

Alliance Southern Minnesota
Live Action Role Play

Player's Hand Book

Introduction

Welcome! You are holding in your hands (or reading digitally) the players guide for the Alliance LARP Southern Minnesota game. This document is an overview of our chapter specific policies, In Game locations, and some information on the races in the Sheltered Lands. This guide is likely to be updated yearly during the Winter "off season" months.

Alliance LARP Southern Minnesota was formed in November of 2008 with the intention of running a game focused primarily on players' actions. Our goal is to have most of the events and plots grown from what players find most interesting and engaging. This doesn't mean we don't have pre-established plotlines or modules but instead we strive to create a dynamic vibrant world with as many options for our players as possible. This means you can pursue any option you find engaging, be it building a merchant empire, leading people to victory over a great menace, or walking the simple path of a warrior or healer trying to find their way. Be warned however, your actions will have repercussions not just for your character but for the nations and people of the Sheltered Lands, possibly far beyond what you may have intended.

While we have worked hard to provide rich information on the races within our world, this guide should, by no means, be considered exhaustive. If you have a fun idea or back history you would like to use, please feel free to contact our plot staff for assistance. There are always new people of all races arriving through the Mists, many of whom are looking for a new start. More information on writing a back story can be found towards the end of this guide. We also recommend reading the section in the Alliance Rule Book regarding creating backgrounds. If you feel you could use a little bit of advice, or just extra help fleshing out your back story, you can always contact our staff at info@mnalliance.com.

Ultimately the strength of any chapter relies on its players and the Southern Minnesota staff wants you to have the best experience possible at all of our events. To accomplish this, we need to hear from our players between events: how we did at the last event; what you would like to see more of; and what your character is doing between events are all things we like to hear about as often as possible. If we don't hear from you, we can't make include elements you'll enjoy or are interested in exploring.

Much of the history of this world has been lost to time: the constant threat of the Corrupt has made many ignore the recording of facts and figures, instead turning their attention to the fight at hand. Much more information will be released in game, through our in game forums, and on our website. Beyond that, complete race packets will be available as they are developed starting in the 2010 season. While this handbook will be updated year to year, understand it is by no means a complete view of the world.

We look forward to seeing you at a future event and welcome any questions you may have. Be sure to check the online forums at www.alliancelarp.com for additional details.

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Safety Policies and Rules

Why are Safety Policies and Rules on the first page of this guide? Because they are by far the most important information we have to share. Alliance Southern Minnesota has many policies in place to ensure that our game is safe and enjoyable to everyone. Each event will have at least one designated Safety Marshall. ONLY these Marshalls are permitted to move during Safety Holds. While we maintain a dedicated safety team as well as comprehensive insurance (for everyone, including those coming out as a trial-members) we would rather prevent injuries than treat them.

The Hold Rule

While it is stated quite clearly in the rule book, we will restate it here. The most important rule in Alliance is the "Hold Rule". Simply put, when you hear the word "Hold" shouted, you must take a knee if able, and look at the ground. Holds are called when someone notices a safety issue. This is not a time to look around for people sneaking up on you but you may go through your tags to track your abilities remaining. A Hold will end when the caller of the Hold does a three count to "game on". If you see an immediate safety concern, call "Hold" in a loud voice. It is better to have an extra Hold, or two, than to have an injury. But remember, Holds are primarily for safety issues and are NOT intended for asking rules questions or clarifying an effect a monster or player is using.

Documentation

All players within, even those attending for the first time as a trial, must complete a Waiver and Medical Information Form. We don't do this to be nosy; we do it to ensure our safety team is kept aware of all medical issues including allergies to food or medicine. Players under the age of 18 must have the Waiver and Medical Information Forms signed by their legal guardian. This is an absolute requirement to play, and while we do not wish to turn anyone away, you will not be allowed to participate in our game without completing these forms.

Safe Play

Even with our padded weapons, it is possible for injuries to occur during combat. To help prevent injuries, certain styles of fighting are not allowed. These include: "Baseball Batting" or swinging your weapon with excessive force; "Charging" or fighting too close to another player; and "Machine Gunning" or swinging your weapon too fast or in an insufficient arc. Players seen doing any of the above will be given warnings by Marshalls. We understand that mistakes will happen and action taken is generally a warning. If dangerous behavior is not curbed and becomes a habitual or constant issue steps will be taken beginning with removal from a specific fight but escalating to multiple game suspension and eventually Chapter banishment.

Paging

Paging is a method of play for those who cannot participate in our combat system due to injury, age, or any other reason. All pages wear orange headbands. Pages may not participate in combat, throw weapons or packets; no player may engage a Page in combat, or throw packets or weapons at them. Any page must accept an effect from any player within ten feet that says 'Page <effect>' (eg: "Page, 2 Normal! Page, 2 Normal!" or "Page, I Call Forth a Stone Bolt!" etc.). These skills are expended in the usual way. Pages are allowed to touch cast spells and perform first-aid and other non-combat in game skills (such as teaching, identifying scrolls/potions or ritual casting).

Your First Event

Many players are anxious before attending their first event, not knowing what to expect or how to prepare. New Players can request a "Newbie Marshal" be assigned to them for help with all the questions you might have on backgrounds, character construction, and the rules of the game. These folks are volunteers and are happy to help with any questions. However, they are generally not able to provide equipment or costuming, but are able to give advice on assembling a basic costume within your budget. Remember, if you ever have any questions, you can email info@mnalliance.com.

Preparing a Character

To prepare for your first event, you'll need to build a character. A great place to start is to decide what type of character you would like to play. A mighty warrior? A powerful scholar? A skilled artisan able to supply the community with useful and valuable goods? Think about the background of your character. Why did they decide to adventure? Why did they decide to head out into the dangerous world and make their way? Remember, not all adventures start with dead relatives, and the resurrection system makes orphans quite rare indeed.

Character Costuming and 'Phys Reps'

While we don't expect you to come to your first game in a full costume with beautifully built weapons, there are some things you can do to make sure you are not out of place. First, be sure not to wear jeans, tennis shoes, or branded clothing. This is by far the easiest way to appear out of place at any of our events. If you need help coming up with quick, cheap, or easy costuming or phys reps, there are lots of people happy to help and share what they've done on our online message boards. If you are playing a spell-caster or an archer, it is a good idea to make some packets before the game. You may also want to make your PVC weaponry (see Alliance Rule Book for instructions and specifications). Generally, we'll have some weapons and packets on hand to lend, but resources can sometimes be limited. Besides, having your own style of packet or weapon is a great way to customize your character and also makes sure the packets you throw get back into your hands.

Fight Practices

Fight Practices are regularly scheduled, non-plot gatherings designed to help players with game mechanics. Despite the name, fight practices are not all about combat. Fight practices are a great place to come to get information and hints on just about any facet of our game. You do not need to come to a fight practice "in character" or costumed. During fight practices, there will often be "mini mods" to help people get used to working together, practice their spell incants, or even simply to have some fun. If you are unsure of what kind of character you'd like to play, attending fight practices is a great way to decide. Attending a fight practice grants you 5 Goblin Stamps, or more if you bring a friend!

A Story Told Together

Remember, above all, Alliance is a role-playing game. In general, you'll get out of it what you put into it. If you are in doubt or confused as to what to do next, the best thing to do is to talk to someone in-game. Whether it's another player or a NPC that's wandered into town, you may be surprised where the discussion leads you.

Writing a Background

While backgrounds are by no means a requirement to play Alliance LARP, they help to give both the player and the plot staff some information on the character's history, desires, and goals. We encourage players to write backgrounds for their characters because we find it helps to provide a clear, consistent character portrayal. Personal plot often comes from this background, as well as in-game events. Personal plots are character-specific plotlines based on details or specific events in the history of a particular character or group. An example might be an opportunity for your character, or a group, to go visit a personal friend out in the wilderness, which then might lead to the set-up for an entire plot line.

Keep it Simple

A common mistake many players make when writing their first background is to try to be too specific with their history. Remember, backgrounds should give some history on your character and some information on their goals. Ask yourself: What is my character trying to achieve? Why? How? There are many reasons people might start adventuring: hope for a better life, to earn money, or power to accomplish a goal. Some might adventure for fame or fortune, others because they simply don't want to settle into a "boring" lifestyle. Whatever the reason, we encourage you to avoid histories that read, "My father was slain by black Jim, an ancient and powerful lich, and I am sworn to avenge him." Try to leave room for plot to fit it into existing plotlines. A better version would be, "My father was in the army and despite having never resurrected in the past, he failed to come home from a campaign deep in the wilderness." Keep in mind that orphaned adventurers are extremely rare, as in this world a death is not always permanent, so to see both parents permanently die is a rare occurrence. Don't worry about length either, a few paragraphs or even a page is the perfect amount of history.

Setting Goals

A character's history is the first information our plot team gets about your character. This is your chance to let us know what you find interesting, what you would like to see in game. Try to keep such information to generalities: "My character wants to one day own a fortress to protect the innocent people of Gaden" works far better than "My character wants to build his fortress on the northern-most ridge watching over the Valley of Solace." Because plotlines can change over time, having a fortress in such a location may not make sense by the time your character is ready to build it. Also remember that some goals might never be achieved, such as becoming a Dragon Mage. Your character might work towards this goal for his or her entire career, but in the end, any PC that obtains such power would immediately become an NPC, under the control of plot. This effectively 'retires' that character, which may happen in rare instances, but will never happen without the PC's consent.

Transfers

Similar to local players, we want to hear from those bringing characters into our chapter for any length of time. In this case, you may provide as much or as little information as you would like about the incoming character. One thing we always like to know is why such a character has left his home to travel through the Mists. Any special interests your character has can also be of great value: Is she determined to be a great alchemist, mage, or warrior; or perhaps she is working on a trade agreement or treaty with one of the nations of the Sheltered Lands. While we cannot provide each character a personal plot line at every event, we do our best to make sure every character has the opportunity to do something related to the character's basic goals at any event she attends.

Building your Character

Often new players are confused about how to build a character. All characters start with 15 build points which may be spent to purchase skills. If you need help with the system you can always request a "Newbie marshal" by sending your question to info@mnalliance.com. Newbie marshals are long term players and volunteers that are willing to help you with questions. If this is your first time playing don't worry about making major mistakes, each new player is allowed to rewrite their character after their first event.

Character Growth

Characters get stronger by gaining Build blankets which can come from three possible sources: Event Blankets which you get for each event attended; Goblin Stamp "Monthly Blankets" which can be purchased for 30 goblin stamps once a month and count as a single "Day" worth of experience; and monthly Dragon Stamp Blankets, which are awarded for national contributions such as approved rules submissions or service on a committee. Initially, each "Blanket" is worth multiple build but as your character grows it gains fewer points per Blanket, so the larger your character gets the slower it gains additional points. This means that newer characters will close the gap with older characters overtime.

IBGAs- In Between Games Actions

Between each game, all players are encouraged to send the plot team a note as to what their characters are doing (plot@mnalliance.com). Such submissions help us know what you are interested in and help us develop plotlines that are interesting to your character. Please remember that an IBGA will never yield experience, although your actions may lead to plotlines that can yield loot, resources, or relationships with NPCs.

Remember to consider the amount of time between events for IBGAs and don't try to do too much at a time. Also remember that the game days/events are the most intense periods of time, you can assume that time spent in between events is generally calmer and less dangerous than your average game day. Your character both makes and spends money during this downtime, but for plot purposes it is generally assumed that your income and expenses match, although it is possible to have plotlines, or holdings, that yield extra coin at each logistics period.

Multiple Characters

Players are allowed any number of characters. Some players do this to have options for play each event, other players like to put their Goblin Monthly Blankets on a "secondary" character in the event their main character suffers Permanent Death. To set up an additional character all you need to do is to let the logistical staff know with a quick e-mail to logistics@mnalliance.com. Remember you may only purchase one Goblin Blanket per month, and the experience from each event must be applied to the character played. If you NPC an event you may apply the experience to any of your characters in our database, or apply it to a newly created character.

The Sheltered Lands, an Overview

The Sheltered Lands have long been isolated from outside influences by the Mists that surround the known world. For nearly two hundred years, the civilized nations near the Mist Wall have been defending against creatures known as the Corrupt. Weak outside their territory, the Corrupt have been held at bay for many years with only minor defeats, however attacking them in their own territory has proven to be disastrous. The country of Gaden has made deals and treaties with the countries of Roskaria and Pratorak, gaining a steady stream of supplies from one and an ally in battle with the other. Recent events have cut Pratorak off from Gaden and the relationship with Roskaria is becoming strained as more supplies are needed each year just to maintain the current lines.

With a thick forest to the west, Roskaria to the north, and the forces of the Corrupt along the southern and eastern borders, the country of Gaden remains vigilant. Pratorak, lying to the east of Gaden along the great northern mountain ranges, has been lost for twenty-four years. The fate of this nation, filled with High Orcs and Stone Elves, is currently unknown and many fear it has been lost forever. Sheltered in its valley and protected by Gaden, Roskaria continues to enjoy its prosperity. The people living within Roskaria spend much of their time creating impressive works of arts, while the apprentice craftsmen create weapons and consumables for Gaden.

The great untouched wilderness to the west and south of Gaden contains many peoples but no known kingdoms. Many tribes of Elves, Gypsies and other nomadic folk, such as High Ogres, Sarr and Wylderkin, are known to inhabit this area. The rare Dark Elf that appears always emerge from this region, although whether they live there or simply travel through it is unknown, and no member of that race offers explanation. The great mountain range along Gaden's northern border runs east and forms the northern border of Pratorak as well. The Dwarves that inhabit these mountains rarely come down to Gaden despite many of their kind living within its borders in peace; they are known for their great craftsmanship and skills as merchants.

The great Mist Waterfall that flows into the lands of Roskaria, from beyond the Mist Wall, snakes its way through the central portions of Roskaria and Gaden. The river turns south and forms the western portion of the country's southern border. It is believed that this river is joined by others and flows all the way down to the very end of the world, disappearing once more into the Mist Wall far to the south. This river not only provides the source of much irrigation and life sustaining water, but it also forms a barrier that the Corrupt have not crossed. Although the Corrupt have conquered and traveled past many smaller rivers, they seem unable to cross the great breadth of the Mist River.

The seasons of the Sheltered Lands seem subdued to travelers from outside the Mists. Winter's chill has less bite and summers are generally warm, but very rarely hot enough to be uncomfortable. Despite the very limited nature of the cold seasons, most people and beings living within the Sheltered Lands still stockpile and maintain food in defense of the occasional severe winter or drought.

Roskaria

This country is naturally lucky to be located between two major mountain ranges, bordered by Gaden to the south, and the curving wall of Mists to the north. The high population of Mystic Wood Elves and Humans, with a smattering of Hobblings, virtually guarantees a strong production and trading base. While this country deals with its own share of problems, with gangs of under-goblins that occasionally come down from the mountains and other local creatures, it has no major problems and is well protected. It supplies Gaden with victuals and crafted items in return for protection. This deal has been strained over the past few years as Gaden has begun demanding more and more supplies to stave off the constant Corrupt attacks. With their excellent resource base and a constant stream of fresh water from the Mist Waterfall, the people of Roskaria rarely want for anything. The supplies sent to Gaden are generally made by the apprentices and those craftsmen that seem incapable of creating the fine works made by Roskaria's master craftsmen.

Government and Society

Roskaria functions like a small community but on a massive scale. Kings are selected every five years by a general vote of all craftsmen, nobles, and soldiers. The king then appoints (or keeps) advisors and generals. Sheriffs and magistrates can also be replaced during this period of time. The king's men maintain the road ways and protect the populace from the occasional incursion and internal threat.

Most noble families can trace their lineage back to an honored craftsman, a former king, and, in a few rare cases, an honored defender, such as a sheriff or magistrate. While it is uncommon, any noble could lose his classification should he dishonor his position. In these cases, the crimes are more often against the people than against the king. Few nobles would dare to act against the king, especially when they can run their own candidate against him. As positions are democratically selected, most nobles are honorable and competent, however, the occasional noble will traffic in illegal goods for fiscal or political gain.

Notable People

Palon – Current leader of Roskaria. He was elected by a general vote, nearly thirty years ago and has run unchallenged for the last 25 years. Taking over during the early years of Roskaria's alliance with Gaden, Palon has greatly increased the steady stream of supplies heading south into Gaden. Currently, the supplies Gaden requests are not a great strain on the country but the King is increasingly concerned that the requests will one day outstrip what the country can produce.

Kalthor – Head of the Roskarian guard. Kalthor is known as a determined but principled man. Charged with the security of domestic matters, he is rarely seen in the same place twice but can almost always be seen at any significant disturbance within his country's borders.

Gillan – Head of the Trading Guild. A stern faced Hobbling known as the go-to man for supplies or for those who have something to contribute to the shipments to Gaden. Many new craftsmen have gotten their start up money and supplies after helping out the Traders Guild.

Rokaria Notable Cities

Rosk – Located in the center of the country, the capital city of Rosk sits on both sides of the great Mist Wall river. Serving as the focal point of Roskarian commerce, most Human and Hobling businesses are centered there; the local Mystic Wood Elf population bear their haggling with a generally bemused air. The north east section of the city holds a large artist conclave. Many talented craftsmen live there in large communes: goods and supplies are shared; the local merchants ensure these artists get everything they need to work as many of the pieces they create can be sold for healthy profits. Kalthor, the head of the Roskarian Guard, is housed in the city of Rosk and keeps a close watch on all aspects of the city.

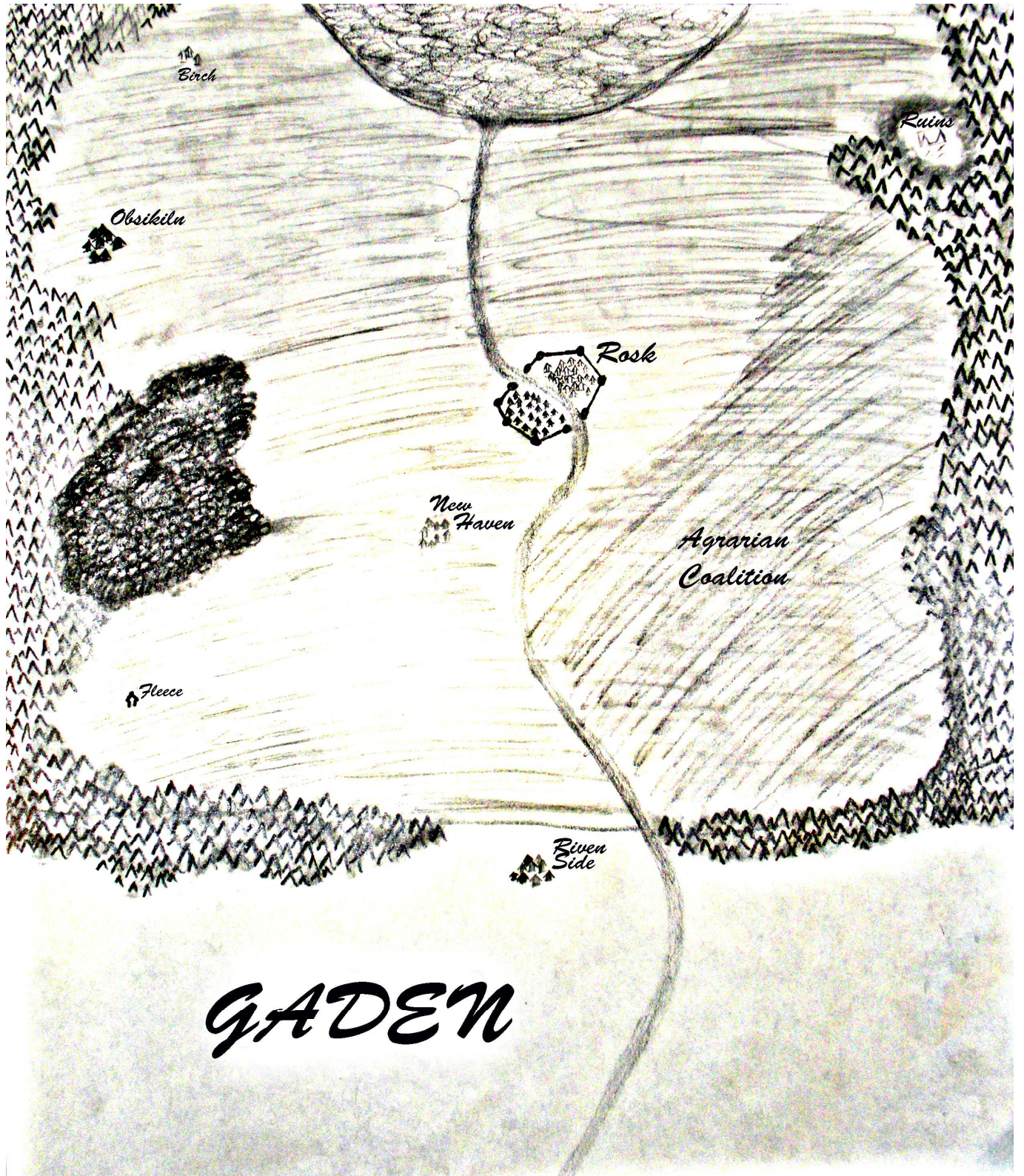
Obsiklin – Located in the north western plains of Roskaria, Obsiklin is an oddity even within its own country. It houses a small population of dedicated artists from many unlikely races, including a famed Snakekin sculptor, a Kobold blacksmith, and High Orc carpenter. Few folks are truly welcome in this town as most of the artists are outcasts who've chosen to live and create far from the center of the nation.

Birch – A small outpost near the Mist Wall, it has recently seen its military force tripled due to the arrival of strange travelers through the Mist. The first Mist Walkers arrived here in the year 1509 and the outpost continues to be a point of entry for most new arrivals, although such travelers are rare. The local Kobold populace continues to make constant trouble for the standing guard as they became extremely agitated by the actions of the first Mist Walkers.

Fleece – A small community of Mystic Wood Elf farmers. Their cotton plants and large sheep herds provide a massive amount of clothing for both the Roskarian civilians and the Gaden military as much of it is processed into uniforms and sent to their southern allies.

New Haven – A mid-sized community sitting a few leagues to the south west of Rosk. New Haven serves as a place for newer residents to make a home. With homes and buildings in Rosk owned largely by long termed residents and nobles, New Haven serves as a convenient alternative to living within Rosk itself. Owned entirely by the Duran family of Hobblings, homes here are leased out for five, ten year, or lifetime contracts. Caravans run along the well tended roads between New Haven and Rosk. Passage on them for residents of New Haven is only a few silvers per month for an unlimited pass, discounts are offered for residents that contribute to the upkeep of the town or the wagons.

Riven Side – The last outpost of Roskaria, Riven Side is a military base that sits between the nations of Roskaria and Gaden. Riven Side serves as a checkpoint for all people and goods going across the border in either direction. The town, and its guard, generally does a good job patrolling the area and catching anyone attempting to sneak by the fairly narrow passage between the two kingdoms. The creatures that live in the nearby mountains help ensure few are adventuresome enough to bypass the crossing.



Gaden

This country borders Roskaria to the south and blocks the only know way into or out of that country. Its high population of professional warriors has served it well as Gaden sits on the frontlines of the current Corrupt territory. Facing weak, though constant, attacks, Gaden has strained its supplies. The country is becoming more aggressive in its dealing with Roskaria and the occasional foreign diplomat, though few foreigners have been seen in recent decades since the Corrupt lines have expanded to nearly surround the country.

Gaden is more militant than Roskaria as it faces daily skirmishes at a variety of locations along the front line. Production tends to have a war time focus and most events/celebration involve the war in some way or another, such as warriors heading off to battle, or a load of supplies completed. Unlike Roskaria, Gaden has a far more traditional power structure with hereditary leadership passed down to the eldest son for most positions of authority.

Notable People

Nerak – The elder king of Gaden, he has been leading the country for nearly thirty years after his father, who was a far more aggressive battle leader, fell for his eighth and final time to the Corrupt. Forced into a more traditional role by his lack of multiple heirs, he lives vicariously through his only son, Prince Talon, who is a strong templar and skilled in strategy. King Nerak is devoted to his son and many believe that were his son to die before him he would sink into a great depression.

Talon – The only son of the current king, Prince Talon has proved himself a skilled and brave warrior. He takes an active hand in the constant fighting with the Corrupt. As an Earth Templar, he tends to serve as the anchor to any group he fights alongside. He is known for making the hard choices when necessary, but always strives to limit the deaths of those who serve him. He has even been known to reassign spirit weakened warriors to safer duties such as protecting the capitol or serving as messengers.

Kirna Lightfoot – A well known merchant with a knack for having the right goods available at the right time. Many nobles and military leaders owe this man a great number of favors. There are rumors that Kirna is not always entirely honest, and questions have been raised as to just how this man has such a well stocked inventory, even at times when a specific need is difficult to find.

Holidays and Special Events

The Respite (Res-pit)- Starting in late summer, this is a jovial time as each year the Corrupt stop their ceaseless attacks for sixty days. Many games and tourneys are held during this time, unions and rites of passage ceremonies are typically scheduled during this time to give the participants a “good start” in their new lives. Action against the Corrupt during this time is forbidden.

The Festival of Remembrance – Held near the end of October, this festival marks the end of the Respite. During this more somber festival, those who have fallen in the previous year are remembered and honored with good acts, ranging from simple good works to large donations to more organized efforts against longstanding bastions of undead and other creatures.

The Gaden Military

The Bonded Guard – Easily recognizable by their large flat blades, the bonded guard of Gaden are considered the elite of the Gaden military. Unshakably loyal to the royal family, there are never more than two dozen at any given time. As each of the guard is spirit linked to a specific blade, anyone caught with a bonded blade will be under immediate suspicion of murder and treason. Returning such a blade is always well rewarded as the spirit link must be transferred to a new guardsmen very quickly to keep the corps sound. Bonded guards have vast authority and are answerable only to the royal family and their direct servants and seneschals; it is extremely rare to see more than two of the Bonded at any time unless they are guarding a member of the Royal Family.

The Gaden Army – Charged with the protection of Gaden's borders, the army is lead by the Crown Prince and his generals. Members of the army will often be found within an internal training camp, at one of the many border forts, or on campaign. The army is made up primarily of draftees, although volunteers are allowed to join if they commit to at least a four year service (some youths in the kingdom will do this to avoid following their family craft). All citizens of Gaden are subject to be drafted into the army, and all nobles are required to train as officers for a total of eight months by their age of majority (the equivalent of 22 years, by Human count). Military service is required of the nobility so in the event of a true emergency all nobles can be called upon to lead the citizenry in battle. Functionally, the nobility of Gaden has never been subject to a draft, although about two of every five has served a two year tour.

The Gaden Militias – The militias of Gaden vary by the areas they patrol. In some areas of the central kingdom, they are effectively the policing arm of the local nobility, charged with keeping the peace and serving the local area. In the outskirts, and villages on the border, the militias are a group of like minded hunters or soldiers that seek to keep their familys safe. Officially, no militia member has any political power; any clout they hold comes from a local noble or town council. Militia ranks vary from militia to militia but generally are limited to a local commander and a couple of lieutenants; often an influential member of the community serves as the unofficial leader.

Guildsmen – Not technically a part of the Gaden military, the two primary guilds of Gaden, the Greater Gaden Earth guild and the Performers of Celestial Arts, both have a number of men at arms and scholars they can field for a variety of duties and interest. During times of significant marches and engagements, there will usually be groups of skilled Guildsmen forming their own platoons. Guildsmen often have strong civilian authority but rarely, if ever, have the authority to supersede an officer of the general army. Occasionally, a ranking Guild Master, or extremely experienced journeyman, may command a militia if their goal is in the interest of the country.

Adventurers – A poorly defined category, “adventurer” is often used as a catch-all term for itinerant folk with above average martial skill. Known for their poor discipline and overall lack of organization, they are rarely dependable and never the first choice for assignments of importance. Local adventurers will often be sent on long shot assignments, or be employed as scouts and skirmishers to help irritate and annoy the enemy. Many adventurers are not considered citizens of the land and thus are not subject to the draft, although they may still be pressed into service when needed to protect the area they inhabit. The adventurer who refuses the occasional indenture will see his holdings seized and possible treason charges leveled.

Important Locations of Gaden

Tunaria – The capital city of Gaden, Tunaria rests in the northern region of the kingdom a few dozen leagues south of the Roskarian border. Resting in the center of the city is the Royal Palace. The palace holds quarters for the sitting king, his queen, the crown prince, and the king's two brothers along with a number of additional state rooms for larger royal trees. Some fear for the line as Prince Talon is unmarried, but since he has never suffered a death most citizens rest easy knowing there is time for a family. Outside the palace grounds is a ring of military hostels and training camps used for the training of the Bonded Guard and the noble officers; these facilities are the most difficult and unforgiving of all the training facilities in Gaden. The final rings of Tunaria comprise three concentric towns which provide the food and basic resources to the capitol and the many forts along the Valley of Solace.

Kethunaira – A midsized city located a few leagues to the northeast of the Gaden capital of Tunaria. Kethunaira is wealthy and most of the estates are large, orderly and safe. This houses many of the upper level seneschals, army leaders, and other high ranking non-nobles that serve the Royal Family and the lesser noble houses.

Hopes Reach – Formerly a military base known as Fort Miller, Hopes Reach was expected to fall to the advancing Corrupt. In the 11th hour, the arrival of a number of traveling, and local, adventurers provided enough muscle to hold off the swarm. Impressed with their vigor in defending the region, Crown Prince Talon declared it to be a settlement zone again, even allowing non-citizen adventurers to settle and build a community. This has led many citizens to fear and avoid the region as it has become a draw for visitors through the Mist Wall. Most prominent merchants refuse to trade with the region, regardless of the profit.

Emilton- Located in central, south-western Gaden, Emilton is a town at odds with the rest of the country. Far from the borders, and more active Corrupt encroachment, this town focuses much of its energy on exploration of the western wilds. Emilton trades with many of the Wilderkyn, Elves, High Ogres, Sarr, and other races that emerge from the wild. It is known for both its eclectic population and its comingling of custom.

The Western Outposts – A thin line of three small outposts guarding the edge of Gaden against any assault from the western wilds. The units stationed here are made up of rotating soldiers from more dangerous postings. Those soldiers on heavy combat posting are rotated to the western outposts for a couple of years after their three year period on the front lines. Usually, this two year period happens to straddle the four year reenlistment renewal.

The Valley Line – A series of five closely knit, stout keeps sitting along the western ridge of the Valley of Solace. Aside from the town of Hopes Reach, this Line is the primary point of contact with the Corrupt. Aided by the steep valley walls, the keeps watch over a small number of natural ravines that run up the valley to the ridgeline. A large number of talented guildsmen provide large amounts of Celestial and Earthern magics to help keep the lines of Corrupt at bay. Deaths are uncommon enough that morale continues to be high. In general, a large number of Corrupt are slain for every resurrection taken by the defenders. Though the line has been held now for over a decade, the tide of Corrupt is undeterred and continues to grow apace.

The Laws of Gaden

Common Man Laws – The below codex applies to all citizen in Gaden, its protectorates and territories, such as Hopes Reach. Nobles suspected of wrong doing will be prosecuted either by a council of three or more equally ranked nobles, or by single noble of a higher class or stature. The royal family is unrestrained by this codex.

Legal Definitions

Accomplice – One who willfully operates, aids, or assists in a crime.

Conspiracy – The planning between two or more people to commit a crime

Sentient Beings – Sentient Beings are legally defined as a member of the following races: Human, Barbarian, Gypsy, High Orc, High Ogre, Biata, Stone Elf, Sarr, Wylderkyn, Hobling, Dryad, Dark Elf, Elf, Dwarf and Mystic Wood Elf.

Offenses

Assault - The unprovoked attack on another sentient being in any manner including weapons, spells, alchemy, or traps.

Bribery – The offering, giving, or receiving of something of value for the purpose of affecting the outcome of Civil, Public, or Legal decisions, or actions.

Commerce Violations (Taxes) - The purposeful withholding of any monies or duties that are required by the duly registered or appointed authority of an area.

Counterfeiting/Forgery – The production or replication of any item of value including, but not limited to, money, formal scrolls, components, and magical items, with the intent of falsely misrepresenting them as being real. This law covers the signing or alteration of anyone's signature, other than the rightful bearer of said signature, with the intent to defraud or misrepresent any document or writ.

Creating an Illegal Circle of Power - Any Circle of Power lasting longer than one hour may only be placed with written permission from a noble of the town. Any Circles placed without permission will be destroyed at the owner's expense and a monetary fine will be imposed.

Illegal Ritual Magics - The act of engaging in any Ritual Magics that creates a danger or instability of any kind for the surrounding region. This includes: all Necromantic Rituals; any unsanctioned Summoning Rituals. Any casting performed by a duly registered journeyman of the Celestial or Earth Guilds of Gaden, or recognized equivalents, is sanctioned.

Impersonating a Noble – Falsely presenting oneself as a noble or acting in a noble's stead without their permission.

Kidnapping – The unlawful taking and holding of a sentient being against their will.

Mind Control Elixirs, Items, or Magic- The use of mind control effects within any part of Gaden for the purpose of committing or concealing a crime is illegal. Enslavement and Amnesia effects are illegal to own, transport, conceal, sell, or use.

Murder – The unprovoked killing of sentient life to the point a resurrection. The lesser charge of “Attempted Murder” is included and used when the victim is restored to life via a Life Spell.

Necromancy – The aiding or creating of undead. The use of any magic, item, or potion which calls upon the powers of Chaos or has been created through Necromancy. The possession of any item considered Necromantic in nature is also illegal.

Perjury – To lie or make false or misleading statements to any civil servant, magistrate, or any official charged with the investigation of a crime by a presiding magistrate. This also includes a lie or misleading statement made to a noble for any reason

Slavery – The buying, selling, ownership, or capture with intent to sell of any sentient being. The use of Enslavement elixirs is also considered slavery (along with being in violation of the “Mind Control Elixirs, Item, or Magic” statute).

Smuggling – The transportation of illegal goods into or out of the borders of the kingdom.

Theft – The taking of a noble’s, or registered guild member’s, property without permission

Treason – The involvement, in any form, of criminal action against a noble. Disobeying a noble’s direct order. Any action attempting to incite rebellion. This law covers involvement in any type of action against the kingdom itself, such as aiding a sworn enemy of the kingdom or aiding rebellious forces.

Common Punishments

Punishments – The below punishments are the commonly prescribed penalties. However, discretion for punishment or degree is left to the presiding noble or their appointed official.

Note: Any punishment of “death” is considered to the point of resurrection.

Assault – Reparations to the victim of 5 gold

Accomplice to Assault – Reparations to victim of 1 gold

Bribery – Forced service period

Conspiracy to Commit Bribery – 10 gold fine

Commerce Violations (Taxes) – Fine of up to double the amount withheld, loss of holdings

Conspiracy to Commit Tax Violations – 10 gold fine, loss of public writs

Counterfeiting/Forgery – Fine of double items' worth for small offenses. Single death for forgery of official deeds or writs.

Creating an Illegal Circle of Power – Destruction of Circle; seizure of components; single death should components fail to cover the cost of Destruction

Illegal Ritual Magics – Forced service period; Obliteration for heinous offenses

Impersonating a Noble – Single death; Liars Mark applied

Kidnapping – Reparations to victim of 10 gold for offenses of less than a month, single death for longer

Mind Control Elixirs, Items, or Magic - Possession: seizure and 10 gold fine. Use: single death, seizure, and 10 gold fine.

Murder – Single death, plus forced service period

Necromancy – Single death; Obliteration for heinous offenses

Accomplice to Necromancy – Same as principle offender

Conspiracy to commit Necromancy – 5 gold fine; death for heinous offenses

Perjury –10 gold fine, plus accomplice charge to crime

Slavery – Forced service period

Accomplice to Slavery –10 gold fine plus a fine of double proceeds from trade

Smuggling – Seizure of goods, 10 gold fine, plus Possession charge

Theft – Reparations to victim of twice value, plus forced service period

Treason – Single death; Obliteration for heinous offenses

Pratorak

The county of Pratorak lays to the east of Gaden, sharing the same mountain range as its northern border. Historically, the region was controlled by various High Orc chieftains who ruled over the Stone Elf population, but this all changed with the invasion of the Corrupt. As the Corrupt swarmed over the High Orc defenses, a group of Stone Elves calling themselves the Stone Council reinforced the buckling High Orc forces and were instrumental in holding the line. The Council's eldritch magic blasted large holes in the Corrupt waves, allowing the High Orcs to reform and save the day. After the battle ended, the enraged High Orc leader came to slay the leader of the Stone Council but was forced to kowtow after losing a duel for dominance. Overcoming the High Orc's rage and strength with a practiced skill, the leader of the Stone Council took over the local area. Shortly thereafter, Council members challenged High Orc leaders from selected pivotal region. In a short time, the Council had authority over the majority of the High Orc clans and proclaimed the territory to be Pratorak. After the Stone Council conquered those remaining tribes who could not be challenged or provoked into an honor duel, it changed its name to the Monolithic Council and began reorganizing the defenses of Pratorak to better battle the Corrupt.

Government and Society

Pratorak is ruled by the Monolithic Council which is entirely comprised of Stone Elves. The eleven member Council has absolute authority. Their orders are unquestionably executed by High Orc military commanders with impressive battle records. All civilian leaders below the Council are selected by appointment; all leaders are appointed by the next higher authority above them. In contrast, military leaders are chosen through direct dueling; any member of the military may challenge a superior officer to an honor duel for that position. This brutal practice has filled the military of Pratorak with strong leaders. The lack of military strategy within the ranks is offset by civilian "advisors" whose word, though phrased as suggestions, is nearly absolute.

With the Monolithic Council's talent for logistics and planning, and their elite High Orc fighting force, Pratorak has been able to maintain not only their own lines but also a stretch of territory between their own country and Gaden. Even after losing contact with Gaden, it is well believed that Pratorak still stands strong within its own borders.

Kalmoke's Anvil

Fort Kalmoke's Anvil, named for a fearsome High Orc chieftain, was overrun by the Corrupt just over twenty years ago. The natural formation of the area allowed this fort to protect the Valley of Solace, which rests between the nations of Gaden and Pratorak. With the fall of the Anvil, the Corrupt have pushed into, and occupied, the Valley of Solace. Steep flanking ridges pen the Corrupt within the valley, but also hold any Gadenian forces out. Many a tactician has suggested that reclaiming the Anvil would be the first step in reestablishing contact between Gaden and Pratorak, but more practical men point out that doing so would further stretch already thin lines and put an even greater strain on the King's army.

A Recent History

- 1403, August - Pratorak diplomats arrive in Gaden to discuss a shared defensive of the Anvil and trade begins in the Valley of Solace.
- 1447, December – Alliance between Pratorak and Gaden solidified by the signing of the Grand Accords. The Society of Truth is formed to create an unimpeachable transcript of historical events.
- 1449, November – Quelie, Elf high-magician, backlashes a ritual and is destroyed, causing the Earth circles in Pratorak to lose resurrection ability.
- 1450, April – A Gypsy caravan is run out of Gaden for telling lies about the Wounding of the Earth.
- 1454, November – The Earth circles of Pratorak regain the ability to resurrect people.
- 1457, March – The first Dryad is seen in Gaden.
- 1460, June – The Order of the Flame is disbanded after the final death of its leader, Krieghammer.
- 1461, August – Dwarven participants in the annual Respite tournament are disqualified for use of Metheran enhanced weaponry.
- 1463, November – The squire of Sir Thalamous is indicted on charges of thievery and is Obliterated.
- 1467, March – A great flood wipes out Gaden’s crops causing famine and death.
- 1472, May – Gaden establishes a trade agreement with Roskaria for a large amount of yearly food. This brings prosperity back to the starving country.
- 1478, September – Roskaria agrees to become a protectorate of Gaden in exchange for providing it with supplies.
- 1480, January – Royal family of Gaden assassinated; the king and queen do not resurrect. Nerak takes the throne at the age of 12.
- 1486, June – Klamoke’s Anvil is overrun, cutting off the trade routes between Pratorak and Gaden. The Corrupt begin to take over the Valley of Solace.
- 1487, February – Talon is born and crowned Prince of Gaden.
- 1487, May – Due to heavy losses, Gaden pulls occupational forces from the Valley of Solace and lets communication lines with Pratorak fall. Gaden creates a new defensive perimeter at Bastion Ridge.
- 1489, August – Last known messenger from Pratorak arrives in Gaden.
- 1491, August – Sureshot Cimorine Lightfoot is the first Hobling to win the Respite tournament.
- 1497, April – The Scepter of Ages is lost.
- 1509, March – “Great Beast of the Mist” slain, strangers begin to arrive in the Shelter Lands.
- 1509, May - Impressed by their efforts, the Crown Prince of Gaden grants permission to stay and attempt to defend the abandoned outpost of Fort Miller to a loose knit group of Mist travellers and locals. A heated discussion surrounding the town’s name emerges.
- 1509, June - Investigations begin on a high ranking member of the Celestial guild over concerns that he is overly involved with travelers from the Mist. The term “Mistwalker” becomes popular in some circles as a derogatory term for travellers from beyond the Mists.
- 1509, September - The annual tournament of Respite is held at the former Fort Miller; the local Hobling sheriff is said to dominate many events and donate his winnings to other participants. Seneschal Damon Tierke, impressed by the proceeding, commissions a special weapon to be made commemorating the occasion.
- 1509, December - Supported by the Crown Prince, a troop of adventurers assault Kalmokes Anvil, the Corrupt's gateway to the Valley of Solace. Though they appear to be successful, the Crown Prince is overwhelmed and while his personal guard resurrects in the capitol weeks later, the Prince fails to reappear.
- 1510, January - Outposts along the Valley of Solace note a significant decrease in the strength and frequency of attacks by the Corrupt.

Barbarians

When Barbarians first came through the Mists to settle and explore the Sheltered Lands, they were a single people. Originally, Barbarians were led by a council of four shamans, each tied to the Earth but focused on various elements. It was their belief that elemental spirits were dangerous and untrustworthy and led to their distaste for Celestial magic. While attempting a complex Formal Ritual meant to seal powerful elemental spirits away from the tribe, the four elder shamans disappeared in a flash of energy. They have never been found. Hundreds of years later, the different Barbarian tribes have forgotten their origins and intermarried. Though their original home has long since been forgotten, they are a diverse force spread throughout Gaden.

Barbarian tribes have settled everywhere with the sole exception of Roskaria. While Barbarians are not unknown in Roskaria, they have no permanent settlements of note. Most of the Barbarian settlements in Gaden can be found in the western grasslands and are populated by the Lambentous and Levarin. There were several permanent settlements of the Irrigu tribe in Pratorak, but their current fate is unknown.

The Lambentous

Though Lambentous are fierce warriors, they are mainly known for their curious, almost eccentric, preoccupation with the weather. Their most sacred rituals concern observations and devotions to even slight deviations in meteorology. More baffling still are their ritual's seeming inconsistencies: a light rain can be good luck, while a heavier rain is a bad omen; a wafting zephyr is definitely unlucky, but a sturdy gust is an omen of wealth. These portents can change drastically depending on the sun's inclination, moon phase, days without rain, days with rain, dust in the breeze, etc. Suffice it to say, outsiders are often unable to predict if a bit of weather will be seen as good, bad or irrelevant.

The Petara

The Petara Barbarians are known for being stubborn to the point of aggression. Barbarians from this tribe will almost never turn from a path once they have begun, regardless of the changing situation. Only a trusted friend would be able to make these Barbarians stop and contemplate a decision, let alone deviate. Many of the superstitions held by this tribe appear to be totally random depending on such seeming trivialities as whether a farmer's sickle is blade up or down, whether a squirrel climbs clockwise or counterclockwise around a tree, or even how many times a woodpecker knocks a tree.. Their augury is highly complex and so dependent on minutiae that any number of different meanings are often divined from the same event. Laymen often complain the Petara are inventing the divination they find most appealing; the Petara merely smile knowingly and tell them to look closer for the signs are unmistakable.

The Irrigu

Barbarians of this tribe lead a life of determined short-sightedness, tending to ignore obstacles in their path, preferring to side-step, rather than confront. Sometimes, a person, once they are no longer blocking the Irrigu, are "remembered" and forgiven; others have found themselves in a kind of limbo with no Irrigu deigning to acknowledge them short of physical threat. Barbarians of this tribe practice a powerful art of rhetoric and divine portents through inspection of random speech. Many an ally has been confused when talking to a Irrigu friend as a simple turn of phrase is seen as a harbinger of things to come. Shamans often practice "tongue speaking" where they will babble incoherently for hours only to emerge later with astonishing insight.

The Levarin

The Levarin pay an inordinate amount of attention to magic and its effects especially when imbued in objects. Levarin are, by far, the likeliest to be scholars, templars, or adepts. Playing a delicate line between attraction and disgust, Levarin view Celestial Magic as one does a hypnotic snake. The extremely rare Celestial casters that emerge from the Barbarian tribes are nearly always a Levarin. Oddly, the Levarin do not practice any specific soothsaying and tend to follow one of the other tribes' mannerisms. Some few Levarin say they practice the true art of Oracle, but none are ever forthcoming and those who prod too closely find themselves the focus of Levarin ire and Ritual Magics.

Playing a Barbarian

A Barbarian is an outlander in every sense of the word. The Barbarian never feels comfortable, never feels that she "belongs" anywhere. Even in the wilderness, the Barbarian feels a stranger in an alien land. Simultaneously, Barbarians long to put down roots. It is these dual feelings of alienation and yearning that define the Barbarians and most distinguishes them from other races.

Barbarians are unhindered by any sense of discomfort or fear. They should be role-played as paragons of confidence and pride, though this does not mean they are necessarily boastful (although some are). They usually feel no need to brag as they are confident in their abilities and don't care if other people recognize it. They are unaffected by what others think of them.

Much of a Barbarian's life is wrapped up in how they develop and focus on their "superstition". The Barbarians' see these beliefs not as a weakness but as a source of strength. An auspicious omen can fill the Barbarian with confidence, while a bad omen might make her wary. The Barbarian should act out her superstitions and rituals with such bravado, with such utter self-assurance that other characters will wish to participate. You can choose from the listings above but they are by no means comprehensive and you should feel free to make up your own.

Costuming

Simply put, a Barbarian's costume should look "barbaric". They prefer to wear rough animal skins and leather, but even if they wear silks, they will create a garment that is dramatically wild in appearance. Good ideas can be found from researching the Mongols, Gauls, Cossacks, Australian Aborigines, and Native Americans. Although Barbarians have unnatural resistance to the elements, they still dress appropriately for the weather. Barbarians are not homogenous and style themselves in anything from voluminous robes to close fitting armor and clothing.

Celestial Magic

All Barbarians in the Sheltered Lands feel uneasy around Celestial magics, commonly calling it Sky Magic. Each Barbarian reacts to this feeling of differently: some seek to overcome it with exhaustive study; some tolerate in recognition of its benefits; others reject Celestial magic so strongly they dislike those who carry Celestial items or invoke its energy. Some Barbarian shamans do wield Celestial magic, but they are generally seen as walking a dangerous and destructive path.

Many Barbarians develop the ability to shrug off elemental forces (via Resist Element). Celestial practicing Shamans see it as a protective covering such as a blacksmith's apron; others are so opposed to Sky magics they reject it in their spirit and are able to shrug off the effects.

Biata

A race of incredibly strong emotions, the Biata are a rare sight within Gaden. Biata appear very similar to Humans except for sparse feathers growing from their hair and in place of eyebrows; some Biata also develop a griffon-like claw, but this is rare. Although this claw looks fierce, it is not strong enough to be used in combat and functions much like a hand. It is unknown where the Biata come from, or retire too, as those Biata seen are generally younger. Once a Biata develops past a certain age, they are drawn toward the mountains and most never return. Those few who do, refuse to talk about their journey even to their closest friends.

Like Stone Elves, Biata develop mental powers with age and experience. These powers are often used to heal mental trauma. Though it is rare, such powers can be misused, but the vast majority of Biata despise this practice and will go far out of their way to investigate and punish such abuses. Unlike Stone Elves, Biata are far from reserved, often wearing their emotions on their sleeve and utilizing this heightened emotional energy to achieve their goals.

Crimson Biata

Crimson Biata have red, orange, and yellow feather patterns and are known for being quick to anger and slow to calm. The majority of these Biata choose the warrior path as their anger fuels their battle prowess. Friends of Crimson Biata are often a calming influence, able to help the Biata maintain their balance and rein in their emotions. These Biata are fiercely loyal and will often fly into a rage to save endangered comrades or swear blood debts in vengeance for fallen friends.

Violet Biata

Displaying predominately darker feathers, generally blue, purple, or black, these are the most easy-going of the Biata. These Biata tend toward a group mentality and will go out of their way to be involved with people. They are often found working within groups, serving as guide, healer, or just good company, though not often as leader. This is not to say that these Biata do not hold strong beliefs or goals simply that their general nature tends toward consensus and group bonding instead of philosophical or political grandstanding.

Wild Biata

Loners and mercenaries, these white, grey, and tan feathered Biata are least likely to be seen working with others. In general, Wild Biata prefer to keep to themselves or within small groups of other Wilds. Despite this seeming misanthropy, their friends note them as pranksters and good-natured mischief makers. Wild Biata are highly capricious and shift their favoritism at random, showering one friend with affection or gifts at one moment, then suddenly shifting their attention to another. While their friendship can be a bit chaotic, and almost unfair at times, they have a way of always being there when necessary, and never forget who their “real” friends are.

Playing a Biata

Though Biata are more emotional than most races, they should be very linear in their approach to life. They are extreme and, to a non-Biata, eccentric in their viewpoints but they always follow a predictable personal code of conduct. Biata never do things “just for the heck of it”. Everything has a purpose and a meaning, even if others can’t figure out what that meaning is or even if that meaning is a random conglomeration of instance, coincidence, and caprice. This does not mean that you should play a Biata like a deranged Vulcan from *Star Trek*. Biata can have a wonderful sense of humor and experience all sorts of emotions, without thinking that these are illogical.

Biata are products of Earth magics and, as such, are very uncomfortable around Celestial magic. They should feel pain, discomfort, or extreme agitation when these spells are cast on or around them. How much discomfort is determined by the PC, but you must role-play **some** discomfort. Biata may receive plot penalties from knowingly using Celestially charged magic items. This does not mean a Biata will refuse to associate with those that wield such magics, only that they will be uncomfortable with its use around them and should avoid knowingly accepting Celestial spells except in extreme life or death situations. Wards, Wizard Locks, and Celestial Circles will also cause extreme discomfort. It is best to think of their aversion to Celestial magics as a kind of physical allergy, something neither feared nor hated but to be avoided.

Costuming

All Biata must have feathery eyebrows and many have similarly colored feathers in their hair and around their face, although this varies greatly from Biata to Biata. The feathers used for a Biata should consist of no more than three colors. If the standard Biata groups do not appeal to you, please contact the SoMN plot staff for assistance in selecting a color which reflects your Biata’s primary emotions. Biata often develop a single griffon like claw on one of their hands. This claw can be feathery or it can feature more elongated nails akin to an eagle’s claw.

The Biata’s eyebrows have to be feathers (faux, plastic feathers will do) attached with spirit gum. Don’t glue them directly on your eyebrows for it will be very hard to remove later. Glue just above them and let the feathers hang down. The feather must be easily visible twenty feet away - it has to be obvious to everyone that you’re playing a Biata. A popular technique is to create a “feather clump” and attach it to a liquid latex pad for easy spirit gum attachment and removal, this also helps maintain your feathers and makes them last much longer.

All Biata must carry a ‘Lodestone’, a small hematite stone that fits within their hand. More details on the Lodestone can be found within the specific race packet, but it is a requirement that all Biata players carry one with them.

Mental Abilities

Biata mental abilities are a great role-playing experience, but don’t expect every NPC to be affected. The average monster-mind is slippery and difficult to handle, and will often produce nothing more than an immediate understanding of events. Also remember that any player can choose to be unaffected by mental abilities; this inability to connect should not be taken as the character refusing the mental connection as the choice is made entirely Out of Game. Mental abilities are measured by the number of racial abilities purchased. Players who exercise their mental abilities with abandon should expect to be noticed as prodigies are rare.

Dark Elves

The Dark Elves of the Sheltered Lands are an enigmatic group, few people in Gaden know much about them beyond rumor and conjecture. Dark skinned with white hair, this race is one of the easiest to recognize, when you can find them at all. Although they are not numerically rare, Dark Elves do not consort with other races often. What little is known about them suggests their home is far to the southwest of Gaden beyond the open plains. The distance to their homeland ensures few Dark Elves choose to travel beyond their borders, and fewer outsiders still choose to seek their kingdom. Nonetheless, as Dark Elves are known to always keep their word of honor many nobles and traders specifically seek out Dark Elves, above any other, for “delicate” assignments. Of course, finding one willing to swear on his honor can be difficult at best.

Dark Elves are ruled by houses. Each member is aware of his or her house and their position within. When members of different houses interact, it is the house’s ranking which takes precedent, not the individual. Thus, the Matron of a small house will give way to even a minor member of a greater house. Delineation between houses is not an exact science, but acting above one’s house carries severe repercussions and refusing orders from a greater house can result in death. Such authority carries risks, however. For example, if a great house demands a dishonorable act of a lesser, then the rulers of the greater house will personally exact punishment on the greater member – punishment often in excess of what would normally be expected.

House Roiyaru

One of the most ancient and powerful houses, even many outsiders recognize this name. Currently the presiding authority of the home lands, House Roiyaru came to power so long ago that only consulting the most ancient of tomes could hope to pinpoint a date. One of the prime beliefs of this house is that Dark Elves are descended from an ancient line of Black Dragons, and as such are far superior to other races. While most houses will be practical in their belief of superiority, members of this house tend to be blunt and brutally honest in the way they perceive the “lesser” races.

House Kariudo

A lesser known house, members from House Kariudo are the most common house to be seen within the lands of Gaden. House Karuido believes its best course of action for earning greater stature and power within Dark Elf society is to make alliances with other races. This house is most willing to work with outsiders to accomplish their goals, which can range anywhere from gathering information to accumulating powerful trinkets or scrolls.

House Soruja

An old and respected house, House Soruja contains a higher than average number of battle hardened warriors. Despite their fierce nature, this house rarely offers assistance without the promise of great rewards. House Soruja is content to watch history unfold unless they are directly threatened.

House Chiryoku

Rarely seen, this minor house earns mentioning only because they pen the vast majority of historical publications within Dark Elf society. They are accepted as the keepers of history and law and are often called upon as arbiters. They are treated with great respect.

Playing a Dark Elf

The primary requirement for the Dark Elf race is a dedication to honor. Their law, their culture, their daily rituals, everything in a Dark Elf's life is based on the rigid and labyrinthine concept of honor. Once their word is given, or a promise made, a Dark Elf will follow it to the letter; because of this, they never give their word lightly. Though they might seek loopholes or conflicting verbiage in fulfilling their oaths they will never break it. Swearing upon their honor, or by the honor of their family, is the most solemn of Dark Elf oaths. Of course, being oath-bound does not stop a Dark Elf from lying. There are times when lying is considered the honorable thing to do, especially when subjecting oneself to personal dishonor will replenish or uphold house honor.

Dark Elves are absolutely certain their race is superior to all others, and they must display this absolute dedication to their race at all times. This does not mean that Dark Elves constantly spit on every other race or that they go about treating others as slaves. Dark Elves sometime choose to ally with other races and treat them with an appropriate level of respect, but it is often the respect given a competent servant or a cherished pet. Some Dark Elves are obvious and vocal in their bigotry, while others are quiet and prudent. Regardless, Dark Elves will never betray their race or prefer another race to their own if there is ever a choice.

When Dark Elves are above ground, they do their best to follow local laws as to do otherwise might bring attention and possible dishonor upon themselves and their family. Some Dark Elves choose to gain significant status or become heroic figures among the lesser races. Although such accolades from lesser races are of little importance to them, they can be useful in achieving Dark Elf goals.

Honor

Dark Elves believe passionately in honor and their race. They react to insults strongly, requiring that honor be satisfied. They will rarely resort to shouting matches or useless posturing as they take matters of honor too seriously for petty bickering. Satisfaction can range from public duels to "revenge served cold" after months of planning. The few serious inter-racial friendships that form are usually "blood brothers" or revenge co-conspirators. When a Dark Elf makes such a pact, they will guard their friend's life like their own. Bonding with a Dark Elf over issues of honor is the only way another race can really know a Dark Elf.

Costuming

Dark Elves must have pointed ears, black skin, and white or silver hair. The best black makeup is generally water-based, pancake powder. Cream-based makeup looks oily, rubs off on everything, and requires special makeup remover. Pancake is resistant to rubbing, resistant to running in cold water (like rain), comes off with soap and warm water, and lets your skin breathe more than the cream-based makeup. Ben Nye is an excellent brand and can be found in most theatrical stores or off numerous websites.

The Dark Elf makeup requirements are some of the most extreme of any race, with the possible exception of Sarr and some Wilderkyn. These requirements are non-negotiable and must be followed.

Dryads

The Dryads of the Sheltered Lands, or the “Children of Autumn”, began reawakening perhaps fifty years ago from a century, or possibly millennia, long slumber. The cause of this awakening is unknown, even to the friendly and cooperative Dryads. What is known is that Dryads have always been part of the Sheltered Lands, their presence has always been felt in the subconscious mind of Gaden. Appearing to be at least partially vegetable, all Dryads have shown the ability to avoid being bound in any way, as well as an aversion to thick metal armor. When asked about their desires, most claim they are searching for First Forest, but few Dryads seem to undertake this task with any feeling of urgency. Most are simply living their lives in the belief that First Forest will present itself in due time.

Bark Skins

By far, the most common of the Dryads, Bark Skins emerge from forests. They often sport bark-like skin and other tree-like characteristics, including leaves and the occasional blossom. Bark Skin Dryads are patient and approach most situations in a philosophical manner; Bark Skins are well aware that forests take an incredibly long time to grow and are content to wait. Despite their preference for the long view, these Dryads are quick to prevent defoliation of natural areas, especially those that include forests.

Reedlyn

Reedlyn, not to be confused with Scavengers, come primarily from shallow bodies of water and the vast grassy plains of the Sheltered Lands. Generally, one of the most flowery in appearance, many Reedlyn are known for their compassion and ability to love without discrimination; the only exception to their amorous proclivities are those of an unnatural bent, including undead, the Corrupt, and Necromancers. Many of the Reedlyn Dryads devote themselves to Earth magic, although most avoid using Binding spells whenever possible. Perhaps due to their affinity with flowers, Reedlyn produce inordinate number of skilled alchemists and potion makers.

Fungrens

Fungrens, despite their fungal origins and odious name, are often quite attractive. Their facial features can be colorful and dynamically patterned with delicate vine-like fungi wreathing their limbs. They don't have specific birthing grounds as Fungrens can spawn anywhere plants can grow. As a group, these Dryads are adventurous and energetic, seeming never to tire of what they find interesting, be it crafting, exploring, or simply talking with others. Unfortunately, Fungrens often have trouble finding groups that will accept them as many people in the Sheltered Lands are unnerved by their strange growths and fungal-like appearance.

Playing a Dryad

All Dryads have a slightly inhuman nature, although this comes out differently depending on their origin. Many of the longer lived Dryads have a very calm approach to life as they know every defeat can be overcome given concerted effort; they rarely see anything as an emergency. Their patience does not mean they will hesitate to prevent corruption or to avert the use of Chaos, but they will approach failure with calm, instead of despair, and resolutely begin to reverse defeat. Other Dryads are quite mischievous, very similar to nymphs or other woodland spirits, although lacking nymphs' desire to lead people into danger. These Autumn Children are easily disappointed and prone to bouts

of depression; however, like their longer-lived cousins, they will always rebound and reapply their efforts to success.

Regardless of their innate nature, most outsiders have trouble understanding a Dryad's willingness to be content existing. Few Dryads feel a driving need to accomplish things quickly, instead taking a millennial view of events. They are content with existing and making small improvements in their lives and areas. Dryads like to whittle down problems, one burrowing vine at a time. They deal with the smallest issues first before moving onto the next largest, and so on. This approach is maddening to many other races and can lead to heated one-sided discussions.

Elder Dryads often develop unique powers which entwine them closely with the forest and other plant life. While younger Dryads can sometimes, for a short time, develop similar powers, they are uncontrolled and ephemeral. These elders are revered and sought out not only by the local Dryad population but often by Wilderkyn, High Ogres, and even some Barbarian tribes.

Costuming

Dryads predominantly wear earth tones as they wish to blend into their environment. Black, grey, brown, green, burgundy, and cinnamon are common. Their foliage often changes with the seasons and can vary greatly from event to event. Their armor is made of natural (non-metal) materials. Makeup for Dryads varies greatly and anything from floral designs on the face to full bark-like makeup is acceptable as long as it is nature-inspired. Any colors may be used as long it is obvious the character is not of any other race (cannot be completely yellow like a High Orc, for example).

The player must have a plant like prosthetic of some form adorning their body: leaves/flowers/vines in their hair or wrapped around a limb is acceptable as long as it doesn't inhibit or endanger movement; costuming may not consist only of makeup. These adornments should vary in color or pattern as the seasons change. While Dryads change their clothing depending on the season, this is usually done for aesthetics or function and not from any sense of modesty.

Dryads have an aversion to metal and should, whenever possible, avoid metal grommets and other similar accessories. Dryads will sometimes wear garments made by others race which exhibit metal, but they will not generally not include them when fashioning their own clothing. While small amounts of metal, such as coins, won't interfere with the flow of the Dryad's energy, larger amounts, such as armor or thousands of coin, will distract and irritate the Dryad.

Dwarves

The Dwarves of the Sheltered Lands have been scattered for many years. What caused this diaspora has been lost to history but it is known the Corrupt were not the prime issue. Many Dwarf clans are locked in battle merely to maintain the land they still hold. Other clans have integrated themselves into existing countries offering their services as warriors or artisans to earn their keep.

The few remaining autonomous Dwarven settlements lay within the mountains of northeast Gaden. The settlement is a complex series of exterior steppes and interior caverns delving deep into the mountain's heart. The Dwarves find great security in their underground citadel and store their greatest treasures deep within the stone. Rumors abound of ancient chambers which glow with the light of arcane forges made from incredibly rare gems. However, these rumors are quickly dismissed as no living soul has admitted to seeing them in over five hundred years.

The Kutorian

Making their home in the northeastern mountains of Gaden, the Kutorian are one of the most notorious, but least seen, of the Dwarven clans. Their weapons are widely considered indestructible as they were developed in an extended conflict with a caustic skinned race. These weapons are rare and costly and are most often given to skilled warriors as a gift for outstanding service or heroic action. A few nobles or wealthy merchants have managed to finagle or steal a Kutorian blade, but they are more often ridiculed than lauded for such accomplishments. A Kutorian Dwarf will value bravery in battle and loyalty to allies over almost any other concern. Many Kutorian Dwarves are considered unsociable even by their closest allies as they do not quickly warm up to other races.

The Regarion

Regarion Dwarves range the length and breadth of Gaden, but make their homes in small camps on the central plains. Far closer to merchants than their brethren, these Dwarves trade finished goods for raw materials. Regarion go far out of their way for rare minerals such as True Silver or Metheran (a dark, heavy metal with unique properties). Most other Dwarven clans considered Regarion to be far too sociable; other races are often surprised at how friendly and approachable Regarion can be.

The Mirunican

The Mirunican have no permanent home, but instead moves in family caravans offering their services as crafters or warriors to those willing to pay. This clan has become scarce of late as many of them have been lost to the Corrupt, and the remaining majority are hired by the Monolithic Council. While they are naturally skilled at blacksmithing like any other Dwarves, warriors of this clan focus instead on their natural resilience and forgo training in blacksmithing beyond the bare necessities.

Playing a Dwarf

Anyone can play a Dwarf, even the excessively tall or thin. Dwarves, being much stockier and muscular than most races, are a proud race of fierce warriors who refuse to take guff from anyone, even when their opponents are much larger! Since their life span is longer than that of most other races (up to 500 years or so), they approach tasks at a plodding yet methodical pace and are meticulous about detail almost to the point of obsession. However, they are quick and decisive when it comes to any type of warfare. To them, battle is the path to glory and they quickly embrace conflict, especially when it is in defense of their race, their friends, or their ideals. Dwarves pride themselves on their craftsmanship, be it smithing or anything else. Their creations are the most

finely wrought and sought after artifacts in all of Fortannis, and they are well aware of it. Dwarves do not take kindly to criticism and more than a few bones have been broken over commentary on a sloppy weld.

As mentioned above, Dwarves are proud craftsmen and relentless warriors who go out of their way to defend their own. Their feelings of clan loyalty will often extend to the adventuring parties who prove themselves to be exceptionally trustworthy and honorable. Earning a Dwarf's friendship is an arduous task, but to have one as a friend is to have a true friend for life. Contrary to popular belief, Dwarves are capable of exhibiting a wide range of emotions, but are very reluctant to do so amongst strangers or even short-term acquaintances. This guarded emotional state often comes across as aloofness, gruffness, or worse, arrogance, especially to those whom Dwarves do not consider being "serious enough" to begin with.

Dwarves marry for life and have no concept of divorce. Their courtships are long, drawn-out affairs, often taking decades to consummate with each partner swearing monogamy for the duration. A Dwarf's heart is nothing to be trifled with, and when given, it is without reservation for life. Such marriages are a source of great pride for Dwarves and are to be remembered with pride and honour. When a Dwarf meets a stranger for the first time, they will often recite their lineage going as far back as they can remember and boast of not only their ancestor's great deeds but of their wedding gifts.

Costuming

First and foremost, Dwarves must sport beards! No self respecting Dwarf, male or female, would ever be seen out and about without a full beard. Societal and guild rank is often denoted by the length and intricacy of the braids in their beards. Female dwarves must also have beards, and although they are often noticeably shorter, they are never shorn in any way (no goatees, for example). Dwarves that do not sport beards are often mocked and shunned by others, for a beardless Dwarf is a shamed Dwarf. Dwarves on Honor Quests often keep their beards shorter than usual to remind them of their mission.

If you have a real beard, you must braid it so that it is clear that you are a dwarf and not merely a bearded human. If your beard is not long enough to braid, then you must wear a fake beard over your real one. In clothing, Dwarves favor earth-based colors and with various metals for aesthetic as well as defensive purposes. They also often incorporate their clan symbol somewhere on their person for all to see.

Elves

Once one of the strongest races, legends speak of the ancient Elven empires as places of great learning and peace. Little is known about their downfall, save that it was the result of some internal conflict. While there are small settlements and lone Elves within Gaden, the majority inhabit the vast open grasslands that lie to the southwest. As a group, Elves seem to avoid Gaden and the few that do come into the country are generally younger and not privy to much of their people's history. Little is known about the old Elven empires, not even where they existed. Those elders that might remember are close-lipped, not even sharing the tales with their younger members. The one accepted truth about the old empires is that Elves can never return, even if they knew where to find them.

The Quelie

The Quelie are an enigmatic group of mystics who choose, every eight to ten years, to relocate their entire clan to another location. The Quelie's magic is so powerful that any area they settle seems to be drained of magic with their passing. This drain prevents the Circles in the area from being used for Ritual Magic for many years after the group moves on. Although this drain does not usurp an Earth Circle's power of Resurrection or a Celestial Circle's power of Identification, it does weaken the barrier which would normally protect those within. Possessing many extremely old and Arcane Ritual Magics, this group protects it many warriors with multiple enchantments. Not surprisingly, most Elven adventurers of this group have a strong focus on magic, either Earth or Celestial.

The Kam-Alua

Known for their extremely complicated yet dependable machinery, this group of Elves has been attempting to rediscover their past for centuries. They are well known for their mammoth and amazingly effective siege equipment; unfortunately these engines are so cost prohibitive as to make them more oddities than proper gear for conquest. Though Kam-Alua are understandably proud of their accomplishments, they live in the shadow of their history as they believe the machines of the past far surpass the present age. The technology of the ancient Elves has been elevated to near mythical status and most believe they approached, or even surpassed, a Dragon's abilities. Most Elves from this group are studious and choose to invest time and effort into research and history; some of them are able to handle themselves in a fight, but they are generally far more interested in tinkering and learning how things work.

The Sagitari

A comparatively young group, the Sagitari came into existence a few years after the great exodus from the old Elven lands. Disgusted by the mistakes of the past, this group swears to do as much good as they can for the land in penance for the damage their people caused. While they encompass all classes and professions, a large number choose a martial approach, with an inordinate number of archers among them. Their natural aptitude for the bow makes them quite feared by those who have faced them before. When not banding together with their brothers, the Sagitari hire themselves out as mercenaries to carefully chosen employers or adventuring groups; even when employed, they follow their underlying principles of always repairing the land and doing no harm to the Earth.

Playing an Elf

Elves are an incredibly varied people, much like Humans. Their skin tone, hair and eye color, and build have the same range as Humans – although they occasional have an odd eye color such as violet or gold. Elves vary in cultures and traditions, but not in the rudimentary function of their minds, bodies, or general abilities. Dark Elves are a separate race and therefore have different abilities. Elves are very interested in the natural patterns of life. Whether they live on mountains, in swamps, sail the seas, or wander the deserts, they are very aware of natural events and they pattern their celebrations and lives around them. Solstices, equinoxes, phases of the Moon, harvests, seasons, and the like are carefully noted by Elves and given special attention.

Elves have an extended natural life span. They mature more slowly than Humans, then remain in maturity for many years. An Elf that appears old is very old indeed. The actual range of their lifespan is unknown but it seems to be affected by the life different Elves lead. Groups that live in very harsh environments may only live two or three times as long as Humans; others seem to go on forever unless they are actually slain. PC Elves should not start older than 150 years, because it makes little sense for them to be so unskilled after such a long life. Due to their long lifespans, Elves live at a different pace than Humans. They are less likely to hurry, unless it is necessary, taking the time to savor and enjoy everything that happens. The Human drive to achieve greatness quickly and pass it on to their family is much less common among Elves who feel they have all the time in the world to achieve their goals. Those Elves who harbor a desire for power or other machinations will create very long term plans, often beyond the comprehension of the shorter-lived races. This leads to a subtlety that is difficult for the other races to foresee or counteract.

Costuming

Elves absolutely must have pointed ears. If a headscarf is tied over the ears, the pointed ears must still be worn underneath. This means it is not acceptable to just hide the ears and not apply the prosthetics with the idea that they won't be seen. If the ears aren't pointed, the character is not an Elf.

Elves in the Sheltered Lands

All Elves within the Sheltered Lands share the knowledge of an ancient mistake that they refuse to discuss with other races or even Elves from outside the Mists. This mistake is often referred to obliquely, and is only discussed with outsiders if they are known and trusted friends. Such discussions are held behind a Ward at the very least, and usually only within a known stronghold where there is no chance of it being overheard. Each Elf deals with this knowledge differently: members of the Sagitari tend to take this knowledge as a personal burden to atone for; members of the Quelie tend to regard it as a simple additional fact in a long history; members of the Kam-Alua tend to feel strongly on the matter, either ignoring it, or obsessing over it.

Most Elves in Gaden are seen in small bands or alone and often away from their clan. The Quelie and the Sagitari are the most common, and often serve as mercenaries, or mystical muscle. Occasionally a Quelie will step up to lead a group of non-Elves in an adventuring group, or guild. Most Elves in a position of authority have inherited the position after the previous holder's retirement or Final death. Most Elves seek neither glory nor power and are content to pursue their personal aims or support others in their pursuits.

Gypsies

Gypsy tribes can be found throughout the Sheltered Lands with diverse cultures and customs. The Gypsies of the Sheltered Lands are considered to be a jolly people, throwing grand parties with much raucous celebration. Generally, they travel from place to place, living off the land or trading for necessities. They gather the stories and legends of every community they touch and have become the orators of the Sheltered Lands. Their tales are a colorful tapestry of times past and myths lost. Many Gypsy caravans stage productions or theatrics of the events recorded by their tribes. Some welcome the Gypsies with their wildly colored clothing and embrace their stories, others disagree viewing the Gypsy as wandering bands of hooligans and ne'erdo wells.

Fratier

The members of this family value the fraternity of their own kind just as any other Gypsy, but they will often take this bond to an extreme level. Their familial bond goes above and beyond the connection that all Gypsies share and approaches that of obsession. Known as the Union, this bond is rarely given more than once in a lifetime. It is important to note that while the Union is often found between spouses they are not the same as the bonds of marriage and many married men and women will have a Union with another. The ceremony recognizing the Union is always unique to the individuals involved and always demands a great test of trust. An example of this ritual might be two potential "brothers" wandering into the desert, each with the other's only canteen of water; they must traverse the desert together each trusting the other to ration water. If one were to drink his brother's canteen neither would make it to the other side. Only through willpower and trust can they survive the desert and cement the Union. It is often said that after this ritual if you were to cut one brother the other would bleed for him.

Valde Venator

When the first great tribe disbanded, one of the shattered groups rose to become great hunters. This tribe has focused many of its effort on the struggle against the Corrupt. They constantly seek great prey to hone their skills and often find the greatest among the Corrupt. These Gypsies find honor and pride in the hunt and, once selecting a target, would rather die than give up their prey. The Valde are often viewed as more dour than the typical Gypsy. While they are certainly more focused, the main reason for this misconception is most outsiders don't understand the strict nature of the family's customs and rules. Valde are quick to take insult when an outsider acts inappropriately, and refuse to explain themselves to those who have offended them. Mostly, the Valde take insult at exclusion or discourtesy, for example: declining an invitation to a party or gathering is seen as a great insult. One of the more misconstrued traditions is that of gift-giving: Valde will offer those they find worthy an ostentatious and expensive gift, one far beyond the merit of the recipient's action. Such offers are not strictly for the recipients benefit, but are instead a way for the Gypsy to show her personal prowess and earn prestige for the Gypsy, and by extension the family. Declining such a gift will almost surely earn the Valde's ire, unfortunately many unfamiliar with this family discover this too late.

Afaji

Often described as being extremely shrewd traders and occasionally thieves, it is said an Afaji will sell you a cart while their sister steals your horse. Despite their reputation, the Afaji have a strong sense of loyalty. While they may indeed steal and swindle at every opportunity, they will also be true to anyone they've chosen as a friend. Of all the Gypsy groups, they are the most likely to build lasting friendships with outsiders, although such friendships take time and are

often strained by the various "pranks" an Afaji will play. The largest stumbling block is usually how possessive Afaji become over the small items they've liberated from those whose company they enjoy; this liberation is not considered theft, but a way of bonding.

Playing a Gypsy

Being a Gypsy means being a member of the largest extended family in the world. Every Gypsy is a member of the same family, whether immediately related or not, even Gypsies who might belong to different tribes. This familial bond is not simply a learned trait resulting from culture, it is a function of biology. It is an in-born instinct that every Gypsy possesses, whether the Gypsy is raised by other Gypsies or by the *gaje* (non-Gypsy races). A Gypsy raised by Elves will feel this bond to other Gypsies. An Elf raised among Gypsies might love the race, as one would love an adoptive family, but will not feel the reassuring tug of the bond, (referred to among the Gypsies as *sumadja*, or the "inheritance").

Because the *sumadja* compels Gypsies to place family concerns above all others, Gypsies have a hard time accepting positions of responsibility in *gaje* institutions such as governments and guilds. At some point, no matter how well-intentioned Gypsies may be, conflicts will arise between their familial duties and their civil responsibilities. Inevitably, the Gypsy leaves the position of responsibility rather than suffer the family's scorn. This does not mean Gypsies hate non-Gypsies. On the contrary, Gypsies happily accept companionship from any individual of any race who could be called a friend or even spouse. The life of a wanderer can be lonely, particularly for as social a creature as the Gypsy. Such non-Gypsies can be "adopted" into the family (and are called *rai*), although the Gypsy will generally let the *rai* know that if the Gypsy must choose between *rai* and *familia*, the *familia* will win. As close as Gypsies and *gaje* may become, *gaje* are simply not family and will never know the tug of the *sumadja*.

Costuming

Gypsies prefer to wear flamboyantly colored, loosely fitted clothing, scarves and veils. Gypsies take great pleasure in flaunting the relatively conservative conventions of other races. Jewelry jingles from ears, noses, ankles, and clothing, and noise usually accompanies an arriving Gypsy. Let's face it, Gypsies love attention! Oddly enough female Gypsies tend to dress surprisingly modestly, with baggy pants or skirts that cover their ankles. However, all Gypsies must possess an exotic accent to make sure the character is not confused for a Human.

Gypsies in the Sheltered Lands

Gypsies are the race most willing to welcome their brethren from outside of the Mists as *sumadja* is just as strong with traveling Gypsies as those locally born. They are equally as accepting of other races that cross the Mist barrier, perhaps due to their own transient and nomadic tendencies. Most gypsies view the lands outside the Mist as just another place where one can walk.

Unlike most races, Gypsies are well aware the Corrupt are wide-spread and that their darkness has been increasing over the last few decades. Many Gypsies have become little more than roaming hunting parties, maintaining an air of celebration while making surgical strikes against the Corrupt or the occasional undead. The extermination of a high priority target is considered family business with *gaje* relegated to the role of support. Although this is a local tradition, and may not hold for non Gaden Gypsies, *gaje* are expected to respect the tradition of *familia*.

High Ogres

High Ogres are a nomadic people who are attuned to the land. They travel the grasslands in small tribes. Each tribe is led by a high chief and a high shaman who are generally the most powerful members of that tribe. High Ogre culture is steeped in tradition and ritual. One of their primary rituals is the annual Spirit Awakening. Once a year, in a special, and secret location, every tribe's high shaman convenes to discuss the land, their people, and to name new high chiefs. The High Ogre population has dwindled over the years, so when the tribes unite for the Spirit Awakening, it is a time of festivity and celebration. After the ritual concludes, the tribes separate for safety, each going their own way for another year. Another important tradition is all High Ogres are taught to never approach the intersection of the three great rivers. The reason has been lost to time, but all High Ogres feel this compulsion deep within their spirit.

High Ogres are a very strong and combative people. Most disagreements are settled by a trial at arms. Using magic during a duel is seen as a sign of weakness and is avoided by all but the most powerful shaman whose rank in the tribe is assured regardless of the duel's outcome. Despite their combative heritage, High Ogres are generally able to restrain themselves while in outsider's kingdoms and manage to respect their "silly" laws.

The Aerie

The Aerie are one of only two known tribes of High Ogres, although stories tell of other tribes either lost or missing. The Aerie are fierce fighters, known for their strength and quickness. Preferring to fight with two weapons, or two-handed weapons, these High Ogres fight in a deadly blur, striking their opponents in a dervish of deadly attacks. The few shamans from this tribe tend to specialize in Celestial spells, wielding bolts of eldritch fire and lightning, although even the most devoted shaman will wield some type of weapon. When not fighting, these High Ogres are quiet and seemingly contemplative. Occasionally, one will find an Aerie simply resting in a field listening to the wind. Like all High Ogres, the Aerie have an affinity for nature and claim that the wind brings them words from the world.

The Erudan

The Erudan are the other well known tribe of High Ogres. Unlike the Aerie, they do not have a well-defined fighting style and instead use a variety of weapons and tactics. Erudan feel close to nature and find special meaning in the movement of water. Occasionally, even the busiest Erudan will stop by a lake, river, or any body of water to observe the ripples. The spell casters from this tribe are commonly known to use Earth magic, although they rarely choose to employ Curses for reasons passing understanding to anyone, even that of the Erudan. Those few Erudan shamans who overcome their innate aversion to Curses are eyed with distaste but generally accepted.

Playing a High Ogre

Duels are constant among High Ogres. To them it's a way of defending their arguments, determining who's fit to lead the tribe, settling family and tribal disputes, proving one's maturity, and choosing a mate (this works for both genders). The duel is not for honor exclusively, but is meant to observe status, prove a point, conduct rituals, to show off skill, or just to have a good brawl.

This does not necessarily mean a High Ogre will duel every person she meets. The right circumstances must be in place and the laws of outsiders must be observed. This often means that offense from outsiders must be suffered silently. Of course, there is only so much torment a High Ogre can suffer before her natural inclinations overtake her courtesy.

High Ogres are reserved around other races and tend to warm up to outsiders only after traveling with them for a time. Their regular personality is boisterous, proud, and excited to face new challenges. They are often bored with intellectual mumbo jumbo, and tend to spend their time between battles looking for a good drink and fine comrades.

High Ogres are often misconstrued as dumb because of their racial difficulty in comprehending scholarly skills. The abstract concepts of reading and writing do not come easily to them. They also find it difficult to grasp abstract concepts like the Code of Chivalry, nobility, and political intrigue. They speak in simple phrases and have great difficulty with words that have ambiguous meaning or are unnecessarily technical. This tendency toward simplicity is less stupidity and more the ability to see to the heart of a matter. High Ogres excel at piercing obfuscation and sniffing out falsehood. They see races who tend toward flowery language as weak since they need to hide behind their words.

Costuming

High Ogres are similar in appearance and physiology to that of a monster-variety Ogre. They have yellow skin and protruding lower teeth. Unlike the Ogre, they grow in all sizes, although smaller High Ogres often find themselves proving their fighting ability more often than the larger ones. High Ogres with long hair tend to tie it back and keep their beards trimmed. They often wear pelts and animal skins, but do not have to look primitive in appearance.

Natural Attunement

High Ogres have an innate understanding of the land's ecology. Different High Ogre tribes have different legends concerning the origins of this ability, but it is always integral to their being. They can tell when something is going to shift the balance of nature such as: natural disasters, man-made disturbances, open rifts, plagues, and animal, plant, and creature imbalances. They have a keen understanding of when the delicate balance of predator/prey is off.

Occasionally, plot may provide a High Ogre player with signs and portents. Rarely do any but High Ogre shamans have a success uncovering the exact meaning of these signs with any certainty. Generally, noticing a mystical sign is enough to put a High Ogre on high alert. Some examples might be the High Ogre developing a cough a few hours before a large fire, or smelling rotting flesh everywhere he goes in an area. Unfortunately, this attunement seems either non-existent or totally meaningless in lands controlled by the Corrupt.

High Orcs

The High Orcs of the Sheltered Lands have long been centered within the country of Pratorak, although plenty travel beyond their borders to find new challenges, fame, and interesting things to eat. While they are technically the ruling class of Pratorak, most High Orcs have little love for administrative duties and leave most of the day to day operations to others. Known for their strength, High Orcs are both famed and feared for their skill in battle. While High Orcs are attracted to battle, and it often forms the core of their lives, they are no less intelligent than the other races. With shorter than Human average life spans, few living much past their fortieth year, many races see the High Orcs as impatient and quick to choose force to accomplish their goals. When two High Orcs disagree or come to odds, there will often be a ritualized battle for dominance, with the loser accepting the dominance of the winner. These duels are usually restricted to High Orcs, however sometimes challenges from other races will be accepted in the case of a trusted, or long term, friend. Despite their fierce nature, two High Orcs meeting for the first time will generally become fast friends unless there is some significant disagreement between them.

Most High Orcs seen in Gaden migrated during the peak years of the alliance between Gaden and Pratorak when travel between the two lands was far easier. Occasionally, a High Orc will appear on the borders of Gaden, but such High Orcs are almost always young and not well-informed as to the current state of Pratorak.

The Green Hammer Tribe

Historically, the strongest of the High Orc tribes, this tribe has the closest relationship with the Stone Elves of Pratorak. As can be expected of any High Orc tribe, Green Hammers are well-known for their ferocity and strength in battle. Beyond this, however, they are well-known for their self-sufficiency and their ability to accomplish goals with little help. Green Hammer High Orcs treat their superior's orders as unquestionable goals which must be accomplished regardless of cost, save the use of Chaos. Although most members of this tribe have a strong sense of honor, they fully believe that the end justifies the means and won't hesitate to remove any obstacles to their goals. This has caused more than a few diplomatic incidents in the recent history between Pratorak and Gaden.

The Stone Arm Tribe

Populating much of the standing forces of Pratorak, the Stone Arm tribe is known for their indomitable will. While their skill in battle should not be discounted, their true strength comes from never backing down from a battle, regardless of the cost. Known to fight to their very last, it was a group of Stone Arms who were the final line during the siege of Kalmoke's Anvil. The group defending the Anvil held it for nearly an entire day against extraordinary odds, paying an enormous cost in life. Of the three dozen High Orcs in the final holding force, all but two died permanently that day. The remaining two became honored chieftains within the tribe. Of the two, one died a few years later from unknown causes and it is assumed the other continued to lead his tribe. However, since the lines of communication were cut off twenty years ago, if this High Orc chieftain is still alive then he is surely in the twilight of his life.

Playing a High Orc

It is a common misconception that High Orcs are stupid. They are no less intelligent than any other race, but their culture and perceptions are such that they appear unintelligent to those who do not understand their ways. The only concepts that a High Orc's mind really has trouble with are writing, bureaucracy, and organized science. It is possible for a High Orc to learn such things but it requires much more concentration and work than it is usually worth. If your High Orc character tries to learn such things, you can role play difficulty concentrating and little patience, but if you spend the build to learn the skill you can do it just as well as anyone else. A High Orc is not much of a forward-thinker or a schemer. Once they develop a not-too-involved plan, they usually stick to it. Also, High Orcs use physical means to accomplish their goal whenever possible. In High Orc culture, "Might Makes Right" is not a philosophy, it is fact.

No matter how your character began, all High Orcs love battle. In the beginning it's acceptable for the character to be tentative, especially when dealing with an obviously more powerful foe, but all High Orcs love a good fight. They feel that to die on the field of battle is the most honorable thing one can accomplish in his or her own lifetime. No matter what your character's class, a High Orc will prefer battle to surrender and an honest fight to an underhanded trick. It is almost unheard of for a High Orc to be a pacifist, even if he or she was raised in Human society. One might exist somewhere in the world, but they would be looked on with disgust by other High Orcs.

High Orcs tend to follow the path of the warrior, largely because it is what they are bred for. However, there are representatives of all classes among the High Orc clans. Earth scholars and templars are very important to the race for they provide healing and the written word. Scholars also serve as ambassadors to the other races which live near the clan. Rogues are trained and valued as scouts for the war parties. The only class you are not likely to see are Celestial casters simply because of the great difficulty involved in learning that type of magic. According to High Orc superstition, all Celestial casters of their race are born during the Winter solstice, as it is the longest night and the stars have the greatest influence.

Costuming

High Orcs must wear makeup. All High Orcs, male and female, wear green make-up on their face and have protruding tusks. Other make-up, used to represent war paint, is optional. An example of this is the black streamers that certain clans wear across their eyes. If you choose to create a clan, you can also create your own style of war paint. Regardless, the base color of a High Orc is green and all exposed flesh should be that color. Many High Orc players often wear tight fitting green clothing to help reduce the amount of makeup needed.

Having tusks for your High Orc is a racial requirement. Each PC should make an attempt at creating his or her own set of High Orc teeth. To avoid being toothless on a weekend, it is suggested that you make a few extra sets in the event your first set is broken. Many people use Friendly Plastic to make their tusks. More details can be found from a newbie marshal, or within the High Orc race packet.

Humans

Humans are, by far, the most common race within Fortanis and are often seen as a baseline against which all other races are measured. Being so numerous, it is hard to pin down this race or any real racial traits. Lacking any racial advantage, and the longer life-span many other races enjoy, Humans compensate with an adventurous spirit. Known for breeding quickly and pushing the limits of their boundaries, many races regard Humans with a wary eye, convinced that so much energy focused in so many directions is bound to cause serious and unforeseen problems. Others point out that Humans are noble, hardworking, gracious, and often on the front-lines of just conflicts.

Regardless of Humans' nature, it cannot be denied they have a tendency to sway events and history by sheer numbers alone, if nothing else. Within both Roskaria and Gaden, Humans hold many high offices and lead not only themselves but many other races against the Corrupt onslaught. Ultimately, any Human must be judged on a case by case basis, as it is almost impossible to predict how this race will react in any given situation. Some historians suggest self-preservation is their primary motivation, while others point to heroism. Humans have also shown a great ability to adapt to their situations and surroundings. Those in peaceful lands will be traders, artists, and philosophers, while those in more warlike areas will generally be warriors, blacksmiths, and strategists. By no means is this a hard and fast rule, for even in the most peaceful of lands there will be warriors, and even in the most hard pressed battle there will be traders or philosophers.

The Humans of Roskaria

Wealthy, pampered, and generally content, the Humans of Roskaria are the most likely to follow their own desires. Many are employed as soldiers or scouts, and they have developed a well-practiced army within their valley. However, they are usually less experienced in combat than the warriors in Gaden or the outlying wilderness. Many Humans born in Roskaria become very wealthy as traders or engineers, building great estates for the nobility. In fact, many of the Human nobles in Roskaria gained their rank and fame from building homes for other nobles. There is some minor resentment among this group as a Human has never been elected King of Roskaria.

The Humans of Gaden

After centuries of holding the Corrupt at bay, the Humans of Gaden have become some of the Sheltered Land's finest warriors and generals. Most Humans born in Gaden are strongly encouraged to take up weapons or to support the war effort in some way. Even scholars or historians are employed in the war effort as their information has proven invaluable many times over. Gaden Human traders are, in general, rough and rugged and willing to fight bandits, beasts, or the occasional monster blocking their path.

Wilderness Humans

Wildborn is a blanket term for any Human not born within Roskaria or Gaden. These Humans run the gamut from warriors to scholars, traders to thieves and are as varied as their origin. Most Humans of this nature are either from nomadic groups or small outlying towns that have survived by the skin of their teeth and the sweat off their backs.

Playing a Human

It is assumed most players have reasonable experience with playing a Human. There are a few differences between playing a Human from the Sheltered Lands and from our daily experience. The first difference to remember is that Gaden people live with the knowledge that they will come back at least two times from death. This knowledge of a limited mortality affects their willingness to be adventuresome, but also makes the prospect of Final Death a little bit more frightening as many people do not contemplate the finality of death until they've resurrected at least once.

Resurrections affect many things, including the difficulty of crime (can't off the witnesses after all and a murder victim will resurrect with knowledge of her attackers). Military service is also more common as Final Death is uncommon until after a few tours. Magical effects also change the Human condition as even your average commoner can be brought back from the brink of death by the local Healer's guild or by a traveling neophyte.

Otherwise, Humans are found in every role you can imagine, having no racial tendency towards any particular role or livelihood. You may want to review the section of the world where you character originates as that will yield unique attitudes. For example, men and women from Gaden tend to be more combat oriented; those in Roskaria are often seen as having entitlement issues but generally have a more positive outlook.

Costuming

Human costuming is as varied as the roles they fill. There is no makeup or costuming requirement, but it is important not to duplicate other races' costuming. For example, while a Human may be flamboyant, be careful not to dress as colorfully as a Gypsy. While a Human hunter might have some type of fur or leather pieces, they should not wear so much as to appear to be a Barbarian.

When building your costuming, remember to consider your characters background and profession. Fighters and scouts will often dress simply to avoid having things get in the way during battle. A rogue or scout may emphasize lightweight and tight fitting clothing, while a scholar or artisan might wear flowing clothing that aren't as advantageous in a fight.

Remember that the above is just a guideline and is, by no means, a hard and fast rule for your character's style. Ultimately, you are free to determine your own look and style with the above suggestions as a base line to help generate ideas. If you are just starting out, a pair of basic scrub pants and a cheap shirt can often give you a very decent base.

Hobblings

The Hobblings of the Sheltered Lands are, by far, one of the most recognizable races. Known for their love of trading, dealing, collecting, selling, and more trading, it should come as no surprise that a great many Hobblings make their way in the world through economic means. Even the fiercest Hobbling warrior will be seen making deals and trading from time to time. Quick on their feet, Hobblings can make extremely capable scholars. In the long view, their weapon options are a bit limited, so few Hobblings take the warrior road.

As one of the most prosperous races within Gaden, many Hobblings are accustomed to a certain status of living that is hard to maintain as an adventurer. This is by no means to say there are not a good number of Hobbling adventurers, but those who do adventure can often be seen spending their wealth on fine drinks and warm beds. Despite their quirks, many adventuring groups find Hobblings to be a valuable addition to their team. Their bargaining skills and vast knowledge of item's value ensures their group stays well-equipped and funded.

While they do not rule Roskaria, there are many notable, and noble, Hobbling families. Within the country, their influence on the laws, especially those involving trade, is clearly visible. Many of the current noble houses began as traders or skilled transporters of goods which, as their vast wealth accumulated, eventually translated into noble titles.

The Lightfoots

An adventuresome bunch, the Lightfoots are a fairly young noble family. They came to power through the fame of Cimorine Lightfoot, who was the first Hobbling ever to win a significant event during the annual Respite tournament. Since their recognition as a noble house, members of the Lightfoot family have been seen adventuring throughout the known world, either in small groups or as part of other adventuring groups.

The Sortiens

Known to be extremely sharp hagglers and traders, the Sortiens are *the* dynasty of traders within Roskaria. This family rose to power decades ago by being in the right place at the right time to handle the deliveries from Roskaria to Gaden. Since that time, the shipments between the two countries have grown at a record pace and Sortien power has grown along with them. Most members of this family seem to have a very strong focus on gathering additional wealth regardless of their chosen profession. Their vast family network can, at times, yield necessary information or assistance, though sometimes at a steep price.

The Durans

This family is notable for being one of the few ever to refuse recognition as nobility. Beyond that, this family seems to have an aversion to liquid assets, converting them as quickly as possible into permanent structures. Despite not being noble, this family owns a large number of mines, outposts, training camps, and craft centers. Over time, this has led the family to become extremely influential and able to supply almost any supply at a moment's notice.

Playing a Hobling

Hobblings, in and of themselves, are a fun loving, mischievous people with a dedication to curiosity, adventure, and storytelling. Hobblings love keeping traditions, superstitions, taboos, and other nostalgic practices in remembrance of the past. Hobblings have a very strong oral tradition and excel at storytelling. The highest possible skill within their society is the retelling of a good yarn, fable, drama, or historical happening (no matter how exaggerated). Hobblings love to read, sing, dance and jest. They are consummate gamblers and lovingly dedicated themselves to learning, inventing, or mastering any game of skill or chance they come across.

While generally a peaceful and content people dedicated to tradition and comfort, Hobblings are often struck with wanderlust. Many people may think “wanderlust” means packing up one’s bags and heading off for adventure. However, Hobbling wanderlust can take many forms as Hobbling are always traveling. Hence, Hobblings often see partaking of a new meal regimen, trying a new type of drink, working to master a specific cardgame, or any radical change in their normal behavior as wanderlust.

Hobblings enjoy being viewed as the best in their chosen profession or at least working toward perfection. They set a high importance on personal achievement, hoping to make a legend out of their own name that will last for years after their Final Death. Hobblings are competitive; they love games of chance and skill. Hobblings view life as a game in many ways; they like to compete and they like to win. Of course, victory over members of other races is somewhat expected, but a victory over a fellow Hobbling makes the win twice as nice. Unfortunately, a Hobbling’s preoccupation with winning can easily slip into obsession, especially when thwarted. Such Hobblings are allowed to remain in polite society, but they are pitied for their weakness; not the weakness for obsession, but their weakness for success. Hobblings play for keeps.

Hobblings in the Sheltered Lands see commerce as the ultimate competition and they are as ruthless in business as they are at cards. Fortunately, their cut-throat practices are only directed at those they deem a peer. Generosity for inferiors is seen as a sign of wealth and many Hobblings will dole out great a deal to show their largesse. Of course, they are never philanthropic to the point of excess; business is business, after all.

While Hobblings love their family, there is still a high level of internal competition. This infighting will occasionally create lucrative opportunities for outsiders. Hobblings will sometimes cut corners to pinch a sister’s profit margin, but they will never endanger the family market; it’s more important to keep coin in the family than it is to one-up a sibling.

It’s important to understand that not all Hobblings find contentment in commerce and second breakfast. Hobblings have their fair share of assassins and Necromancers. Their stories are told in the depths of night when the campfire is burning low, or behind locked doors in the privacy of one’s family home. It is never wise to assume a Hobbling village all is sunshine and lollipops.

Costuming

Both male and female Hobblings are immediately recognizable by their dark, bushy sideburns. These can be purchased at any costume shop and applied with spirit gum, or liquid latex (better). Drawing sideburns with make-up is not sufficient. Some players also like to attach bushy eyebrows, but this is not required.

Mystic Wood Elves

Most of the Mystic Wood Elves of the Sheltered Lands enjoy a life of little strife. Roskaria, the most prosperous of all the countries, is home to and ruled by Mystic Wood Elves. Their natural abilities lead them to be excellent craftsmen and farmers. These abilities have seen Roskaria grow into a prosperous, wealthy country. They have virtually no cultural taboos, save that of retarding or removing another's free-will. The one thing no Mystic will ever joke about is controlling free-will. They refuse to craft, cast, or administer any Command effect and so great is their loathing of Commands, it is illegal for anyone to possess any products of this group in the lands of Roskaria.

Inevitably, wanderlust overcomes all Mystic Wood Elves and they embrace the insatiable urge to travel the world. No one knows what compels them to travel in the way they do. It is an accepted and normal part of a Mystic's life. During these travels, they will commonly travel under a pseudonym, often called a Road Name. Mystics believe their true name has special properties and will give others power over them. As such, they only reveal their true name to family and other trusted individuals. When a Mystic gives their true name, they are offering friendship for life.

Natural Craftsmen

All Mystic Wood Elves have a knack for picking up craftsmen skills more easily than other races. They are strongly attracted to learning new things and new trades. As they are such efficient craftsmen, they often have an overabundance of goods but have very little interest in coin and trade. Mystics often give away the results of their craftsmanship for free or in exchange for future offered favors. This does not mean they do not value their creations, they simply weight these items differently since they are so easy to build. Despite this, most Mystic Wood Elves eventually end up with large piles of coin as a result of their crafting ventures. This coin is almost always spent or invested quickly as it is not in their nature to hoard.

Free Will

Another aspect, some say their primary focus, is their fierce belief in free-will. Indeed, Mystics feel there are few crimes worse than forcing someone to do something against their will. This aversion includes most spells or elixirs of the Command variety. Though some Mystics disagree, most feel Awaken is acceptable as it restores free-will. While there is a small grey area, such as the use of Dominate for returning people to normalcy, no Mystic Wood Elf would ever employ a Greater Command, such as an Amnesia, or Love Potion #9. To do so would go against the very fiber of their being, causing great nightmares and negative feelings. These feelings often cause Mystic Wood Elf to fall a great depression which reduces their abilities to act or craft.

Generally, most Mystic Wood Elves will burn or destroy any Command effects they come into contact with, often paying money out of their own pocket to acquire and destroy them. Rumors of more powerful Command effects are always of interest, and there has been more than one quest lead by a Mystic Wood Elf for the express purpose of destroying charms which usurp free-will.

Playing a Mystic Wood Elf

Mystic Wood Elves are required to demonstrate and implement a personal hatred of any artificial restriction of their freedom or the freedom of others. They are strongly opposed to slavery and anything that removes free-will. They hate any sort of control magics, including Charm spells, Enslavement elixirs, and any similar monster ability such as Vampire Charm. They will always

attempt to break any Charms they find on others. They do not believe these things are inherently evil (like most people view Necromancy), they object to their use against sentient beings. A Mystic Wood Elf may have no problem whatsoever casting those particular spells on an unintelligent monster. A Mystic Wood Elf may even cast a Dominate on another person if it serves the ultimate purpose of removing another Command (most would immediately order them to “return to normal”). It is the ends that are important, not the means. It is up to each player to decide on their line, which offers all sorts of role-playing arguments among the race.

Mystic Wood Elves are innately curious beings and enjoy all kinds of learning. They are often preoccupied with trying new things and learning tradecraft of all sorts. Craft-Master is a highly regarded accolade in Mystic Wood Elf society. In general, the gaining of knowledge is less a habit and more a preoccupation. Some enjoy mastering one art-form before moving on to the next thing, while others enjoy dabbling in many different skills; both are acceptable in their culture.

Young Mystic Wood Elves tend to be somewhat innocent and naive and are akin to a deer in headlights when they first leave their home. However, as they grow more experienced and seasoned, they will exhibit a more realistic view of the world. Mystics have no official life span. For all intents and purposes, they seem to be immortal as there are no documented cases of Mystics dying of old age. Now, accounts of accidents, battles, and experimentation with strange portals, on the other hand, abound. Curiosity might have killed the cat, but it slaughtered the Mystic first.

Most Mystic Wood Elves in the Sheltered Lands live in Roskaria and are generally unaffected and unconcerned by the war with the Corrupt. Their prevailing theory is that the Corrupt are a creation of the Gaden Humans as an excuse to demand additional supplies. Their increased orders are generally seen as a humorous, but ultimately unnecessary, deception.

Costuming

Mystic Wood Elves are recognizable immediately by the horns on their heads and their pointy Elf ears (like the mythical Pan). The ears should be attached with spirit gum or liquid latex. Light, hollow, rubber horns can be attached with spirit gum, or one can use string for the heavier, ceramic horns. Special effort should be made to secure the horns because they can be dangerous if lost during a fight. Padding the back of the horns is recommended as a direct hit on the horns, even with a padded weapon, can hurt!

Mystic Wood Elves wear a variety of clothing. By and large, they will wear comfortable and reasonably fashionable clothing (although each Mystic Wood Elf has his or her own opinion as to what is “fashionable”). Most Mystic Wood Elves look for quality in their clothing as their love of tradecraft gives them a keen eye for cheap knock-offs or shabby construction.

Sarr

The Sarr of the Sheltered Lands are seen as a largely feral race, far more likely to attack than act in a civilized manner. While there is some truth to this, as Sarr are closely related to predatory felines, it is not an entirely fair perception. Like all races, Sarr have a full range within their population, from aggressive mercenaries to the rare diplomat but, in general, Sarr disdain relations with other races. Appearing as a humanoid feline, many races are hesitant to trust or even speak with Sarr and often believe the worst of them. All Sarr share a fondness for edged weaponry, to the point of refusing to use blunt weapons. To them, the idea of a weapon that cannot cut seems alien and pointless. As well as being resistant to poison, many Sarr share a natural understanding of physiognomy and are able to find, and pierce, a victim's vital organs with a natural ease. All these things, coupled with a higher than average number of Chaos-casting scholars, and one can understand why the Sarr are excluded from formal relationships with most kingdoms. From the Sarr's point of view, this is all to the good as they want as little to do with outsiders as possible.

Most Sarr roam the vast grasslands to the west of the natural forest which borders Gaden's edge. Though Sarr do not speak of it, bards say there are a great many hidden settlements within this grassland that serve as a staging area for the Sarr's nomadic groups. Those Sarr that do travel and live within the borders of Gaden find employment as mercenaries to traders or adventuring groups. They never stop roaming and disdain the idea of a 'settled' life. As with any race, there are exceptions to this rule and Sarr can be found throughout Gaden in a variety of jobs, anything from a humble messenger to a captain within the King's army. The Sarr are well known throughout Gaden, despite their population being few and far between.

The Crimson Fang

Despite the name, the Crimson Fang share no common colors. What they do share is an aptitude for stealth and eliminating troublesome people of all races. Rumor has it, the Fang never leaves a trail or evidence of their assassination attempts except for a telltale bite or claw mark on the sides their victim's neck. An honored kill will often be bitten while the victim is bleeding out, the act symbolizing the Sarr taking their strength as its own. Those deemed less worthy will instead be slashed across the throat and left to painfully bleed to death; but this is only to be done to approved targets by the clan elders, never to random or personal victims. It is unknown how many Sarr are members of the Crimson Fang, as they jealously guard their membership. However, the Fang prides themselves on being able to strike any target at any time, given the right price.

The Kasarrass

The Kasarrass are a diverse group and more of a motley crew than a true tribe. Known most for their protective nature, their patrols protect the Sarr settlements of the grasslands. Most Kasarrass seek to defend their chosen people, be they Sarr or otherwise. For this group, the best defense is a good offense. When a threat is perceived, a Kasarrass will act quickly with maximum force to remove the threat. Even Earth scholars of the Kasarrass are quick to join battle with anything that threaten those they hold dear. Most of the Sarr in Gaden are from this group. Their dedication to defense and the loyalty they show when employed has won them some begrudging respect from the general populous and it is rare for open disrespect to be shown without cause.

Playing a Sarr

The Sarr are anthropomorphized hunting cats. When role-playing a Sarr, you should try to think like a jungle cat. Tigers, leopards, and pumas hunt alone, while lions often act in concert. A Sarr should not be played as a domesticated house cat as to do so would debase oneself. Sarr will rarely meow and they do not purr (as large cats lack this ability). Growling before a kill, or letting out a blood curdling roar is looked upon as more in line with a hunter's spirit.

Sarr are deeply aware of their image as capable warriors. One must be able to voice her anger or joy in the hunt. A weaponless, clawless Sarr is looked upon as a weakling. How can hunters feel the thrill of the fight if they do not get involved in combat, or rely solely upon magic? The Sarr are a bloodthirsty people who prefer claws, swords, and other edged weapons. This may be tied to the Sarr's acute sense of smell: the scent of their prey's blood fills the air and they are filled with the primal strength of the warrior. They are primarily carnivorous and will often eat what they have killed in battle, but Sarr also supplement their diets with fruits, vegetables, and bread. Though Sarr have excellent vision, they are handicapped by a peculiar kind of colorblindness: instead of the common red/green blindness, Sarr see the world in shades of grey. The entire concept of color is lost to them making them rely strongly on their sense of smell.

Their superior olfactory senses affect them greatly, especially when it comes to herbs in the mint family, such as catnip and peppermint. Catnip causes a Sarr's senses to intensify: everything looks and feels more vivid; minute sensations can become overwhelming. The Sarr usually embrace this sensory onslaught and become very relaxed. These sensations usually last for about 15 minutes before completely wearing off. Constant users of this "drug" are distrusted by other Sarr and often thought to be insane. Note: these effects are for role-playing only and will never grant a game or rules advantage.

Peppermint has a completely different effect. It fills the Sarr with mania and battle-lust. They will forcibly attempt to take the peppermint, demanding it at first, but almost invariably resorting to violence if provoked. Sarr are angered when other races tease them with peppermint. They feel the action takes away their self-control, and they react violently to those who torment them. Some Sarr have become addicted to the leaf, as it gives them a rush of adrenaline and supposedly increases their fighting prowess, but Sarr society frowns upon the practice. The effects of peppermint wear off after several minutes.

Sarr in the Sheltered Lands are still a rare sight and are often watched closely by other races. Sarr accept this scrutiny feeling other races have much to learn from them, as long as they don't take the foolish step of offering guidance or criticism. Sarr take great pride in their efficient assaults on the Corrupt. Many other races are amazed at their ability to materialize from the shadows and strike down a powerful Corrupt, or to effortlessly cave the Corrupt's battle flank.

Costuming

Costuming for Sarr is very extensive. Many players prefer the Mehron "Paradise" brand makeup, but it is important to wear barrier spray to prevent running. Another option is a face mask from Lyonshel or other providers. If you wish to play a Sarr it's a good idea to get in contact with one of our newbie marshals at info@mnalliance.com.

Stone Elves

The Stone Elves of the Sheltered Lands are a mystery to most of its inhabitants. Logical to the extreme and with a very firm grip on their emotions, these beings have little trouble understanding the emotions of other races. Stone Elves have emotions; they simply do not allow their feelings to guide their actions. Their history has become interwoven with a race that is diametrically opposed to themselves. The origins of this race have long been lost to history up until they migrated from the northern mountain range to the nation of Pratorak. At first, the High Orcs of the area viewed these new comers as a threat and prepared for war. The Stone Elf leaders quickly realized the High Orc cared little for the finer points of society or leadership and offered surrender, choosing to take a subservient role. As they expected, the High Orcs quickly tired of shepherding their new servants and soon left them to their own devices. As time went on, this union proved to be beneficial to both races. While the High Orcs handled the military defense of their territory, the Stone Elves were left to hone and improve the infrastructure. Most orders from the High Orc leaders boiled down to, "grow more food" and "build more weapons". As time went on, the Stone Elves learned to manipulate the High Orcs into acting as muscle in their civil projects. Through chicanery and long-term planning, the Stone Elves were able to control more and more of the nation's activities. Many Stone Elves believe that High Orcs knew exactly what was going on but simply didn't care as they benefited and were relieved of burdensome bureaucratic duties.

The Monolithic Council

Recent events have changed the long-standing relationship between the Stone Elves and High Orcs. After careful deliberation, a group of eleven Stone Elf mystics, called the Stone Council, decided the pressures of the Corrupt demanded they take the situation in hand. They carefully placed their Stone Elf scholars within High Orc ranks and, after turning the tide of battle at a key engagement, the Stone Council challenged the regiment's leader to a duel for dominance. After a long battle, the Council member won the duel and took command of the High Orc troops. In a coordinated sequence, other Council members followed suit and within a fortnight the Stone Council took command of the entire High Orc army. The Stone Council renamed themselves the Monolithic Council and have taken leadership of the war's strategy and reshaped the Pratorak nation.

A Race of One Tribe

Unlike many other races, the Stone Elves have not split into various groups. Indeed, even Stone Elves outside of Pratorak are still seen as part of the whole race. Stone Elves have a variety of mental abilities, although not all members of this race choose to practice them. These abilities allow for many impressive feats of healing, mental recall, and other effects that make them excellent administrators and leaders. Like any other race, the Stone Elves have their outlier members: those who have chosen to travel the world and integrate into other countries, and many of them are valued greatly as advisors and administrators. Like any other race, the Stone Elves have their outlier members: those who have chosen to travel the world and integrate into other countries, and many of them are valued greatly as advisors and administrators.

Playing a Stone Elf

Stone Elves show no emotion, and have the appearance of being eternally calm. Their discipline and mental strength make it possible to suppress any expression or emotional burden. Patience is

easier for them, and they commonly believe that most conflicts resolve themselves in time. Role playing a Stone Elf is no easy task; in fact, it is probably the one of the hardest races to play correctly. It can be mentally draining to monitor oneself for any sign of emotion and repress it. This is a very difficult mindset to maintain for long periods of time, no matter how logical and unemotional you think you already are.

On average, Stone Elves live to be approximately 1,200 years old, and view matters differently than short-lived races. Few Stone Elves desire to leave their home, but often the quest for knowledge can take them far from their homeland for hundreds of years at a time. Most Stone Elves are strategic thinkers, willing to play whatever role will accomplish their goals most effectively. A good example of this can be found in the history of Pratorak when the Stone Elves subordinated themselves to the High Orcs. Instead of fighting, they bided their time until taking power was necessary to the war effort with the Corrupt.

Stone Elves have limited roleplay-only mental skills. If another player agrees, a properly trained Stone Elf can attempt to fix various emotional problems. Stone Elves are able to overcome severe emotional trauma, instill the deepest calm, or create torrents of unbearable grief. Both parties must agree and the process itself must be properly roleplayed. Unfortunately, players cannot use this ability to remove any In Game effects like Curses, Enslavement, Disease, Charm, or anything else that was created through a tagged or monster ability.

Please note, the decision to roleplay this skill is an Out of Game decision: the player may decide to be affected even if their character would prefer to resist. Alternately, if a player choose not to allow a Stone Elf player to use her mental ability, this reluctance should not be reflected onto the character. Stone Elves know that their mental abilities have limits, and no one really knows when their abilities will work or not. Most wandering monsters will be unaffected by this ability as their nature is difficult to scrutinize and most are interested in nothing more than the here and now (i.e. plot doesn't create a rich background for every wandering crunchy).

Costuming

Playing a Stone Elf demands the use of makeup. Stone Elves have white skin accented with darker features, such as black lips and eyebrows. All exposed flesh must be white, gloves are advised so you do not have to paint your hands. One popular option is the water based "Paradise" makeup from Mehron. The white face is often coupled with black lipstick and black eyeliner pencil to upturn the eyebrows and help define the line between Stone Elf and undead. They most often have black hair, but red, and dark brown are not uncommon. They have pointed Elven ears. They have a preference for plain colors, and they rarely, if ever, wear bright, flamboyant clothing or jewelry.

Wylderkin

Wylderkin, more commonly known as Scavengers, are an oddity to other races. Nobody knows the origins of this loosely-defined race but many suspect magical breeding between animals and other races. The great variety of beings that can be classified as Wylderkin is staggering. As a rule, most Wylder are referenced by their closest relation to other animals, such as Wolfkin, Squirrelkin, or Possumkin. While all Wylderkin have differing personal aspects, all Wylder have a few common characteristics including a superior sense of smell and a penchant for adventure.

No large political groups of Wylderkin are known within the Sheltered Lands. Most Wylder come from small, out-of-the-way villages or tribes, and rarely travel in groups of more than a handful. The majority of tribes are scattered about in the great forested area and the vast plains which surround Gaden. Wylderkin are not uncommon in the lands of Gaden and their number often appear on the borders. Many of these folk settle into careers, becoming everything from military scouts to innkeepers. While not all Wylderkin are upstanding citizens, on the whole, members of this race are given a fair chance before being judged.

A Race Without Limits

Unlike other races, each and every Wylderkin will have different racial abilities. Usually, but not always, such abilities can be anticipated based on the animal most closely resembling the Wylder. But, even amongst those that come from the same tribe, their abilities may vary greatly. For example, two Wolfkin brothers may each be great fighters, but one may have a strong resistance to fear while his brother may instead have the innate ability to wiggle out of the most complex Binding spell. This diversity means that attacking a village or tribe of Wylderkin must be planned very carefully, for an invader will never know what they will face.

A Different Outlook on the World

Unlike most other races, Wylderkin tend not to have a long list of traditions. Indeed, the term “Scavenger” seems to be the most accurate description of their cultural practices. Wylderkin will very rarely have much interest in politics or accumulating wealth, instead they focus on day-to-day issues as they appear. While a Scavenger might accept prepared foodstuffs, they will generally not think to seek out additional supplies until they are hungry. Similarly, the concept of personal property seems alien to most Scavengers and they will often take things they need but which don’t belong to them. This can cause conflict as many don’t understand Wylder are not stealing but, are merely being practical and would be more than willing to return the favor. A Wylderkin that finds something she doesn’t need is quick to give it away without a thought to repayment or personal gain.

While each Scavenger is different, most will have a pattern of behavior they find comforting: Turtlekin might have a tendency to fight defensively; Weaselkin are likely to dart about quickly in, or out, of combat. While they are generally self-sufficient, many Scavengers are happy and content to make themselves part of a small group or team. This is especially true of traditional ‘pack’ animals such as wolf or horse kin.

Playing a Wylderkin

Wylderkin are, in their way, very simple. Though most races reference them as Wylderkin or Scavenger, they refer to themselves by the animal to which they are related: dogkin, rabbitkin, possumkin and so on. They are usually solitary, although they sometimes form small groups of

similar creatures for mutual support. Even in these groups, their culture is very primitive and doesn't rely upon generations of tradition. There is, in fact, no one fundamental Wylderkin "race". Their specific abilities and natures often vary depending on their "kin" animal and sometimes even from individual to individual. Wylder find it difficult to band together into long-lasting groups as they often have very little in common.

Due to their lack of a social structure, Wylderkin tend to look for security within themselves or perhaps within a small group of companions. They are likely to establish simple patterns of personal and communal behavior to gain a sense of belonging and stability. These habits often make no sense to outsiders, but are comforting to the Wylderkin. While Hobblings have taken to the practice, rubbing a lucky "rabbit's foot" was originally a Wylderkin practice. Even given their dissimilarities, there are certain consistent characteristics to the Wylderkin. Their role as social outcasts often leads to uncivilized behavior and clothing. They are not necessarily rude or obnoxious, they are simply unaccustomed to civilization. The artificial concept of "Money as Wealth", (as opposed to "Food as Wealth") can sometimes be beyond their primitive minds, and social mores more complex than, "I can beat you up, so do what I say" seem nonsensical.

Wylderkin are survivors. Their bottom line is finding the food and shelter for today; gathering immense wealth or political power in order to achieve greatness in ten years seems pointless to a race which is unsure it'll live to week's end. To the typical Wylderkin, people from organized cultures are out of touch with what is really important. Wylder believe that if civilized folk were not supported by their flimsy network of trade and commerce, they would quickly starve and die. A Wylderkin will always survive.

Costuming

Wylderkin must resemble their creature kin. If people can't immediately determine what they are looking at, the costume is inadequate. There are a number of websites which sell animal masks. A quick question on the Out of Game Alliance forums or on the Southern MN webpage and players will offer any number of sources. If you prefer makeup to masks, that is possible as well. The advantage to makeup is a greater range of vision and not worrying about the mask slipping; the drawback is a longer preparation time, and makeup will run and blotch over time, no matter how carefully applied. The rest of the body needs to be considered as well. It's not a bad idea to wear gloves as makeup will wipe off quickly. Tailor made body suits or skin-tight, breathable shirts and pants (such as Under Armor exercise gear) will make your life easier.

What you can't do with makeup or costuming can often be accomplished with physical roleplay: an unusually stiff walk for a turtlekin; a unique accent, such as a birdkin "whistling" half their words; or a propensity for flicking the head and stomping the feet for a horsekin. A general sense of acting "not quite human" will go a long way.

Clothing should generally be rough and rudimentary, the sort of outfit a recluse living in the wilds or on the fringes of society might wear. Some Wylderkin might have fairly nice clothing but they are usually found or given as gifts. They will often incorporate strange "treasures" into their costuming, sometimes becoming more attached to the odd baubles and "liberated gifts" more than the clothing itself. Others might feel a desire to wear shiny or pretty things and will festoon themselves with garish gewgaws and tacky tidbits.

Alliance Southern MN Transfer, Level Cap, and other Policies

Overview

It is the policy of the Alliance Southern MN to limit the levels and effects transferred into its game until such a time as it is deemed reasonable to relax the restrictions. At the same time, it is also the desire of Alliance Southern MN to encourage out-of-chapter players to come play in our chapter. The below policies are designed to balance these aims.

Level Cap

The current level cap at the start of 2010 will be 205 build. Character transfers may NOT be ‘cut down’ and characters above the cap will not be allowed to transfer in, even if played previously in the Chapter. This caps moves up with each event, but we suggest that transfers are designed with some room below the cap so you do not go over it due to additional blankets. Over the season, the cap will increase at a rate of one blanket per game day, i.e. a character at the build cap will advance with the build cap as long as they don’t blanket any other chapter’s events.

Magic Item Policy

In order to provide a fair, consistent, and balanced game, Southern MN limits magic item transfers. For the first game, no transferred character may use any magic item, Restricted or LCO, as the unique Mists surrounding the Sheltered Lands suppress their magic. This includes any Fae Marks, Rituals on the spirit, and any non-standard effects. Each player may attempt to attune one item or effect on their spirit for each game day or logistics period. Further attunement may be available through In Game measures as the overall restriction is linked with In Game situations.

The item tag and its phys rep must be on-hand and in-game to attune. Players may also work together to attune more powerful items, but all participants in such efforts may not attune another item nor participate in any other attunement attempt that day. In Game effects are in place to ensure that non-attuned items cannot be permanently stolen or destroyed. Once an item has been successfully attuned, it may pass into Gaden without further restrictions. Southern MN maintains an ‘attunement database’ of items that have been attuned In Game.

Retirement Policy

As per Alliance LARP policy, any character Retired in Southern MN must be housed in the Southern MN database and all Retired items can only be turned in for Southern MN goblin stamps. A new character may then be forged with half the Deaths of the Retired character, rounded up, and half of the Retired characters Build Points, also rounded up. In the event that the goblin stamp value of the Retired production items is above 300, further goblin stamp purchases may be restricted to Event/Monthly blankets and or Production purchases at the sole discretion of the Southern MN staff. This means such goblin points could not be used to buy phys reps or membership extensions. Goblin stamps earned in other ways will still be redeemable for standard services.

Helping Run the Game (Non Player Characters and Volunteers)

Like most LARP chapters, Southern Minnesota survives and thrives through the efforts of our players and volunteers. Without selfless volunteers, the chapter would either no longer exist or events would cost over a hundred dollars a head. The easiest way to donate time or supplies is to contact our staff and ask what we need most. As a general rule, we always need more costuming, packets, and basic

supplies. Check our website at www.mnalliance.com for specifics as we keep an updated request list. If you'd prefer to donate time, we can always use extra hands preparing our loot reps, helping to process other donations, or doing other necessary tasks. Our need for this kind of clerical work varies, so it's best to ask so we can set up a proper time.

Goblin Stamps – The Main Reward

The most common reward for donations and volunteer work are Southern Minnesota “Goblin Stamps”. Goblin Stamps can be redeemed for a variety of things including: “Monthly Blankets” which give character Build at a rate of 30 Goblins per blanket, per month; production items (potions, weapons, battle scrolls, etc) at a 1:1 exchange rate according to the production price of the item up to a maximum of 50 Goblins per day of the event; to purchase magic items on a limited basis; and finally, Goblins can be used to pay for a player's yearly membership fee. Goblin Stamps may also be used to blanket an event you NPC or are unable to attend. Goblin Stamps accrued in Southern Minnesota can only be reclaimed in Southern Minnesota.

Non Player Character Rewards

In addition to paying a far lower cost per game to NPC, generally free with a membership (barring rare circumstances when site-fees demand otherwise), those who NPC will also be given 30 Goblin stamps per logistics period they work. These Goblins are generally spent into “Blanketing” the event, giving Build to a character of the NPC's choice. If clean-up and pack-out is completed on time, participating NPCs are given an additional 30 Goblins per logistics period. Finally, NPCs are given an Local Chapter Only Magic item “Pick” for each full day of NPC work. Some full-time staff positions garner additional rewards in recognition for their extra effort. These Picks are meant as both a thank-you for extraordinary effort, and to balance out the fact that long term NPCs forgo the opportunity to gather loot and wealth during events their characters cannot attend.

Local Chapter Only Magic Item “Picks”

Players who volunteer to NPC an Event, or staff members who put in long hours working on projects, are granted LCO Magic item “Picks”. Each Pick gives the player one opportunity to “buy” Magic items with Goblin Stamps. These items last for a base of two years but can be extended to as long as five. All items offered, and their costs, are variable and subject to change at any time, although any item already purchased and logged will not be affected. Players and volunteers should contact our Logistics team about current items and their costs.

Special, or large donations, will often also be granted Picks as well. Generally speaking, any donation likely to garner more than a few hundred Goblin Stamps will be reviewed and may be assigned a small number of Picks in addition to the Goblin Stamp value.