

# GWYNELAD

Embraced by the Cormyrian and Jordian Mountains, bound by the forests of the Astegon, Summervale, Ravenfall and Ember, and washed by the Occidental Ocean, Gwynelad is the center of civilization and salvation. King Galen III rules over the twenty-two Cares from the Seat, his palace in Gwynelon, which is built over the very place where his ancestor Riva sealed away the Demon-Gods of Chaos two hundred years ago. The Twelve Peers enforce the King's Justice, and the half-demon Baal enforces his will. The Temples of Light, Dark, and Grey compete for the faith of the people.

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## HISTORY

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Gwynelad is a land recovering from the darkest of Dark Ages. Almost two thousand years ago, the world was invaded by the armies of the Demon Gods, and for fifteen centuries they ruled with an iron fist. Humans were slaves, servants, and livestock, fodder for all the Demon-Gods' heinous appetites. They came out of the Chaos, Demon-Gods that controlled the world with fists of fire. They twisted the minds of mortals with brutal magics, making slaves of all the mortal races. Gods of chaos and bloodshed, for more than a thousand years the twisted and insane ways of the Demon-Gods were all that mortals knew.

### THE AGE OF DEMONS

The six Demon-Gods came to this land with hordes of demon followers, and soon swelled the ranks of their armies with slaves and volunteers. Their war of invasion was waged haphazardly, working against each other as much as the embattled mortals. That changed when TiThurye, the Princess of Torment, was killed in battle. The Demon-Gods forgot their differences and the united armies rolled over the mortal resistance; the Demon-Gods spent the next thousand years venting their rage for the loss of one of their own.

Five Demon-Gods remained after the

death of TiThurye. Over all the Gods ruled Turranos, the King of Demons, and his consort Tanpaar, the Mistress of Poisons. Beneath them were Zhaos, Son of Destruction and Master of Chaos, and Mordaar, the Lord of War who washed the world in blood from his games. Beneath them all was Gwen Dur, the Slave; it was he who made slaves of mortals, twisting them and ripping them apart for his own amusement. Although there were small pockets of resistance and freedom, there was no salvation in sight.

### BANISHING AND UNIFICATION

However, from these free men came salvation in the form of Riva, a regular man who was called to greatness. His dreams led him to the plains of Thurii, named for the Demon Princess of Torment who died there, the only Demon God ever slain by man. There he found two alters, one dedicated to the Light, and the other dedicated to the Dark. They demanded sacrifices of Riva, an act of greatest good and an act of greatest evil; in return, the Powers of the Light and Dark would banish the Gods back to their Demon-realms. Riva did as the Powers commanded, but his evil act was tainted by regret, and the Banishing was incomplete. Still, the Demon Gods and their most powerful servants were cast out of this realm; the world was free once again.

Although the Gods were Banished, Riva's work was not yet done. He gathered

twelve men and women of extraordinary strength and wisdom, the Twelve Peers of Riva, and they set out to cleanse the land that would become known as Gwynelad of the taint of the Gods. The Peers destroyed monuments to the Gods, drove out the Gwen Duri (humans dedicated to Gwen Dur, the Slave), and reached out to the shattered kingdoms of Soren, Andregard, Ember, Lothoras, Amber, among others. From these shattered pieces, Riva forged the Kingdom of Gwynelad using a combination of diplomacy, trickery, and force. After nearly twenty-five years, Gwynelad had the same borders as it does today, although several areas (notably Soren and the "barbarian" north) would not be fully assimilated for years or decades.

### **THE FIRST KING: RIVA THE GREAT**

His kingdom complete, Riva retired to his capital of Gwynelon to be King. Old when he returned to Gwynelon, he still raised a family and reigned as King for another thirty-five years. Riva was not a great King, though, relying mostly on his ministers and son (and heir) Galen to run the kingdom while he pursued other interests. On St. Swithen's Day of the year 58 A.B. (After Banishing), Riva called Galen to him and descended from the throne, after which Riva mounted his horse and left Gwynelon for good. His fate was unknown for years, until word came back that Riva's tomb was discovered in the Nine Isles. It had apparently been built with his own hands, and the island where it was found was renamed Rivan in his honor. To this day, Riva's Tomb is the resting place of the Royal Family.

### **THE SECOND KING: GALEN I**

Galen the First reigned for thirty years, building the Seat and consolidating his father's kingdom; by the end of his reign, only the "Barbarian Frontier" still refused to bow. Things came to a head in the summer

of 85 A.B., near the end of Galen's reign, with open rebellion in the territories that will become known as Uthuk and Khelik. The Summer of Blood, as it became known, killed many clansmen and soldiers, and was only ended by the early winter that would become known as the Hungry Winter, the harshest winter before or since. As many lives are lost to the cold and hunger as to the fighting, but both sides were ready to resume the war when the spring thaws came. The rebellion was derailed by a massive influx of starving non-humans who poured out of the Cormyrian Mountains; by the time they were driven off, both armies were decimated. Total war was averted, but the region remains unstable, and hostilities continue to simmer just under the surface. In light of the massive failures in the north, and his own waning stability, Galen is forced to abdicate in favor of his nephew, Theoric "the White," in the year 88 A.B. Galen's body has been ravaged by time, and without his duties as King to occupy him, he is dead before the end of the year.

After seeing his uncle properly buried in the Royal Tomb, Theoric's first task was to protect his subjects in the northern frontier; to that end, he ordered the construction of the Keepline, a series of fortresses across the north lands. Caer Steadfast is the first to be completed, in the summer of 98 A.B.; the Keepline itself is completed three years later, in 101. Although effective in protecting the area against raiders, the very existence of the Keepline is taken as an affront to the clans, and Khelik the Bruce harnessed that resentment, whipping up the clansmen to chase the Gwynelans from the north, starting the conflict known as the First Clan War. Theoric tries time and again to crush the rebellious clansmen, but was outmaneuvered at every turn by Khelik the Bruce. Khelik is so successful that within two years he controls most of the frontier, and all but two fortresses in the Keepline have been destroyed or cut off and rendered untenable

by the clansmen.

### **THE FIRST CLAN WAR: SUPPRESSION OF THE CLANS**

A desperate Theoric offers governorship of the frontier to whomever can tame it, leading to all manner of atrocities by ambitious men and women. On Yule Night of 102, at the annual granting of indulgences, Theoric is approached by his secretary, a man named Rommel, who offers to conquer the clans if Theoric would only provide him with an army on St. Swithen's Day. Theoric was understandably skeptical, as Rommel was already an old man, and had never held a sword in his life. He had, however, spent a lifetime in the Royal Court, under three different kings, and was a master of intrigue. Theoric granted the request, and Rommel departed immediately for what was already being called "Khelik's Land", not even waiting for his promised army.

No one is sure what happened next, save that Rommel put his plan in motion; by St. Swithen's Day Khelik the Bruce was dead and the clans were at each other's throats. The army sent by Theoric spent most of their time fortifying Rommel's capitol, occasionally sweeping out to repulse raiders or suppress the clans. Theoric named Rommel the governor of Care Khelik, and Rommel spent the next twelve years playing the various clans off each other. By the time Rommel was murdered by a clansman in 115, the clans had been both broken and integrated into the kingdom. Adding insult to injury, the capitol of Khelik was named Rommel, a constant reminder of the clans inferiority. New Bruces would rise and fall, but more than a century would pass before the clans recovered enough to be a true threat again.

### **THE KING OF EXPLORATION: GALEN II**

The remainder of Theoric's reign was peaceful, as was his successor's (Galen II took the throne after Theoric died in his

mistress' bed in 130). Nearly seventy years of relative peace led to a flowering of culture in Gwynelad; paved roads connected every care, contact was established with the Astegoni elves, and explorers and envoys were sent across the Cormyrian Mountains to Jarred, across the Jordian Mountains to explore the plains of the Na-Ti and make contact with the kingdom of Zecat, and across the Occidental Ocean to exotic Nin-Po, with varying degrees of success. The failed envoy to Jarred in 168 leads to reinforcement of the Keepline, but the expected invasion fails to materialize.

In the end, Galen II became a victim of his own curiosity. Fearing invasion by Jarred after Galen's disastrous envoy, a cabal murders the king in 170 and places his young grandson, Loren, on the throne. The cabal expected that Loren, a boy who had barely reached his majority, would be a pliable puppet; they were shocked when he had them imprisoned and executed for treason.

### **DUSK AND DEMONS: THE REIGN OF LOREN**

Loren's reign was fairly peaceful, but everything changed in the year 208. A group of adventurers, following an ancient prophecy, released the third great Power, Dusk, from its long internment. Within days, the greatest of the Demon-Generals, the Reaver, broke free of its prison and rampaged across the countryside. The Gwen Duri, long since banished to the Cormyrian Mountains, exploded into Gwynelad, slaying indiscriminately and kidnapping victims for sacrifice. Despite the best efforts of the greatest heroes in the realm, another Demon-Lord, the Teaser, was released. By the end of the year, the Gwen Duri and their Demon masters completed a master stroke, opening up dozens of portals to the Bloodrealm and flooding the northern cares of Gwynelad with denizens of the Demon Realms.

## **THE RIFTWAR**

For two years, the northerner cares of Gwynelad were embroiled in the disastrous Riftwar. The Gwynelan army, supported by forces from both the Temple of Light and the Dark Church, fought a war that was rife with mistakes, bad luck, and downright betrayals. Many brave men and women died nameless and alone, as did some of the greatest heroes of the day. There was no news but bad news, and nothing was worse than the news of the Battle of Golden Brin.

At the end of the first year of the Riftwar, the relationship between the forces of the Light and the Dark were strained and deteriorating. The Gwynelan army tried to keep the peace as best they could, but eventually the armies of the Light and the Dark turned on each other at Golden Brin, decimating themselves and the Gwynelan army (which had the bad luck to be between the two sides). Losses were so bad that King Loren was advised to give up the northern front, and retreat behind the ancient walls that once divided the northern cares from the rest of Gwynelad.

The Riftwar ended as suddenly as it began. Just before Banishing Day, 209, the combined armies made a huge push to allow a group of heroes to enter the Bloodrealm itself. Many other heroes had died in similar attempts, but this group succeeded, and the rifts began spontaneously closing. Within hours, every rift in Gwynelad was closed, although there were rumors that one or more still persisted in the Cormyrian Mountains.

## **THE SECOND CLAN WAR**

There was little time for celebration, though. Immediately after the rifts closed, the northern clans rose up against the throne, taking or sacking several castles in the Keepline and inflicting enormous casualties on the celebrating troops. Another two years were lost as General Highfang, hero of the Riftwar, tried to restore order; in

the end, though, the Second Clan War was ended not through force of arms or diplomacy, but by sheer exhaustion. The northern cares simply could not support more war. Peace reigned, uneasily, because no one had the energy or resources for anything else.

## **THE COMING OF THE PRETENDER**

Everyone was exhausted by the one-two punch of the Riftwar and the Second Clan War, but none more so than King Loren. When the King collapsed at his birthday celebration in 211, some took it as a sign. Warmaster Belfar, banished from Loren's court in 207, had long been making trouble in the southlands. With the King's infirmity, he made his move, marching an army of ten thousand men straight up to the gates of Loren's palace, the Seat. When the guards refused to open the gate, Belfar blew them in with a powerful magic unknown in Gwynelad. He then declared himself King and used the same magic to raze the Seat to the ground. It is said that before doing so, Belfar slew decrepit King Loren in his own bed. Despite his best efforts, Galen escaped, spirited away with the aid of the Teaser, who had been pardoned by King Loren and named "Protector of the Children".

## **THE INTERREGNUM**

Belfar ruled more or less peacefully for almost twenty years before he died in 228. Although his coup was relatively bloodless, the purges he conducted after taking power earned him a number of enemies, as did his policies of brutal repression towards non-humans, especially orcs. Many people danced with joy when they heard of Belfar's death, but his policies continued under his successors. Most people believe that Belfar's advisor, a foreigner named Apenator, was the true power behind the throne, although some superstitious individuals believe that Belfar

was in fact raised from the dead to continue ruling from behind the scenes.

### **THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION**

Galen was raised in secrecy by several families of Loyalists, and the truth of his heritage was hidden from him for many years. His only companion was Baal, the half-human son of the Teaser, and the two grew very close. Finally, with the death of Belfar, the truth was revealed and Galen began preparing to reclaim his birthright. The Loyalist resistance finally had something to rally around, and as the months wore on its numbers were bolstered as more and more Gwynelans turned against the Pretender's Throne. Finally, on Midsummer of 230, Galen, Baal, and several allies entered the Seat and reclaimed the throne. Apenator was killed in the fighting, but not before killing all of the King's allies save for Baal.

### **THE PRESENT**

It is now nearing Midsummer of the year 231 After Banishing, and Galen is holding an enormous Coronal Celebration in Gwynelon. Everyone is invited, regardless of caste, creed, race, or country of origin; it is said that emissaries from the Astegon, the Dwarven Kingdoms, Nin-Po, Zacat, and Jarred will all be in attendance.

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## **DENIZENS OF GWYNELAD**

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**Humans** – Gwynelad is a human kingdom, and most of its residents are human. They usually run between 5 and 6 feet in height, with hair ranging from black to red and blond, and usually live to around 80 years of age.

**Half-Elves** - Almost always the progeny of a human and a Summervale Elf, half-elves are fairly rare. They almost always integrate into their mother's society (be it human or elven), but are distrusted by most Astegoni Elves,

due to the "weakness in their blood."

**Summervale Elves (Elves)** - Descendants of the elves that Prince Summer led out of the Astegon, Summervale elves suffered a tragedy in during the Age of Demons that stripped them of much of their magics (which has led to a divide between Astegoni and Summervale elves). Despite their common name, Summervale elves are not restricted to the care of Summervale, although the main elven communities are there.

**Astegoni Elves (Eladrin)** - Those who live behind the Ban, the elves of the Astegon are highly magical creatures. Few Astegoni elves choose to roam outside the Ban, and those who do are usually intensely curious about "the human condition." A rare few Astegoni elves are sent out as ambassadors, which they seem to regard as a punishment of some sort. Astegoni elves look on Summervale elves with pity, as if they were crippled; this tends to strain relations between the two elven communities.

**Dwarfs** - When the Demon-Gods came, the dwarfs of the Cormyrian Mountains retreated underground, sealing themselves off for a millennium and a half, and they still live in much the same way. In recent generations, however, more and more young dwarves have fallen victim to wanderlust and journeyed out to see the world; most of them don't return home, either falling victim to the dangers of the wider world or becoming enchanted with its wonders. As such, most major cities (such as Gwynelon and Treville) have a reasonable dwarven population, and several above ground dwarven communities have sprung up in the Jordian Mountains (the Cormyrian Mountains are too dangerous for such communities).

**Halflings** – Halflings are rare enough that many people believe they are merely short humans, or possibly human children. They

are slightly more common in the south.

**Half-Demons (Tieflings)** - Half-demons are rare, and none are more than twenty years old. Viewed with hatred and mistrust by most people due to their parentage, most half-demons avoid civilized areas. Those who don't are usually motivated by a desire to prove that they are not the monsters they appear to be, or by a desire to lash out at the cruel world. Half-demons are physically distinctive, often with horns and/or a tail, and skin tinted an unnatural color (usually red, but Baal, the most visible half-demon in Gwynelad, has golden skin).

### **NON-PLAYER RACES**

**Dark Elves** - Cunning and evil dark elves are the scourge of the northern coasts, streaming out of the Cormyrian Mountains to raid and pillage at the most inopportune times.

**Orcs** - Orcs have a reputation for being as strong as an ox, and only slightly less intelligent. They live in crude villages in the Cormyrian Mountains, organized into tribes led by the strongest orc in the village. They are not adverse to taking advantage of anyone they perceive as being weaker than themselves, and often raid human, dark elf, and dwarven settlements. They are confused by the shapeshifters, and so usually let them be.

**Shapeshifters** - A bizarre race of particularly protean beings, shapeshifters are native to the Cormyrian Mountains. Their native form is so malleable that they can form weapons and armor out of their own bodies, as well as taking on the attributes of almost any human-sized creature. There is a great deal of superstition and paranoia surrounding shapeshifters, due to this ability.

**Goblins** - Smaller cousins to orcs, goblins range throughout Gwynelad. Being habitual cowards, they tend to stay away from

civilization and anything resembling a fair fight, fleeing if they don't have a significant advantage.

**Demons** - Remnants of the hordes that poured through from the Bloodrealm twenty years ago, Demons still roam Gwynelad. Most demons have red skin, although a few have different colored skin. It is unknown whether there are different races of demons, or whether skin color has any significance whatsoever. Most demons have no name; only the most powerful, the Demon-Gods, have proper names (Turranos, Tanpaar, Zhaos, Mordaar, and Gwen Dur), while the less powerful (but still considerably dangerous) Demon-Generals are referred to by descriptive names (such as the Teaser, the Reaver, and the Temptress).

**Gwen Duri** - Twisted and debased worshipers of the Demon-Gods, the Gwen Duri were driven into the Cormyrian Mountains by the Twelve Peers of Riva. The Gwen Duri were loyal servants of the Gods, and they show their devotion by tattooing and mortification of the flesh. They are widely believed to be cannibals, but whether this is true or merely a justification for their persecution is unknown.

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### **GWYNELAN STEREOTYPES**

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As the saying goes, stereotypes save so much time. While none of these are universal, many are widespread.

#### **COMMON GWYNELAN STEREOTYPES**

- Loquefort is the most cosmopolitan care, and the port city of Trieste, its capitol, rivals the royal city of Gwynelon. It is known for its cuisine and general hedonism. Loquefortina women love to seduce young, innocent men; so do Loquefortina men.
- The care of Ravenfall is adjacent to the

Elven Wood (the Astegon). Its people are supernaturally close to the woods of the care. A similar stereotype exists for the people of Summervale, because they all have elven blood in their ancestry somewhere.

- The cares of Uthuk, Khelik, and Skagarak are still the northern frontier, peopled by barbarians and wild men who would as soon kill you and eat you as look at you.
- Thurii is the home of Gwynelon, the capitol city, and the Royal Palace, called the Seat (pronounce See). Almost all of the important organizations in Gwynelad are based here, including the Temple of Light, and the Grey Council and the Church of the Dark both have a significant presence here.
- The members of House Sinister are all lying, scheming, back-biting snakes who are always ready to betray anyone, even their own mothers if it'll help them get ahead.
- The members of House Dexeter are all do-gooder nances, without even a shade of deception in their souls. This makes them easy to manipulate and take advantage of.
- If you invite an Emberian over for dinner, you'd better count the silverware, your livestock, and your children before they leave. Everyone knows that they are so sticky-fingered that they could stick to the ceiling, and wouldn't think twice about robbing you blind.
- Dark elves are mountain savages, elves cursed by the Gods and banished to the Cormyrian Mountains by the Astegoni Queen. They hate anyone who isn't a dark elf, and if you come from one of the northern cares, you've probably lost relatives to dark elf incursions.
- Orcs are, like their lives, nasty, brutish, and short. They are smelly and stupid, barely speak and respect nothing but strength. Since orcs are many times stronger than humans, the idea of an orc

respecting a human is preposterous. However, because they are stupid and superstitious, they are easily thwarted.

- Shapeshifters are bogeymen, stories told by mountain mothers to frighten their children or tale-tellers to make some coin. No one has actually ever seen one; anyone who claims to is either lying or mistaken.
- Goblins are like orcs, but twice as stupid and congenital cowards.
- Demons are truly the stuff of nightmares. No two is alike, and they like nothing more than causing human suffering; in fact, they feed on it.
- Gwen Duri are base, degenerate things, poor mockeries of human beings, driven mad by their association with the Gods.

## HUMAN STEREOTYPES

- Most of the inhabitants of Gwynelad are human, and believe that pretty much everyone believes they way they do.
- Half-Elves are exotic, irresponsible, and rambunctious. They are exceptional lovers, and party animals of the highest degree.
- Summervale Elves are quiet and in touch with the natural world. They are exceptional woodsmen, and compassionate to all animals; they are the kind of people who would save a bird from a predator, and nurse it back to health.
- Astegoni Elves are mysterious and mystical, fairly crackling with arcane power. They truck with dangerous things and know obscure facts; they are veritable fonts of occult knowledge.
- Dwarfs are gruff and humorless. They like living underground, mining, smithing, gold, and gems. They hate trees, and because elves love trees, dwarfs hate elves.
- There are no such things as "halflings." Those people that are labeled as halflings

are merely humans afflicted with some sort of tragic disorder that prevents them from growing. Obviously, they were not fed properly when they were children.

- Half-demons are terrifying things, capable of rending men's souls with their chaos powers. However, like their demon parent, if you can learn a half-demon's true name, you can bind them to your will.

### **HALFLING STEREOTYPES**

Halflings are pretty rare; you probably don't know any halflings that you are not related to, and your size is probably viewed as a "family condition" (you may be the only one in your family that has "bred true"). You probably don't know your family history very far back, although you may have old family stories of the family progenitor trekking out of the jungle.

- Humans are condescending boors; because you are the same size as a child, many people treat you as one, and you don't like it.
- Half-elves are pretty good about treating you like a real person, probably because they don't quite fit in themselves.
- Elves are pretty much all the same, whether they're from the Elven Wood or Summervale: Haughty, know-it-all, and holier than thou. They know lots of interesting things, though.
- Dwarfs, although closer to your size, are quite distant from you in attitude. They are so serious and industries, it kind of gets you down.
- You know better than to judge people by the way they look, but half-demons just freak you out. There is something just... wrong about them.

### **SUMMERVALE ELF STEREOTYPES**

- Humans are so fascinating; cursed with their short little lives, yet so obsessed with gaining immortality in any way they can. Sometimes it's dangerous, but

sometimes it's amusing.

- Half-elves are like eternal teenagers: They're irresponsible, have no work ethic, and all they want to do is party and have fun. While you can appreciate that sometimes, they don't ever hunker down and do the important stuff.
- Astegoni elves are nearly insufferable. Every time they look at you, they have that sad look on their face, like you are their severely retarded child.
- Dwarfs are hard to understand. They are capable of producing such beauty, but they choose to lock themselves away from everything that is beautiful.
- Half-demons are frightening and unnatural things, but there is some purpose for them. Every half-demon will fall victim to its baser nature eventually, but until then, they have their uses.
- Dark Elves are an abomination, and not to be trusted. A Dark Elf will take the first chance to slip a knife into your ribs, and you certainly return the sentiment.

### **ASTEGONI STEREOTYPES**

- Humans are, like their lives, brutal, nasty and short. It is frankly amazing that anything they do hangs together, because they never take the proper time to prepare.
- Half-elves are difficult to deal with. You can't understand why one of your people, even one of the debased Summervale elves, would want to lie with a human being. Opinions run the gamut from willful ignorance of their existence to outright abhorrence.
- Summervale elves are crippled, and you pity them for their invalidity. However, they are still kin, regardless of the weakness in their blood. Because of their weakness, they are not as in control as they should be.
- Dwarfs are dour and humorless, because they cut themselves off from the world and live in their elaborate tombs.

- Half-demons are an abomination, rape-get that should have been drowned at birth.
- Dark Elves are bogymen used to by Astegoni mothers to scare their children into behaving. As such, you are rather reticent to have dealings with them.

### **DWARVEN STEREOTYPES**

Most Dwarven communities are buried deep in the Cormyrian Mountains, although a few villages have sprung up on the surface in the Jordian Mountains, which are typically free from the endemic threats of Dark Elves, Orcs, and Gwen Duri. The remaining communities are called deep delves, many of which are still sealed from the the Coming of the Gods. Dwarfs from the deep delves often only know of the outside world as myth and legend.

- You are pretty fond of humans. They are the only race of Gwynelad that approaches the Dwarfs in their industriousness. However, their flightiness occasionally makes your head hurt.
- The pointy eared races are generally pretty... pretty. Like a beautifully sculpted vase, their main purpose is to hold flowers.
- The half-demons aren't any more intimidating than Gwen Duri or any of a thousand more frightening things, just uglier.

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## **PEOPLE**

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**THE ROYAL COURT - Galen III** is the King of Gwynelad. He has only been on the throne for a short while, having just regained it from the Pretender. Although only a few years past his majority, Galen is well respected as a good and just man.

Galen's bodyguard and primary advisor is **Baal** (*Bail*), the half-demon son of the

Teaser. Baal's loyalty to Galen is unquestionable, and Galen treats him like a brother. More pragmatic than the king, Baal has no compunction about doing what needs to be done to ensure the safety and fortunes of the King and Gwynelad.

**THE COUNCIL OF LORDS** – This shadowy body of people is rumored to control the kingdom. They are also rumored to know secrets man was not intended to know, eat babies, consort with demons and worse. Of course, no one really knows who they are, or even if they really exist.

**DISSIDENTS** – Many people are opposed to King Galen's rule; some are loyal **Reformers**, driven into exile after Galen's restoration, while others oppose the King's government for moral or personal reasons. Their dissent runs the gamut from simple speech to full-fledged rebellion.

**Lord Dragon** is a charismatic Cleric of the Light who takes a hard-line stance towards the Gwynelan presence in Khelik. He believes that King Loren was compromised by the Demon-Gods, and the fact that Galen keeps a half-demon as his closest advisor makes him even worse.

**The Company of the Dark Hand** is a loose association of murderers and miscreants, dedicated to the Dark and overthrowing the Gwynelan King, whomever it may be. While some Dark-aligned groups operate in the open, the Company of the Dark Hand does not; it is an underground criminal organization, committing atrocities to advance their goals and expand their own power. The last time the Company of the Dark Hand appeared overtly was the Battle of Golden Brin during the Riftwar, although several atrocities have been attributed to them since.

There has long been an official policy of repressing the **Cult of the Wyrn**, a group dedicated to worship and appeasement of various dragons. The dragon-worshipers are strongest in the countryside, experiencing surges in membership anytime a dragon rouses and threatens an area. Despite their bad reputation, the presence of the Cult does seem to act as a deterrent against dragon attack.

**HOUSE SINISTER** – **Prince Leftark Sinister** is the head of House Sinister, and a strong contender for the leadership of Soren. He and his wife, **Sarissa**, have an astonishing number of children, both legitimate and otherwise, and each and every one of them has inherited the family ambition: Wrest rulership of Soren from the rival **House Dexeter**.

House Sinister is also known as the greatest arcane power in Gwynelad, due in no small part to the efforts of **Alexandrin Sinister**, second cousin to Leftark, who spent most of the past twenty-five years recruiting willing (and not so willing) arcanists, until his disappearance several months ago.

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## RELIGION

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Religion in Gwynelad is a somewhat messy affair. There is the state religion, which recognizes three major Powers which are worshiped, **the Light**, **the Dark**, and **the Grey**, represented by the three overarching organized religions: **The Temple of Light**, dedicated to the cause of Good and to the Light; **the Dark Church**, dedicated to the Dark and spreading Evil; and **the Grey Council**, led by the Greywalker, and dedicated to preserving one's individuality and the balance between Good and Evil.

The Light and Dark sponsor both paladins and clerics, although paladins of the Dark

are generally called Anti-paladins. The Grey does not sponsor paladins in any form, although it does sponsor clerics.

The Light, Dark and Grey are abstract, impersonal, and inhuman forces, and many people don't quite understand them. They reach back to the old spirit religion, where human-like Patrons embodied principles and controlled events. The state religion has co-opted these Patrons as Avatars, because when the laity need to appeal to a higher family, they find it easier to pray to an Avatar to intercede on their behalf than directly to the more abstract Powers.

The most common Patrons are listed below:

**Avandra** is the Patron of change, luck, freedom, travel and trade. She is the Patron Spirit of freedom fighters, merchants, gamblers, pilgrims, and travelers in general. There are numerous small shrines dedicated to her along the roads of Gwynelad, where people seek her favor by leaving small gifts of coin or twisted grasses. Avandra is quite popular, and worshiped as an Avatar of all three major Powers.

**Azmodeus, the Tyrant**, is the Patron of power, tyranny and domination. He is the Patron Spirit of those who seek or have power, and is worshiped as an Avatar of both the Grey and the Dark. The Temple of Light casts Azmodeus as a gloss on the Demon God Turranos, King of Demons.

**Bahamut, the Platinum Dragon**, is the Patron of justice, honor, nobility and protection. He is also the Patron Spirit of Paladins and heroes, and is worshiped as an Avatar of the Light and the Grey, as well as by the Cult of the Wyrn.

**Bane** is the Patron of war and conquest. He is the Patron Spirit of soldiers and warriors, with a strong following in the Gwynelan

Army. He is worshiped as an Avatar of both the Grey and the Dark; the Temple of Light directs their militant worshipers toward Bahamut and Kord, treating Bane as a gloss on the Demon God Mordarr, God of War.

**Corellon** is the Patron of beauty, magic, spring and the arts. He is the Patron Spirit of artists and magi, and is worshiped as an Avatar of the Light and the Grey.

**Erathis** is the Patron of civilization, invention and laws. He is the Patron Spirit of inventors and those who make and keep the law, and is worshiped as an Avatar of both the Light and the Grey.

**Gruumsh** is the Patron of chaos, turmoil and destruction. He is the Patron Spirit of Gwen Duri, and often invoked for protection from them. Gruumsh is worshiped as an Avatar of the Dark, and by many Orc tribes.

**Ioun** is the Patron of knowledge, prophecy and skill. She is the Patron Spirit of sages, prophets and teachers, and is worshiped as an Avatar of both the Light and the Grey.

**Kord** is the Patron of battle, strength and storms. Like Bane, he is the Patron Spirit of soldiers and warriors, as well as athletes, and has a strong military following. He is worshiped as an Avatar of the Light, the Dark, and the Grey, and receives many prayers for safe passage through the storm or battle to come.

**Lolth, the Spider Queen**, is the Patron of lies, poisons, shadows, and spiders. She is the Patron Spirit of Dark Elves, and often invoked for protection against them. Lolth is worshiped as an Avatar of the Dark, and is the Tribe Mother of many Dark Elf villages.

**Melora** is the Patron of wilderness and the sea. She is the Patron Spirit of sailors, rangers, and woodsmen, and is worshiped

as an Avatar of the Light.

**Moradin the Smith** is the Patron of creation, artisans, and the family. He is the Patron Spirit of artisans and smiths, and often prayed to concerning matters of the family. He is also worshiped as an Avatar of the Light.

**Pelor the Corn Lord** is the Patron of the sun, summer, agriculture and time. He is the Patron Spirit of farmers and mothers, and often prayed to concerning matters of fertility. He is worshiped as an Avatar of both the Light and the Grey.

**The Raven Queen** is the Patron of death, fate and winter. She is the Patron Spirit of undertakers, grave-diggers, and seers. She is worshiped as an Avatar only by the Grey, while the Light and Dark treat her almost as the embodiment of the Grey.

**Scarlett** is the Patron of thievery, trickery, and adventure, and he is the Patron Spirit of thieves, bards, actors and adventurers. Scarlett is worshiped as an Avatar of the Grey, and held in especially high regard by the people of Ember.

**Sehanine** is the Patron of the moon, love trickery, and autumn. She is the Patron Spirit of lovers, liars, and those who work by night, and worshiped as an Avatar of both the Light and the Grey.

**Tharizdun** is the Patron of annihilation and madness, and the Patron Spirit of the mad. He is often invoked out of fear, with prayers for mercy or relief. Tharizdun is worshiped as an Avatar of the Dark, and the Temple of Light treats him as a gloss on the Demon God Zhaos, Son of Madness.

**Tiamat, the Dragon Mother**, is the Patron of wealth, greed, and vengeance. She is the Patron Spirit of those who desire wealth or

vengeance, and worshiped as an Avatar of the Grey and the Dark. She is also worshiped by the Cult of the Wyrms.

**Torog the Jailer** is the Patron of imprisonment and caves, and is the Patron Spirit of slavers, jailers and executioners. He is worshiped as an Avatar of the Grey and the Dark. The temple of Light treats Torog as a gloss on the Demon God Gwen Dur.

**Vecna, the Lich**, is the Patron of necromancy, the undead and secrets. He is the Patron Spirit of necromancers, guardians, and secret-keepers; his image is often used to seal things to be kept secret. Some believe that he is the infamous Lich-King Nesh-Rak, or the mysterious Deathlord of Crios. Vecna is worshiped as an Avatar of the Dark, and is quite popular among Zacatian expatriates.

**Zehir** is the Patron of darkness, poison, and serpents. He is the Patron Spirit of poisoners, apothecaries, and assassins, and is worshiped as an Avatar of the Grey and the Dark. The Temple of Light treats Zehir as a gloss on the Demon God Tanpaar, the Mistress of Poisons.

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### **PALATINE OATHS**

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Paladins and anti-paladins are bound by oaths; breaking their palatine oath means losing the powers granted to them by the Light (for paladins) or Dark (for anti-paladins). Considering their differing philosophies, the oaths are a little different.

#### **THE PALADIN'S OATH**

*The Paladin* promotes the True and the Good in all things.

*The Paladin* leads others to the Light by his example.

*The Paladin* does not strike another, who be unaware, from behind.

*The Paladin* does not harm the innocent nor allow the innocent to come to harm through his sloth.

*The Paladin* does not deceive.

*The Paladin* does not join with others in alliance to fight against inferior numbers.

*The Paladin* does not use artifacts of evil or artifacts created for evil purpose.

*The Paladin* does not knowingly work together with those of the Dark.

#### **THE ANTI-PALADIN'S OATH**

*The Anti-Paladin* promotes the False and the Evil in all things.

*The Anti-Paladin* will lead others to the Dark by his example.

*The Anti-Paladin* shall not allow a good deed done by pure of heart to go unpunished.

*The Anti-Paladin* shall not use artifacts of good or artifacts created for good purpose.

*The Anti-Paladin* shall not work together with those of the Light.

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### **GEOGRAPHY**

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Gwynelad is primarily a land of fertile, hilly grasslands. The **Cormyrian Mountains** mark the northern border, and act as a natural barrier between Gwynelad and Jarred. The eastern border is marked by the **Jordian Mountains**; beyond them lies the vast prairie of the Na-Ti and the wicked kingdom of Zacat. Beyond the Southern Marches is unsettled frontier, and beyond that lies **the jungle of Gulth**. To the west is the primeval forest of **the Astegon**, the ancient land of elves, protected by the Ban. Finally, the western shores are washed by **the Occidental Ocean**, and woodlands dot the kingdom like a youngster's first beard. Gwynelad has a temperate climate, with warm summers and cold winters, and a reasonable amount of precipitation; additionally, all the water in the Cormyrian mountains flows into Gwynelad, providing plenty of irrigation for Gwynelad's thirsty



fields.

## NEIGHBORS

**The Astegon** - Elven for "Home," the Astegon is the primeval wood. Home to the elves for thousands of years, some believe that it encompasses much more area than appears on the map. The Ban, the magical barrier that protects the Astegon, is the only defense that withstood the assault of the Demon-Gods without failing. It still stands to this day, protecting the Astegon and the Astegoni elves from the Demon-Gods and

their servants. Gwynelad enjoys favorable, if distant, relations with the Astegoni elves.

**Jarred** - Jarred is a desert realm, full of sand and wind. Life is harsh here, and not just because of the environment; Queen Janna's gladiatorial games and cruel laws have spilled so much blood on the Jarradan sands that they have been irrevocably stained. King Galen II's envoy to Jarred was an abject failure because of a lack of understanding; Jarred is so female-centric that it is a crime for a man to appear in public without a female chaperon. King Loren's envoy in 208

was more successful, opening up limited trade between the two kingdoms.

**Nin-Po** - The exotic island nation of Nin-Po lays far to the west, in the Occidental Ocean. It is quite xenophobic, yet it allows limited trade with Gwynelad, consisting mostly of silks and spices in return for raw materials, as well as shipping provisions (Nin-Po is the major way point on the sea route between Gwynelad and Zacat). Limited travel is allowed, but foreigners found outside the few "open" port cities are subject to imprisonment or even execution. Nin-Po is ruled by a coalition of several clans, who all owe fealty to the Sun Emperor; additionally, they worship many diverse spirits, rather than the powers of the Light, Dark, and Dusk.

**Zacat** - Little is known of Zacat; it is commonly believed that everyone in Zacat is either irredeemably evil or irrecoverably insane, or both. Zacat is a land where life is cheap, and the dead walk the streets as slaves, servants, and laborers. Zacat is ruled by the dreaded Lich-King, Nesh-Rak, whom is rumored to have "lived" for thousands of years.

**The Nine Isles** – The band of islands to the west of Gwynelad are nominally self-ruling, but the cultural and economic ties to Gwynelad run deep enough that they are effectively vassal states anyway.

## CARES OF GWYNELAD

**Ambermount** – The northwest corner of the kingdom, Ambermount has long been the bastion of defense against Jarred's meager navy. Trieste has a better harbor, but more ships sail from the ports of Ambermount than any other care (although not all of them are legitimate; pirates infest the coasts of Ambermount, but not to the

extent of the coasts of Falkirk)

**Andregard** – The breadbasket of the Kingdom, the people of Andregard are rural, religious, and racist. The largely agrarian care is not as rich as Thurii or Thaylis, and many Andregarders believe that they are being held back by the non-human residents of Gwynelad. Oddly, the Thieves' Guild in Andregard is larger and more powerful than anywhere else in Gwynelad.

## Blass

### Eben

**Ember** – Ember is a fairly quiet care whose main concern is the escalating struggles of Soren, as the intrigue of that care boils over into Ember with ever-increasing regularity. As the saying goes, "bards, merchants and thieves are abundant in Ember, but the only thing there is in surplus are agents of Soren".

## Emigan

### Erindell

**Falkirk** – Falkirk is a notorious haven for coastal pirates preying on the shipping trade setting out from Ambermount and Loquefort. Every few years, the Gwynelan Army or Navy makes an attempt to route out the pirates, but the hidden coves and stark coastline of Falkirk makes it too hard to eradicate them.

**Fen** – Fen is a poor shire at the fork of the Cormyrian and Jordian Mountains, and life here is a hard-scrabble affair. Much of what the Fenians manage to grow is stolen by marauding orcs and dark elves, and Fenian villages are constantly in search of protection.

**Galen** – When Riva built his kingdom, he named this care in honor of his son and successor. Since that time, Galen's fortunes have only grown, by capitalizing on its position between the grain rich heartland and the

mineral rich north.

**Goldcoast** – A tiny coastal care, Goldcoast is the home of one of the richest amber mines in the world. Several fortunes have been made (and lost) in the amber trade.

**Khelik** – The center of the Northern Frontier, Khelik was named for leader of the Clansmen in the First Clan War. It's capitol, Rommel, is named for the man that defeated him, a fact that still rubs many Clansmen wrong. Life in Khelik is hard, which is something that the Khelikans relish; they claim it separates them from the “soft grub-worms” of the more southern shires.

**Khrist** – Very nearly the geographical center of the Kingdom, Khrist also strives to be the spiritual center of Gwynelad. Both the Grey Council and the Dark Church are centered in Khrist (although both have a significant presence in several other cares), and the Temple of Light also has a significant presence here.

**Loquefort** – Home of the greatest harbor in Gwynelad (the harbor at Trieste), Loquefort is a melting pot of cultures and races. As the “gentleman's paradise,” it is one of the most cosmopolitan of the cares; chefs trained in Loquefort are in high demand across the kingdom, and Loquefortina wines and cheeses are universally considered the best of the best.

**Marin**

**Morn**

**Peregrine**

**Ravenfall** – Bordering on the Astegon, the people of Ravenfall are closer to the forest than most. They get along well with the Astegoni and Summervale elves, and have much in common with them. There are also more half-elves living in Ravenfall than any other care except Summervale.

**Skagarak** – One of the “Barbarian Cares,” Skagarak was the only such care not involved in the Second Clan War. It is still a fairly wild place, where freedom is valued over loyalty, but it is firmly entrenched in the Gwynelan sphere of influence (primarily because of the influence of its cosmopolitan neighbor, Loquefort).

**Soren** – Once the center of a vast empire, Soren now suffers as the plain step-sister to Thurii and Loquefort. Everyone in Soren looks back to the days of old, and none more so than its ruling families, House Dexeter and House Sinister, who are constantly struggling for control of the care.

**Spitz** – This small care is much maligned as poor and stupid; with an agrarian economy largely based on pig farming, a common joke is that Spitz's major import is mud, because the Spitzers cannot remember the recipe. However, with King Galen's choice of Spitzer brick for the new wall of the Seat, that reputation may be on the mend.

**The Southern Marches** – On the edge of the southern frontier, the Southern Marches are a hotbed of support for Reformist causes. This is where Belfar went to recruit his army, and many here still believe in his cause, although the aging Duke Rico does his best to keep order.

**Sudenturm**

**Summervale** – Home to a substantial conclave of elves, Summervale is one of the most fertile cares in the Kingdom. Rather than turn its hills and woods into farmland, Summervale is carpeted with vineyards and small gardens that provide the raw ingredients for the gourmet wines and delicacies of Summervale's northern neighbor, Loquefort.

**Thaylis** – Thaylis is the richest and most powerful care in the Kingdom. Although the capitol is in Thurii, Thaylis boasts more wealth and more soldiers than any other care. When his army destroyed the Seat, Warmaster Belfar chose Thaylis to be the location of his new capitol, called Redemption. With Belfar's government overthrown and the Seat rebuilt, the fate of Redemption is in doubt.

**Thurii** – Named for the only Demon-God to ever be slain by humans, Thurii is the home of Gwynelon, King Galen's capitol city, which means that it is the home of any group of any size or power.

**Trôs**  
**Tzarnia**  
**Uthuk**

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## **VERSION LIST**

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Revision 1.5 - First published revision.

Revision 1.6 - Minor formatting updates, added Palantine Codes, map of Gwynelad, and some information on select cares.

Revision 1.7 – Change to two column format, added to Religion section, added list of patrons.

Revision 1.8 - Added several people and groups to the People section, standardized spelling across the document.

Revision 1.9 – Added several care descriptions and detailed more stereotypes.

Revision 1.10 – Revamped the Religion section to better reflect the state and lay beliefs.