

It is said that no greater glory has ever graced the material plane than the Imperial Capital of the Elves, Maelyl Vaerdos. This glorious city sprawled over an entire continent and was filled with wonders undreamed of by the civilizations that came afterwards. In a single horrid night all of this was lost, the whole continent laid to waste by a great calamity that sank half of it beneath the sea and left the whole of it haunted by innumerable spirits by night. It was years before foolhardy adventurers returned here, risking their mortal existences in the pursuit of long lost Elven riches. You are one of those adventurers.

Broken Covenant

Five thousand years have passed since the fall of the ancient elves. It was long before any dared to journey back to those once prosperous lands and when brave explorers did venture there they found a wasteland ruled by displaced spirits by night and by the burning sun by day. Great monstrous beasts, descendants of creatures once caged for the show or created as experiment by the elves, now dwell in the ruins of the great city while far in the depths dwell horrors that should not exist.

These brave explorers were the first but greed soon proved stronger than prudence. Parts of the wasteland were warded against the nightly assault of fallen spirits and settlements sprung up that soon grew wealthy from trading ancient Elven artifacts to the broader world. In time three cities were incorporated on the borders of the wasteland to outfit and exploit adventurers who risk everything in their pursuit of wealth and glory. Many of the people who settled there forsake the deities of their ancestors and instead began to worship the exotic deities of the Elves. It is rumored that the Elven deities still wander the land in secret, watching over the newcomers and manipulating their work to their own aims.

Logistics

The initial player characters will be the founding members of a new guild of adventurers looking to combine their resources in order to accomplish their goals in the wasteland. They will establish the rules of the guild and act as its governing members.

Occasional player characters will play members of the guild who have other occupations but who join in an adventure from time to time.

Experience will not be used. The Game Master will determine when a level up is appropriate. All player characters will be the same level regardless of activity but player characters that play regularly will have an equipment advantage in keeping some loot from adventures in addition to their recommended wealth by level.

Ability Scores will be determined by assigning 8, 10, 12, 12, 14, 16 to attributes plus an additional +2 to any one desired attribute before racial modifiers. HP will not be rolled at each level instead assume that the highest possible number is always rolled.

Player Characters may be of any official Featured Race. Advanced, Monstrous, and Custom Races are not necessarily disallowed but would involve approval and balancing by the Game Master.

Player Characters may cross class into any number of Base Classes but may have only one Prestige Class.

The starting level is __ and starting gold is ____; no more than ____ gold may be spent on each item. Do not use Item Creation feats for starting equipment; there will be opportunity to craft magical equipment later.

Personality and Background

Occasional player characters need only have two core personality traits – the ability to work cohesively with others and the ability to form relationships with others after intense joint experiences. That doesn't necessitate that the various player characters be close friends – rivals or even enemies can still work together in the same organization towards a greater goal. They just might get into a bar fight afterwards or subtly sabotage one another in non-lethal ways.

Initial player characters have more influence and thus have a few more requirements placed on them; the Guild somehow fulfills a core life goal of theirs that they will not easily abandon, as the "face" of the Guild they will need to be able to make public appearances (if disguised with the appropriate disguise and bluff skills), and they will need to be prepared to take on additional responsibilities

outside of adventuring (making business deals, handling logistics, and researching sites to loot).

What to expect?

This is primarily a dungeon crawl in noteworthy locations throughout the ruins of Maelyl Vaerdos. At night these ruins will be haunted by incorporeal undead and by day stalked by monstrous beasts. In addition there will be ancient traps, magical safeguards, and more than a few puzzles. However, that's not to say that there will be no need for diplomacy – the three cities are ripe with intrigue and opportunities. After all, securing markets to sell recovered artifacts while resolving conflicts with rivals will be essential to the success of a new Guild. Politics from the broader world will influence events on Maelyl Vaerdos but it will be up to the player characters to decide how involved they want to be.

The Three Cities

Ladia - Positioned on a northern peninsula surrounded on three sides by coastal cliffs, the glistening white towers of Ladia strike a sharp contrast to the ruins inland. Laws are strictly enforced in Ladia giving it a feeling of security that is missing in Minai and Numartu but this comes at the cost of individual freedom and a hefty tax on doing business there.

- **Laws:** The standard common laws - theft, trespassing, assault, kidnapping, etc - are not only enforced but subject to excessive punishments here. Unauthorized magical compulsion is also severely punished. Slavery is illegal but all elves and elf bloods are required to report to the authorities to provide "community service". It is also illegal to slander, insult, or threaten anyone who holds official authority.
- **Races:** There's an obvious size bias and humanoid bias, so medium sized humanoids have definite advantage. Humanoids of celestial descent have particular advantage, being of the same heritage as the Hadriel nobility. Otherwise "ugly" creatures such as orcs and goblins are subject to extreme bias.
- **Warding:** Powerful wards have been placed in the waste around Ladia creating a barrier that incorporeal undead cannot pass. Similar wards are placed at each level of the city. The glistening white towers of Ladia are armed with magic to attack any incorporeal threats that somehow make it beyond the wards.

Numartu - Positioned on one of the few gaps in the cliffs on the eastern coast of Maelyl Vaerdos, Numartu is a squat fortress with layers of thick walls composed of materials that block passage by the incorporeal undead that haunt the wastes. The bulk of its living space is built into the walls and severely overcrowded, even the sewers have been transformed into living space, with only the residences of the nobility - each a miniature fortress itself - free from the press. A large diamond

shaped island floats in the sky above Numartu, heavy chains anchoring it to the city below - this is the governor's residence.

- **Races:** Numartu seethes with racial tension. There is a strong pure human bias among the nobility with extreme discrimination leveled towards mixed bloods and other races. Elves and elf bloods are often sold here as slaves and it's very unusual for one to stay free for long.
- **Laws:** Officially, Numartu is overseen by an Imperial Governor and bound by the same laws as the Second Human Empire but in reality there is little that cannot be bought by the coin including the law. If one is careful not to insult the nobility and does nothing to damage the walls of the city, carrying coinage to bribe the guards is usually significant to escape punishment for any other offenses. As in the Empire, slavery is legal in Numartu and beings are often bought and sold here; elves and those with elf blood often fetch very inflated prices since many items and traps in the ruins react to them beneficially.
- **Warding:** Numartu was constructed with materials that block incorporeal and ethereal travel. This has the added effect of making teleportation difficult resulting in an increased chance of mishap. In addition there is a powerful artifact in the governor's residence that radiates positive energy, harming all undead that come within 500 feet of it and accelerating natural healing for living beings. Each of the noble's residence has it's own set of wards to block divination, teleportation, and similar undesired effects.

Minai - Positioned on an island off the southernmost tip of Maelyl Vaerdos, Minai is an autonomous city founded by an alliance of merchants, pirates, and shadier guilds.

- **Races:** Anything and everything can be found in Minai. Racial discrimination is so common that it's unremarkable, effectively most races have equal opportunities for prejudice. As in the other cities, elves and those of elven descendant are in high demand which often infringes on their freedom even though slavery is technically not legal (as opposed to being illegal).
- **Laws:** Minai has few laws and even fewer that are enforced. Of note, slavery is not legal in Minai (which is not the same as being illegal). Aside from this the laws of the city generally boil down to 'might makes right' which means that most individuals are usually well equipped to protect themselves.
- **Warding:** Minai is primarily protected from the incorporeal horrors of the waste by being located on an island off the mainland. Additional safeguards are broken up on an individual basis.

Organizations

- **Cloisters:** Several orders of Monks have sprung into being in Numartu and Ladia, striving for a life of balance and order in a chaotic world. Despite their various beliefs, it has become accepted that most Monks are trustworthy although not necessarily agreeable.
- **Thievery Guilds:** Although fiercely repressed in Ladia, organized thievery is overtly powerful in Minai and covertly present in Numartu.
- **Liberators:** Once a thieves' guild, the Liberators no longer engage in thievery. Instead, they offer their protection to anyone on the wrong side of the law in return for an annual fee. Those under their protection will be freed by them upon capture with certain stipulations.
- **Exploration Societies:** Well trained and well equipped, these societies' members are nobility who adventure into the ruins as more of a hobby than an occupation. These societies are found in Ladia and Numartu.
- **Pearl Guardians:** While not the most powerful, the most famous defenders of Ladia are a group of young women donning pearl white armor. Renowned for their skill with blade and wizardry, they serve and protect the nobility of Ladia from all who threaten it. Upon losing their virginity, they lose their status as Pearl Guardians and become commanders among the standard troops.
- **Pirates:** From their base in Minai, pirates prey on expeditions into the waste and supply caravans to the other cities. Many adventurers turn to piracy, judging that piracy is safer than risking the ruins.

Rumors

- **Poh:** Several months ago a bizarre character appeared in Ladia. Undead and adorned in flashy garments, this figure calling himself Poh has begun a campaign of trickery and thievery unparalleled. Armed with a seemingly endless supply of magical items and supernatural abilities, this odd menace has evaded punishment by the authorities for the time being.
- **Floating Castle:** A strange floating castle has appeared about the wastelands of the south. High among the clouds, adventurers wonder if it is part of the remains of the great city, a watch post of the Gods, the secluded home of an Archmage, or merely a mirage.
- **Piracy Countered:** Ladia has organized hippogriff mounted patrols to protect caravans and expeditions. The famous Pearl Guardians are among these patrols, mounted upon the mightiest of hippogriffs.
- **Lady Nera:** A noble of the Imperial Court of the Northern Empire has fled to the lands of the south. It is rumored that she was plotting the young emperor's death. Her whereabouts in the south are unknown.

- **Foul Wizardry:** The powerful necromancer Tiel has come into favor with the governor of Numartu and with his blessing has begun experimenting on slaves to advance his dark magic. There are rumors that strange happenings in the crowded lower levels are due to these experiments not being limited to slaves.

Deities in Maelyl Vaerdos

The elder deities departed the material plane long ago leaving behind pantheons of racial deities to watch over each continent.

- **Mystanto:** The Elven deity of trade.
- **Rhy'alas:** The Elven deity of lore.
- **Ursan:** The Elven deity of order.
- **Mru'orda:** The Elven deity of artifice.
- **Ysrocha:** The last surviving dragon deity.

The history of Maelyl Vaerdos

While each society has its own telling of how the planes came to be aligned as they are, the most ancient of the outsiders tell it this way. Long ago when the elder deities were still young, the First gave them the blank tapestry of the planes to cultivate great works from. In the beginning they focused their efforts on the material plane, giving it shape and form before bringing the first mortal life into being – the lower animals and the Giants. After eons, they set their sights afar to the outer planes and began to imagine the works that they could do there. So it was that the elder deities created the younger or native deities. Splitting the land asunder the elder deities gave dominion over each continent to each pantheon of younger deities and then departed the material plane for the outer planes.

The native deities in turn populated their continents with sapient races formed after their likeness. As the individual races slowly matured, some of them in turn experimented with magic and created still more races of animals and monstrous beings. Of the races given life by the native deities, none were more majestic and powerful than the dragons. With each member possessing near immortality, strength equal to an army of the lesser races, and magical prowess equal to an archmage, the dragons never had the need to organize themselves into complicated societies like some of the other races. Instead, each brood loosely pursued their interests. So it was for eons until Ysrocha, long weary of overseeing creation, slew one of her sibling deities in a petty squabble and first whet her appetite with divine blood. Through deceit and trickery, Ysrocha overcame the remaining draconic deities and consumed them one by one, adding their power to her own. Her now insatiable hunger turned to the lands of the elves, where she swiftly consumed five of the Elven deities and all life that came within her grasp. The four remaining Elven deities, Mystanto, Rhy'alas, Ursan, and Mru'orda, lead the greater part of their race in flight. This exodus was to last over two hundred years while Ysrocha feasted on the rich lands before her.

The elves and their surviving deities finally settled on a savage continent ruled by beastly deities who were tamed by the Elven deities and taken as mounts. In time, the surviving elves built a great civilization and not only reclaimed their former glory but with renewed purpose actually surpassed it. The Elven deities upon their divine mounts actively lead this renaissance of their people, never forgetting the horrors that Ysrocha had inflicted upon them and plotting the gluttonous deity's downfall.

Over thousands of years the elves built a great Empire uniting many of the other races under their influence and transforming the savage land into one vast capital city. They named it Maelyl Vaerdos, the land of Second Birth. During this age Ysrocha visited devastation upon other lands and consumed many more deities before settling into a deep slumber. This slumber was only disturbed when a vast army of elves, led by their deities mounted on divine steeds, came against Ysrocha and after a great battle cast the devourer down, binding her in a great stone and sealing her power away. The elves then carried the imprisoned Ysrocha back to Maelyl Vaerdos and placed the great stone holding her in a great golden pyramid that had been built to hold her for the rest of eternity.

With the devourer overthrown and most of the material plane under their dominion, the elves and their deities were content to enjoy their splendor and wealth. In this era their artistry, spellcraft, and lore surpassed any that had come before them. But it was not to last... The end came swiftly and without warning. Horrors from beyond the abyss appeared in the midst of Maelyl Vaerdos, unleashing death and destruction upon the glorious city. The continent quaked as a great power struck it, causing the lands to the west of the great mountains to sink into the sea while lifting up the lands to the east. A great scorching wind made the once fertile land arid in a fortnight. The slain elves did not pass peacefully into the afterlife but rose up when the sun set and haunted the ruins of their homes. The deities of the elves did not depart with the few survivors who escaped this cataclysm but remained in Maelyl Vaerdos braving the horrors.

It was long before any dared to journey back to Maelyl Vaerdos after cataclysm, what they found there was a wasteland ruled by night by the displaced spirits of the slain elves and by day by the burning sun. Great beasts imprisoned for the amusement of the once great city now lived in its ruins while further in the depths horrors that should not exist sulked.

In time, greed proved stronger than prudence. Expeditions warded parts of the wasteland against the spirits of the fallen and fought off the beasts that ruled the land. A new market was created around pillaging and looting the ruins, the great works of the ancient elves being highly desired by the outside world. Three cities sprung up on the borders of the wasteland to outfit and support adventurers who risked their mortal existences in the pursuit of long lost elven riches.

The “Native” Races

These are races that have a pantheon of deities and a homeland. These include the elves, humans, dwarfs, merfolk, halflings, goblins, orcs, ogres, naga, jann, dragons, and fey among others.

- **Elves:** are a shattered race of exiles who have lost their homeland twice. Their history is grand but their current state leaves them open to discrimination. Their deities never left Maelyl Vaerdos and no longer watch over elves in the broader world.
- **Dragons:** are very few in number. Despite their immense power most dragons leave in secrecy, hunted by the other races who fear and hate them. Ysrocha is the only remaining of their deities having consumed the others.

The Ancient Races

These are races that existed prior to the elder deities leaving the material plane. These include most Outsiders and the Giants.

- **Giants:** were created by the elder deities before the native deities had even come into existence. They are a slow race with strange ways and odd values that seem overshadowed by younger and more vibrant civilizations.

The Mortal Races

These are races that were created by “mortals” rather than by deities. There are too many races to list specifically.

- **Gnomes:** were a twisted experiment to merge elves and halflings. While technically successful the results left much to be desired.
- **Kobolds:** were created to serve the dragons in ancient times and have singular devotion to the great drakes. Dim witted and fast breeding, Kobolds search the world for the few surviving dragons in hopes of finding one to serve.
- **Centaur:** were created by a human king who wanted the greatest cavaliers in his army. The resulting race proved to be unruly and rebellious, soon breaking free and spreading throughout the world.