ships to carry them across the Straits of Algoni to exile in Southern Ergoth. Under the command

of Ergothian shipwright Koromer Vlusaj and the smith Theros Ironfeld, the elves constructed a fleet of four squat, rolling ships over the course of eleven months; these were expected to complete the three day journey from the port of Quivernost to the new city of Qualimori. Each ship could carry 800 elves, or 500 with a full complement of cargo. The vast majority of the Qualinesti elves departed their forest home as Verminaard's troops began to invade the southern reaches of the forest in the late summer and early autumn 351 AC.

Southern Ergoth is home to the Kagonesti elves, who were given the mountains of Ergoth by Kith-Kanan for their loyalty in the Kinslayer wars. When the Silvanesti refugees arrived in Southern Ergoth, they enlisted the help of the native Kagonesti living on the island to help them build their new capital, Silvamori, on the western shores of Harkun Bay. The Qualinesti arrived several months later, and with the aid of the Kagonesti constructed their capital, Qualimori, on the eastern side of the bay. The Silvanesti and the Qualinesti were thus separated by only twenty miles and the Thon-Tsalarian - or 'River of the Dead' in the Kagonesti language - and there was some attempt to re-establish friendships between the long-estranged cousins.

Unfortunately, even after hundreds of years, the elves could not meet together without the old hatreds and misunderstandings surfacing. In order to prevent any bloodshed, the elven leaders have mutually decreed that none may cross the river under penalty of arrest. Spies have been captured on both sides, and accusations run rampant of each side having sold out to the Dragon Highlords. Worse still, many young Kagonesti elves have drifted to their civilized cousins to learn the art of making fine jewelry and working with steel. The Silvanesti and Qualinesti take advantage of the Wilder Elves' poverty, and the Kagonesti toil as virtual slaves among them. The Kagonesti elders grow more savage and warlike every day, as they see their young people stolen away and their way of life threatened.

condescending comment, and pointedly reminded of the perceived failing they were unable to remedy.


Many half-elves banded together in various ways. Many half-elves joined cults or religious groups seeking fellowship. Others formed groups of bandits, honing their skills with blades or bows in various shady enterprises. When word of armies gathering in the east spread, some half-elves heeded the call and joined the forces of the Dark Queen. Others actively fought against the invasion as resistance fighters. Their natural cunning and grace made

them exceptional leaders, and they gained the respect of not only their followers but the humans and elves who had previously misjudged them.

## SEA ELVES

Always reclusive to begin with, the sea elves retreated even deeper into their underwater realms after the Cataclysm. Even their surface kin started to believe that the sea elves were destroyed during the Cataclysm. The Cataclysm did indeed cause much chaos amongst the sea elves, for the





entire world shook when the fiery mountain struck Istar, but they were not destroyed.

The Dimernesti splintered into family groups following the Cataclysm, for their coastal homes were hit particularly hard by the Cataclysm. More than half the Dimernesti were killed by the Cataclysm and their cities destroyed, except for the single city of Dimernost in the southwest part of Ansalon. The various Dimernesti families are able to maintain communication with one another through Dimernost, where their hereditary monarch, the Speaker of the Seas, has ruled since the first decade after the Cataclysm.

The Dargonesti, the Deep Elves, dwell primarily in deeper waters, with their capital Watermere located in a vast undersea valley in the Courrain Ocean. They are ruled by the Speaker of the Moon. Following the Cataclysm, which suprisingly left much of their kingdom untouched, most of the Dargonesti cut off communication with their kin, including the Dimernesti. The newly formed Blood Sea created a new frontier for them to explore. The once glorious city of Istar—now hundreds of feet beneath the surface of the sea—became home to entire families of Dargonesti.

The Dimernesti and Dargonesti had almost no contact throughout much of the Age of Despair, each nation more concerned with survival than with reestablishing trade or communication. After decades of isolation, such isolation became habit. Unfortunately, this would prove to be a weakness which the forces of the Dark Queen would exploit during the War of the Lance.

If it was a rare occurrence for a Dimernesti and a Dargonesti to encounter each other, it was even rarer for a landwalker to encounter one of the sea elves. Although stories spread throughout taverns of Ansalon of drowning sailors being rescued by mysterious dolphins or blue-skinned creatures of beauty and grace, such stories grew increasingly rare over the years.

When the Heroes of the Lance and the Everman find themselves in the sunken ruins of Istar, the sea elves will begin to involve themselves in the war above. Even though the sea elves do lend aid to the surface war—primarily through the harassment of the minotaurs who have long been ancient foes—they keep their involvement minimal and secretive; the primary reason for this being their own war against the King of the Deep and evil sea dragons raging under the waves.

## OGRE RACES

At the dawn of time the ogres were the favored race of the Queen of Darkness. They were tall, strong, and fair—yet also cruel and greedy. Many of them viewed the world through the same harsh eyes as their goddess. Their beauty was also cold, yet such a beauty that surpassed all the other races. Pawns of the Dark Queen, the ogres were, her special pride—until the human race came along. The humans demonstrated free will that threatened the other races enslaved by the Dark Queen. She hated the humans for their free will and demanded that the ogres enslave and control them. Some ogres tried to obey the Dark Queen,

but other ogres saw this as the path of destruction and struggled against their goddess. A civil war erupted and the ogre race split into factions, the largest led by the high ogre Igrane. The ogres that rejected war removed themselves from contact with the world and traveled to a distant land, magically concealing their path. They became known as the Irda.

Throughout the ages, the Irda remained in seclusion. Few Irda ventured to leave the ideal tranquility of their paradise home, where they lived a peaceful existence, enjoying studies in magic, the arts, and natural sciences. They existed this way for thousands of years, until the War of the Lance.

The ogres that remained behind fell deeper into ignominy. Their appearance changed to match the ugliness inside of them. Their civilization fell into ruins, and many ogres fled into the mountains. Others continued to live among the remains of their cities, hoping to reclaim the glory they had enjoyed in the past. Throughout the generations, charismatic leaders would rise among the ogres and rally them into fierce armies that would periodically rage across the continent. These visions of glory were transitory, however, and the ogres always ended up defeated. Now the Dark Queen has called upon her favorite children once again, giving them one more chance to rise to greatness.

## IRDA

The Irda have long lived in a self-imposed isolation, hidden away from the people of Ansalon. Living in peace they have sometimes, out of idle curiosity, observed the fate of the other races on the mainland of Ansalon. Some Irda have even been known to leave their veiled homeland and make the journey into the lands of the lesser races. They learned about the Kingpriest and recognized the folly he was bringing upon himself and his people, but they did not foresee the destruction that he would bring upon the entire world. Although their island home was left largely untouched, the Cataclysm created a schism in Irda society. Many Irda felt that if they had been more involved with the lesser races they might have been able to prevent the catastrophe. They viewed the races of Ansalon as unschooled children in need of insight and wisdom. So rather than sit back and pity the other races, some Irda decided to assist those who had survived the tragedy.

Those Irda who left their island home and traveled the continent soon found that evil reigned. The decades the Kingpriest spent banishing the darkness had been reversed, and now it was good that was waning in the world. Ogres, goblins, bandits, warlords, and murderers were rife; they seemed bent on plundering anything of worth and destroying everything else. The Irda fought them when they could, using their magic, but this often led to trouble. Prejudices against the wizards of Ansalon were still prevalent, and more than one innocent Irda was killed for using witchcraft. The Irda had to keep their true identities secret. Among humans, they were reviled as monsters, while among elves and ogres they were viewed as “true” ogres and attacked without provocation.

Back on their island home, the Irda who tried to remain sheltered from the world were one of the first races to witness the return of the dragons to Ansalon. The Dark Queen does not forgive easily, and the Irda's disobedience had nettled her for millennia. She now sought to torture and destroy every last one of them. The goddess sent a squadron of dragons led by an ancient red wyrm, to destroy the Irda homeland. Magical forces of colossal magnitude were deployed on both sides. The dragons were eventually turned away, but not until many Irda were captured.

The remaining Irda have been able to do little except attempt to heal their wounds and restore their homeland. Magical calls have been sent across the sea to their brethren on the continent, pleading for their return or their assistance; so far not one has responded. With their ability to change their appearance at will, the lost Irda have spread across the entire continent, living quietly without being discovered, and they continue to travel and live among the races today.

## MINOTAURS

The history of the minotaur race is one of brutal conflict, both in the Games of the Great Circus and in the many internal and external wars that comprise their bloody history. Minotaurs are an honorable race, and they believe deeply that might makes right. They are a proud race of warriors and mariners and view all other races as being inferior to them. Opponents who think they are dealing with a dumb beast will soon discover that behind a minotaur's brutish exterior lies a cunning intelligence.

Cycles of war and defeat, followed by periods of slavery, have stained the history of the empire. In ancient times, the minotaurs were slaves to the dwarves of Kal-Thax, forced to work in their mines for over 200 years. Then they became slaves to the ogres during the Third Dragon War, fighting against the Knights of Solamnia. Still later, the proud warrior race were enslaved to mighty Istar.

While the Cataclysm was a time of doom for many of the races of Ansalon, it was a time of rejoicing for the minotaurs. Their ancestral homes of Mithas and Kothas were separated from the mainland when the fiery mountain plunged Istar down to the bottom of the newborn Blood Sea. The minotaur took this as a sign that Sargas (Sargonnas) had delivered his favored children from the Cataclysm.



In the early years of the Time of Darkness, the minotaur emperor Toroth began expanding the minotaur empire, looking toward the east and claiming vast stretches of the Courrain that had never before been explored. After his death, Toroth's vision for the empire would guide minotaurs for generations to come.

The coming of the War of the Lance saw many changes among the minotaurs. Conflict had arisen between the great houses, and the Supreme Circle found itself in disarray. Emperor Garik Es-Karos proved to be an

ineffectual ruler, who led the empire into a state of decay and degeneration.

One day, before anyone could challenge Es-Karos in the Games for the leadership of the empire, the emperor was discovered dead, the victim of poisoning. This assassination was unprecedented, and speculation arose as to who had dishonored the minotaur tradition by committing such an atrocity. Rumors spread that it may have been a rival of Garik's, too cowardly to face him in the Games. Or perhaps it was an enemy from outside the empire, one that sought to undermine the empire and turn its citizens into slaves once more.

In this time of turmoil, a new voice of stability arises. Chot Es-Kalin, Chieftain of House Kalin, becomes

emperor. He promises the minotaurs that they will never again serve as slaves of the lesser races, that the empire will expand and consolidate beyond their wildest dreams, and that the horned race will soon realize its great destiny, conquering all of Krynn.

Chot meets with the dragon highlord Ariakas, and a bargain is made. While his people do not like the idea of allying with the humans, Chot reassures the minotaurs that the agreement is temporary, and that it will benefit them in the long run. Chot respects the might of the Dragonarmies, and the dragons they command.

Chot's scheming continues, even as he provides troops to Ariakas. Chot assigns the sons of political rivals to fight for the Dragonarmies, ironically falling into the role of the "slave soldiers" of old. Many serve under Feal-Thas at Icewall Castle, and they are present at Sanction as part of Ariakas' reserve army.

Chot meanwhile builds up the navy of the empire, launching ships on pirating raids throughout the Blood Sea. The empire grows stronger, with its citizens grateful to Chot for their bolstered pride. Chot prepares for the day when he will be emperor of Ansalon.



## OGRES

During the reign of the Kingpriest, the ogres of Ansalon lived in constant fear for their lives, pressed by Istar and its Divine Hammers to the east, while the Solamnic Knights threatened them from the west. It was the worst of times for the once favored children of the Dark Queen. Although most of Ansalon saw the events that followed the Fall of Istar as apocalyptic, the ogres were pleased. The loss of the gods was a small price to pay for ridding the ogres of their greatest enemies. Above all, the Cataclysm allowed the ogres to go forth into the world once again to torture and pillage and enslave.

Indeed, shortly after the Cataclysm, hordes of ogres rushed the plains to the east of the Khalkist Mountains to seek their enemies and to destroy them. They had not truly understood the wholesale devastation until their eyes beheld a barren grassy plains which gave way to a great sea. Istar was gone. Hundreds of miles of continent had vanished beneath the Courrain Ocean. Looking for any survivors, the ogres followed the coastline, slaughtering any in their path. Reaching the end of a peninsula, the ogres claimed the land as their own. Thus the ogre region of Kern was established in the early Age of Despair.

Throughout the Age of Despair, tribes of ogres made their way across the broken landscape, exploring, looting, and killing all who stood in their way. Unafraid of this new world that was bereft of gods and left open to intimidation, the ogres established numerous villages and strongholds across the continent. Living by brute strength, they rejoiced in the suffering and pain of mankind.

Nearly two centuries after the destruction of Istar, the ogres of Blöde and Kern faced a new threat. An ancient black dragon by the name of Talon awoke from his slumber and began hounding the ogres. He demanded tribute from them and terrorized them for decades until his untimely demise battling another of his kind. Thus the ogres were among the first races to deal with the return of the evil dragons.

Following these years of torment, the ogres grew agitated and restless. Raids into neighboring territories increased. In the decades leading up to the great war, emissaries of the Dark Queen contacted the ogre chieftains and gave them the option to join with her armies in the name of Takhisis, or face her anger when they reached the Abyss. They were aided in this choice by their own keen instincts for violence. In the name of a goddess they had thought long gone from the world, the ogre nations have eagerly allied with the Dragonarmies, serving as ground troops and mercenary units. Ogre shamans lead the warriors, and the strongest and smartest of the ogres have joined forces with evil dragons.

## HALF-OGRES

Istar's war against evil cowed the ogre race and forced them to hide underground or in the distant reaches of the Khalkist Mountains. After the Kingpriest's nation was destroyed and the lands of the Solamnics were ravaged, the ogre and goblin races made their way back into the world. Hordes of ogres rampaged across Ansalon, wreaking

havoc. A number of these ogre attacks resulted in half-breed children. Most of these children were orphaned at an early age, and were afflicted by deformities.

Those half-ogre children who managed to survive their younger years often became outcasts from society. Shunned in human communities and barely tolerated in ogre lands, they lived apart from both and scrounged for their existence. Many of them used their natural ogre strength to become mercenaries and outlaws. They survived from day to day by preying upon the weak and less fortunate.

At the beginning of the War of the Lance, when the Dark Queen's emissaries are sent forth across Ansalon to find warriors, many half-ogres join the campaign. A good number find they have skills that are well suited to the cause. Smarter than typical ogres, yet nearly as strong, half-ogre recruits are considered more reliable, and therefore more valuable, than most humans and ogres in the army.

Tales are told of half ogres who, in rare instances, have become part of a larger human community. These individuals do not resemble their ogre parents except perhaps in size and general appearance. Such half-ogres tend to be overly protective of any society that accepts them and will usually violently defend that community.

## DWARVES

While the human nations of Ansalon suffered terribly, perhaps no other race was affected by the Cataclysm as much as the dwarves. The Fall of Istar separated one dwarven realm from another and ignited a civil war that killed thousands. In Kayolin, the creation of the New Sea separated the northern clans of the Hylar and Daewar from their brethren in the south, leaving the dwarves there to rebuild without assistance from the kingdom of Thorbardin. They eventually renamed the mountains the Garnet Mountain range, and severed ties to their kindred of the south.

In the Kharolis Mountains, the dwarves fell into a bloody feud when fear of invasion and starvation forced the mountain dwarves to close their doors to the outside world—which also meant shutting out the hill dwarves who wanted entry for access to the valuable food stores located deep beneath the mountains. The escalating dispute turned dwarf against dwarf, and hundreds of dwarves died on both sides of the conflict.

The most damage was inflicted on the kingdom of Thoradin. Thousands of dwarves were crushed to death when the continent was violently reshaped into new forms. Earthquakes, eruptions, and other disasters swept the underground nation, leaving only one city intact. The city of the Theiwar survived, but a horrible mold plague took root in their city, altering every Theiwar citizen until the dwarves looked unlike any known to Ansalon. Insatiably evil, this race survived and crawled from the ashes.

## MOUNTAIN DWARVES

The noble Hylar of Thorbardin have served as the ruling class of the dwarven kingdom since its construction thousands of years ago. It was the Hylar that first proposed

# THE DWARFGATE WARS

THE fortified dwarven kingdom under the Kharolis Mountains fared better than other places in Ansalon in the aftermath of Istar's Fall. Yet, before the disaster, Thorbardin had become increasingly dependent on trade for its food supply from the Abanasinia plains, Qualinesti, and the city of Xak Tsaroth. The Cataclysm wiped out this trade supply. It swiftly became evident to King Duncan that the current food stores would not support all the dwarves of Thorbardin that lived within the mountain as well as those dwelling nearby. So he announced the controversial decision to close the doors to the dwarven kingdom, reasoning that the dwarves outside could continue farming to support themselves, while those who remained inside the mountain could temporarily make do with the stored foodstuffs.

This decision became known as "The Great Betrayal" by the surface dwarves. Above the underground kingdom, famine and plague ran rampant. The survivors of Xak Tsaroth and Abanasinia tribesmen joined with the hill dwarves in demanding access to Thorbardin's rumored food supplies. The mountain dwarves refused. The legendary wizard Fistandantilus joined the army of the hill dwarves for his own purposes, and a bloody battle ensued between

the two forces. Dwarf killed dwarf, brother killed brother. When it appeared that the mountain dwarves would win the battle, Fistandantilus called down powerful magic that destroyed not only the army of the mountain dwarves but his own troops as well. The resulting explosion decimated the wizard's fortress of Zhaman, leaving it with the visage of a great looming skull. The great dwarven hero Kharas returned from the battlefields with the bodies of the heirs to the throne of Thorbardin. King Duncan's sons were buried with honors, and the last High King fell into a deep depression and died shortly thereafter. Disgusted with his people, Kharas hid the magical Hammer of Honor and declared, "Only when a good and honorable dwarf comes to unite the nations shall the Hammer of Kharas return. It will be his badge of righteousness." Then Kharas left the mountain and was never seen again.

The war bore terrible ramifications for Thorbardin. It fractured the dwarven nation. Without a High King, the Thanes under the mountain fought one another for control. Above the dwarven cities, the Neidar struggled to survive, all the while harboring a deep hatred for their mountain kin.

that all the dwarven clans live together, sharing the resources of the Kharolis Mountains and joining together for a better future. With their noble bearing and skills as warriors and diplomats, they managed to keep the diverse clans from warring with one another for centuries. Since the Dwarfgate wars, however, things have been different. The spirit of cooperation is gone, along with their beloved High King. Now the Hylar struggle to keep the peace. But when members of their own clan are responsible for much of the unrest, it is difficult to maintain a strong grip on the society as a whole. Currently, the Hylar have begun to talk about trade with the outside world again. But the rumors of war spreading across the surface world have stalled this initiative. They have managed to arrange for a minimal amount of trade thus far, but the dwarven merchants have had to travel far north or south to find any willing trading partners. The elves have closed off their borders, and the lands surrounding the mountains are already trading with the Neidar and don't want to ruin any ties established with the hill dwarves.

The fanatical Daewar in all their grandeur have had the most difficult time of all the dwarves dealing with the loss of the gods. Their temple districts, lined with prominent walkways and grand shrines gilded in gold and silver, do not stand abandoned like human temples. Within each one, the devout dwarves keep a fire lit, hoping for the return of the gods, especially Reorx, beloved of the dwarves. The Forgers, Silverhands, Golden Hammers, and

other religious organizations maintain a diligent routine of worship despite the silence of their gods. The loss of those gods, however, has resulted in a number of cults that have sprung up throughout the city. Because of this, civil unrest within the Daewar community has continuously increased as cult members clash with worshipers of the "old gods". Just as the Daewar are forced to deal with their internal struggles, the other clans had been left to deal with their own problems. The fiery and brash Daewar warriors have spent much of their time working to quell food riots and fights over religious differences as, for the past three decades, the situation has worsened beneath the mountain.

The wild-eyed Klar have long pledged to serve the Hylar of Thorbardin. For centuries now, the Klar have been relegated to life as farmers and hard laborers under the mountain. Their natural affinity for dealing with the Urkhan tunneling worms caused many Klar to become farmers, worm wranglers, and manual workers. While the Hylar are the architects and master craftsmen, it is the Klar who are the muscle behind all the digging and building. Work crews of Klar can often be seen in various places around Thorbardin lifting, pulling, or dragging massive stones, carts of gravel, columns or other finished stoneworks. In the enormous food warrens, the Klar can be found tending and harvesting the great mushrooms or feeding the underground oxen. The Cataclysm has not troubled the Klar nearly as much as other tribes. The insanity that is prevalent in their society has always



been a problem and the loss of part of their tribe was regrettable. But life goes on, and the erratic Klar continue to be the backbone of the under city. The “light-loving” dwarves of Thorbardin have grown to depend on them.

In the kingdom of Kayolin, the Hylar and Daewar offered the Neidar a sanctuary in their underground kingdom. Their hospitality proved fortunate. Because of it, the relations between the mountain dwarves and hill dwarves of the Garnet Mountains has worked out for the mutual benefit of both the clans.

### HILL DWARVES

The Neidar lost much more than the mountain dwarves in the aftermath of the Cataclysm. Their population went into decline following years of famine. Thousands more died during “the Betrayal” (the hill dwarves’ term for the Dwarfgate War). After the war, the dwarves picked up the pieces of their lives and forged a new existence. With most of their warriors dead, many women and children of the hill dwarf villages had to take up arms against bandits, rampaging ogres, hordes of goblins and mercenaries who swept through the lowlands looking for easy pickings. What the invaders discovered, however, was that, unlike humans, all dwarves are raised with martial training. With each encounter, the dwarves prevailed and over a century the attacks slowed.

By the second century following the Cataclysm, a number of settlements for trade were reestablished across the mountains. The hill dwarves patrolled the new trade routes and prospered. Although their numbers were small, they grew as many of the sturdy dwarven women had multiple children. Large families of hill dwarves lived in each settlement. Each child was given training in how to wield a sword or axe, and daily they were reminded of the treachery of their kin under the mountain. It was the mountain dwarves’ fault their father or grandfather had perished. It was a terrible act of treachery that would never be forgotten.

The silence of the gods was yet another hardship the Neidar had to endure, along with the rest of the world. Too busy dealing with their troubles, the worship of many of the gods was abandoned. The stories and teachings of the gods were handed down from one dwarf to the next, but only as lessons or parables. A handful of churches were built to honor the ancient gods, but these were often manned by only one or two dwarves. Gatherings at the



churches were often only performed during dwarven holidays—both religious and secular. Currently, traditions are upheld, but the heart of the hill dwarf religion is hollow.

In the region of Kayolin, the hill dwarves fled beneath the surface lands in order to escape the anarchy and unrest of the world above. They appreciated the mountain dwarves for their hospitality, despite the “cramped” living quarters. After a few decades the Neidar became restless and started making their way back into the world. They established new homes and sent out merchants to the human cities of Solamnia, to see how the humans were faring. The news was grim. Many of the cities

were overcrowded and food was scarce. The hill dwarves set to work plowing fields and growing crops. For many years they became the primary food source in the region. The mountain dwarves of Kayolin provided military troops to guard each of the settlements to keep them free from bandits and other malcontents. As a result of this, the dwarves of Kayolin won the respect of the humans in the region, and over time they established trade with nearly every city in Solamnia. Despite the disappointing disappearance of the gods and the upheaval that transpired, the dwarves of Kayolin have prospered.

### DARK DWARVES

In the shadowy depths of Thorbardin in the lightless cities of the Theiwar and Daeargar, the dark dwarves go about their lives of labor, perfidy, deceit, and murder. Among the Theiwar, the largest clan of the dark dwarves, the processing of gems, jewelry, and production of intricate weapons and armor are their specialty. The need for these items in Thorbardin is rare though and, with the lack of major commercial outlets, the dwarves of the Theiwar clan have chiefly turned to two activities: food production and plotting against their cousins. The Theiwar have steadily been expanding their own food warrens with arcane magic and dwarven muscle. They have also been scheming against one another and against the light-loving dwarves. The loss of a stable Hylar king has given the Theiwar more power than they have ever had before.

Prior to the construction of Thorbardin, the Theiwar were the largest clan in the Kharolis Mountains. To them, the arrival of the Hylar dwarves represented the end of their perceived supremacy over the other dwarf clans. Although they have ostensibly obeyed their Hylar