

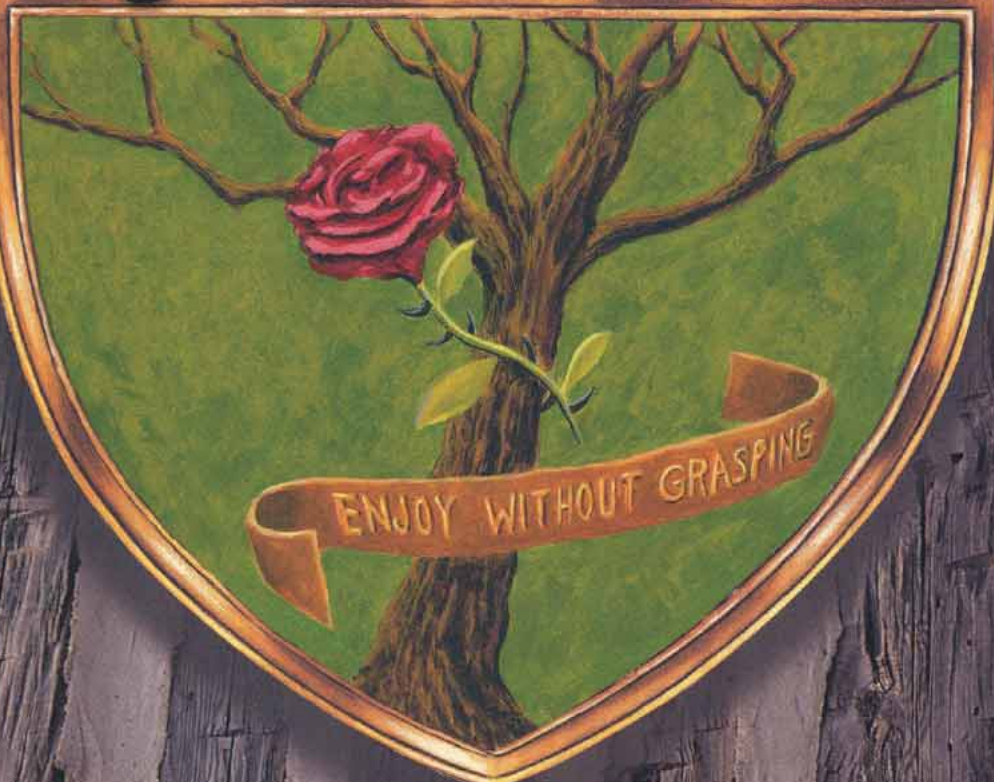
Player's Secrets of

# TALINIE



## BIRTHRIGHT™

DOMAIN SOURCEBOOK





# talinie

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 UNITED KINGDOM

As you assume the regency of Talinie, many challenges await. The realm faces conflicts with its neighbors, religious troubles, vanishing forests, and goblin raids. Court intrigue strains every alliance and undermines each royal edict. As ruler, you command the resources needed to solve Talinie's problems, but you must act quickly, decisively, and carefully. One wrong decision worsens the crisis, and two wrong moves mean certain disaster.

You may not even last long enough to make a second mistake. You have reason to believe that someone assassinated your predecessor after just one.

## what you need to play

This domain sourcebook is an accessory for the BIRTHRIGHT™ campaign setting. You or your Dungeon Master need the BIRTHRIGHT boxed set to play, as well as the AD&D® *Player's Handbook* and *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*.

## how to use this sourcebook

This book details the people, provinces, customs, and landmarks of Talinie. Herein, you will find all the information you need to play the regent of Talinie. Players of nonregent characters who live in Talinie can also use this sourcebook to flesh out their homeland.

If you choose rulership, you may play Thane Thuriene Donalls (the regent listed in *Ruins of Empire*) or a character who inherits the domain upon the thane's death. Alter any details in this sourcebook that you dislike or that don't apply to your character's reign.

Once you've read this book, pass it along to your Dungeon Master. Explain what you want to keep or change about the kingdom, and point out the adventure ideas you wish to pursue. Remember, if there's something here that won't fit the campaign, your DM is free to reject it.

Talinie is meant for the regent who wants a challenge. Your character faces trouble the instant he takes the throne. Act with care. Successful rule of Talinie calls for a delicate balance of authority, diplomacy, and guile. Good fortune be upon you, O Regent!

**A** Supplication to the Most Holy and Honorable Noble Thane of Our Beloved Land of Talinie, Protector of the Realm, Defender of the Faith, Champion of the Oppressed, Advocate for the Righteous, Scourge of the Heathen, and Chosen Emissary of Haelyn the Celestial Warrior:

Your Highness! Upon your glorious accession to the Oak Seat, a thousand congratulations from your loyal adherent, Harrin, Fifth Viscount Stalban of the estate of Grimsay, Greensward. A thousand condolences on the sudden and tragic death of your honored predecessor, Thane Thuriene Donalls. We all join you

in wishing her a lengthy interval in

Haelyn's Twelve Lands of Rapture. I fervently hope that you will not condemn this letter's

arrival so soon after your coronation. Of course, writing the first letter to a new monarch should be the privilege of the High Priest, the revered Hierarchy Torias Griene. However, he appears delayed in returning from his sudden visit to the upland temples. No doubt he has paused to mourn the riding accident that killed the thane, whom he served fervently day and night these 15 years.

I cannot hope to match the High Priest's vigor of service, but my love of this realm, my lifelong home, compels me to try. During the past decade some loyal followers among the nobility have observed the High Priest's admirable reluctance to bother Thane Donalls with trivia. Certainly if I had taken Hierarchy Griene's place beside the thane on those moonlit walks in the Rose Palace gardens, I too would have felt reluctant to broach distracting matters of state. Yet some believe that the thane might have wished to learn of certain issues. To that end I

describe my view of the problems this realm faces, the dangers that beset any solutions, and the resources you command to face these dangers.

## missive from a courtier

### political issues

The view I now describe met with unfavorable response from your predecessor, but I stand firm in believing its truth: In the past 15 years, Talinie has

been invaded twice—invisibly.

For generations, Talinie enjoyed easy peace with the neighboring kingdom of Boeruine. During your predecessor's reign, Aeric Boeruine's ambitions, and strength, grew without limit. We all remember the stormy day three years ago when the archduke, clad in full

plate, led his hordes to the Talinien border and said to the panicked guards, "I suggest an alliance against the threat of invasion." Of course the thane could do naught but accept this "suggestion," for fear of seeing the threat of invasion instantly become fact.

The late thane undoubtedly has earned millennia in the Sweet-Scented Lands for her deft handling of our unwanted treaty with Boeruine. For the rest of her reign, she skillfully deflected the archduke's demands for troops and support. (The good Hierarchy Griene approved of the thane's policy, for he believes Aeric Boeruine lacks faith in our Northern Imperial Temple of Haelyn.) Still, with each day the archduke grew more insistent that Talinie send troops and aid to support his quest for the Iron Throne. Now you, Your Highness, must cope with a powerful ally—if that is the word—who will greet your ascension with instant impatience.

Despite the thane's shrewd diplomacy, she could not refuse the incursion of thousands of refugees from Boeruine—gentry and scholars whom the archduke made unwelcome. These folk found safe harbor in the lowlands region, but their foreign customs have produced friction between them and native Talinien residents.

Talinie has also seen a second, different invasion: The mining and timber interests in the Northern Marches have taken over the realm's two guilds. Our guildmasters—unctuous confidence men—are puppets of two ruthless foreign guildmasters, Bannier Andien of Dhoesone and Storm Holtson of Stjordvik. These thieves have gained only minor success in their home realms, so they encroach on Talinie's land to exploit it for

whatever they can plunder.

I fear the guildmasters must have shown a face of false devotion to the High Priest Torias Griene and led him astray, for he encouraged the previous thane to indulge these men without limit. The good hierarch, himself (I am sure) of spotless character, practices benevolence toward all his flock, and people of low character have no doubt taken advantage of him.

I believe a possible third invasion threatens our beloved realm: a series of disastrous coastal raids. The northern jarldoms of Rjurik grow restless, their eyes turning toward the Anuirean domains that lie just across the Tael Firth. Many suspect that Rjuven druids preach of war against Talinie to protect its forests, a point that leads me to my next unpopular sentiment.

## economic issues

The people of Talinie honor the preceding thane for the prosperity she brought to our fair land. All are living better than they were before she took up the torch of leadership.

That said, I urge you to note how the countryside has become less fair during her reign. We in the upland provinces lament the gaping quarry pits, the bleak eroded hillsides, the devastation that the guilds have wrought. Your subjects have benefitted from the plunder of the land, but what will our children inherit? The land is still healthy, for the moment, but if left unchecked these destructive practices will ruin the realm.

I must also mention the new incursions of brigands and raiders from Thurazor and the lawless goblin gorges of the Five Peaks. Our scarred, barren land gives no protection from these savages. We implore you to help.

## religious issues

As Thane of Talinie, you see not only to the secular needs of your people, but also to their spiritual needs. The unification of church and state, under which the thane also leads our Northern Imperial Temple of Haelyn, makes the government an example of the balance all of us should strive to achieve in our own lives.

Your predecessor showed great commitment to the temple's ideals; her lieutenant and hierarch, the high priest, has spread its stern teachings with admirable zeal. In these times of change, though, may we not consider showing generosity of spirit toward those of different creeds? Orthodoxy has closely knit our society, yet surely

believers secure in their own faith can tolerate the varying beliefs of others, without resorting to violence or oppression. Temple hierarchs have enacted restrictions on nonbelievers that, some say, deserve reassessment. I would gladly speak to you in private of these sensitive matters.

## resources

Left unchecked, any one of these problems could destroy the realm, but I think none of them insuperable. Talinie, for all the threats against her, still boasts substantial resources. Your predecessor cleared the forest with zeal but did not squander the income produced thereby, and so the state treasury remains adequate. Talinie's true wizard, Torele Anviras, presents a magical force to be reckoned with. Though he calls nobody friend, I do not doubt his loyalty to the realm.

Your greatest resource in all crises remains unchanged: the people of Talinie. Torn as they are between uplands and lowlands, among temples and guilds, all still pledge loyalty to the Oak Seat you now occupy. Though the immigrant newcomers in the lowlands seem giddy and extravagant, they bring new ways and new ideas, cosmopolitan views, and intriguing new skills. The uplanders, born to this land for thirty generations, remain unlettered, provincial, and more than a little suspicious, but also hard-working, honest, provident, and sensible. They are the foundation rock upon which you can strengthen our beloved realm.

In this eventful time after your glorious coronation, you will receive many visitors. Certainly the high priest, upon his return, will counsel you as he counseled the late regent; you may trust his words as much as he trusts yours. No doubt I can add little to his wise advice, but if you feel that a new and candid perspective on matters of state may prove useful, please know that I am always at your service.

I remain Your Majesty's loyal and devoted servant,  
Harrin Stalban

## early history

**T**he first residents of this land were, of course, elves. But the primordial elven culture called the Trautha ("stone builders") remains mysterious. Not even the Tuarhivel elves know much about these earlier elves. The Trautha fashioned swords of bronze and pots of clay, but they wielded powerful magic. Their stone circles, spaced arrow-straight on ley lines across the realm, remain Talinie's strongest sources of magical power—two thousand years after the Trautha were exterminated by the Andu, precursors of the Anuirean Empire. Even the reasons for this bloody war remain unclear. The Andu did not exterminate native peoples elsewhere, but the Trautha (whom the Andu called "mud folk") seem to have aroused their particular hatred. No one knows why.

After the cataclysm at Mount Deismaar, the land became part of the Anuirean Empire. Emperor Gladian Roele (who began his 10-year reign 83 years after Deismaar) christened the domain "Talinie" after his favorite concubine. The current capital, Nowelton, is built on the ruins of the principal Anuirean fortress, which was called "New Town." The Empire built six other outposts in the region; these became Talinie's provincial capitals.

It seems Anuire never found this outlying territory worth much trouble. The Imperial City settled Talinie with exiled minor nobles and other troublemakers, nonconformists who developed a free-thinking culture that to this day produces independent and hard-headed people. After the Empire's collapse, this independent and contrary nature led to three centuries of petty internal succession wars.

## wasted centuries

**T**alinie fell into disunity for many generations. Small, contentious factions of priests and nobles warred with one another, using the commoners as their pawns. Priests advanced their various

beliefs; nobles allied with whatever faith looked most likely to improve their incomes.

The settlers' Anuirean background made Haelyn their god of choice, but they disagreed violently over the proper way to honor the warrior god. Competing splinters of the Temple of Haelyn proposed varying degrees of pomp, different temple hierarchies, and contradictory scriptures. History records a bloody battle between two temples, resulting in mutual destruction, over the number of candles to be lit on Haelyn's altar.

After too many generations, the Northern Imperial Temple finally gathered enough support from

# history of talinie

the nobility to become the established religion of the domain. The Northern Temple's plain, strenuous, serious faith attracted the nobles because it did not confuse them with pomp or foggy ritual. What is more, the Northern Temple preached a message of work—unending work in Haelyn's name without expectation of reward. This severe message pleased lieges who felt their vassals could show more industry and less inclination to grouch.

Although mired in internal dissension, Talinie's squabbling factions always managed to present a united front to would-be invaders. Since the fall of the Empire, Talinie has remained free of outside control—a point of pride among all Taliniens.

## return to order

**O**ver two centuries ago, the baron Jarod Dannis emerged from the chaos and seized power. A brilliant warrior and talented statesman, the baron founded modern Talinie and the current line of regents, though he himself never held the throne. To mollify his allies (who feared his ambition), Dannis refused the crown and instead put his three-year-old son, Edrand, on the throne.

Dannis made the proclamation of regency immediately after his stunning victory in the Battle of Ice Haven, 319 years after the death of Michael Roele (or 319 Michaeline Reckoning). Because the only stick of furniture left intact in the enemy castle happened to be a wooden chair, Dannis used it as a temporary throne. To this day the wooden throne of Talinie is

called the Oak Seat.

Dannis ruled in all but name for many years. After his father's death at an advanced age, Edrand the Great (and, obviously, the patient) ruled well for decades.

Edrand married *Taricia Einharat*, a scion who shared the bloodline of Anduiras. Their son, Edrand II, married Naomi the Cursed, an unblooded noblewoman, and had two sickly children. Naomi died in her second childbirth, and Edrand married the far more vigorous adventurer Clarice Vitalic (Brenna line), a swordswoman from Alامية. Clarice gave birth to Edrand III. Edrand II died soon after, and Clarice reigned as thane until her son grew old enough to assume regency. To take the Oak Seat, Clarice had to convert from her birth-faith (Western Imperial Temple of Haelyn) to the state religion; thus her historical name, "The Apostate Queen."

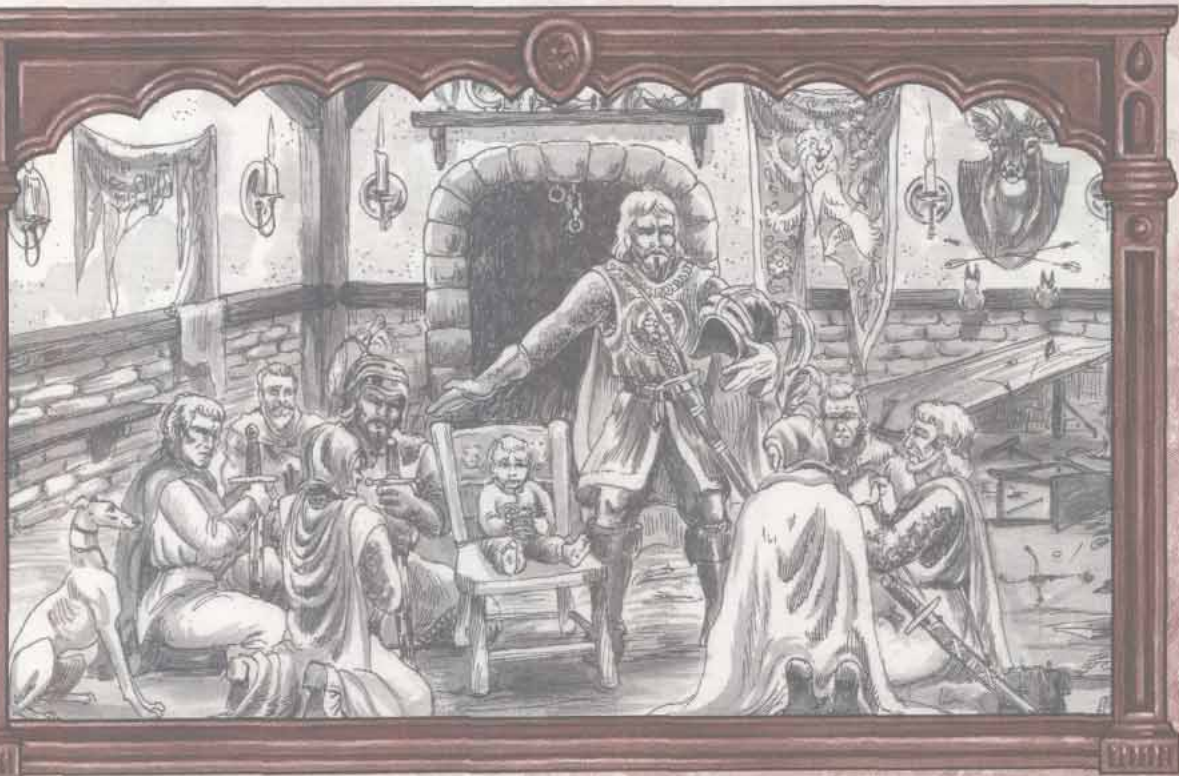
Clarice, wise as a ruler but impulsive in matters of the heart, remarried to a blooded companion from her adventuring days, the dashing rogue Halloravant (Anduiras line). The collateral line they began holds a secure but troublesome place in Talinie's history. The

Halloravant lineage includes many nobles who are duplicitous, given to stealth and conspiracy. These politically minded scions technically have no claim to the Oak Seat, yet some contest the issue. Over the generations, some have quietly held that the Halloravants have right of succession if Edrand's lineage should fail, though the Halloravants have made no open claim. Shielded from disrepute by their great influence and familial status, some Halloravants have allied with foreigners who mean no good for Talinie.

The realm's two leading guildmasters, Anphelan Halloravant and his cousin Murdoc Sanford Myles, are puppets of the thieving Bannier Andien of Dhoesone and Storm Holtson of Stjordvik. The fact is widely recognized but not spoken, for the thane can do nothing overt to prevent this foreign alliance. The Halloravants occupy too lofty a social position to permit royal censure. So the foreign guilds lay waste to the realm, and divert the profits to Dhoesone and Stjordvik.

## thuriene donalls

Upon reaching his majority, Edrand III took the throne peacefully, and his line continued unbroken over the next two centuries to the present. The last regent but one, Thalia Armara, took official control of the Northern Imperial



Temple of Haelyn, making explicit an alliance implied for generations. After a long and pious reign, Thalia choked on a ritual wafer and died. Thuriene Donalls took the cause of her mother's death as a sign that Haelyn disapproved of (what Thuriene considered) Thalia's moral laxity. As the new thane, Thuriene pursued her stern religious devotions with zeal.

The regent took as her mission the elevation of Talinie's citizens. She took as her method the development of economic prosperity for all; as her means, the exploitation of Talinie's great forests and mineral resources. Few local citizens had the necessary skill to tap the wealth of timber and coal, and so the thane invited guilds from Dhoesone and Stjordvik to raze the forests and open the mines. Thuriene specified a five-year period of access for the foreign guilds, and during this time they were to train native Taliniens to perform their work. But at the end of the access period, the crafty guildmasters merely appointed native puppets to replace them. The local populace now works the forests and mines, but most of the profits they earn go to the foreign guilds.

Worse, the depredation of the forest alarmed its resident elves. Talinie has few elves, but they conveyed their fears to the elf realm of Tuarhievel. Prince Fhileraene of Tuarhievel had maintained open (though cool) diplomatic relations with Talinie for generations, but now he protested to the thane. "The forest is all of a piece, a living thing that knows no borders," his dispatch read. "Laying waste to the forest in Talinie endangers the forest in Tuarhievel, as a wound to the limb endangers the heart."

Thane Donalls seems to have ignored the prince's protests on counsel from her newest adviser, a prestigious lesser hierarch from the Greensward priory of the Northern Imperial Temple. This junior official, Torias Griene, spoke movingly to the thane about her people's new prosperity in that mining province, and the increased loyalty to temple ideals that resulted. Griene's testimony convinced Thuriene to continue mining and deforesting, despite the elves' increasing protests.

Timber cutters and miners began to suffer strange accidents, mysterious attacks, and even kidnaping. On counsel from Griene, the thane prepared for war against the elves. At this crisis, a young man emerged from the forest in the Lindholme uplands, claiming he had visited the elven court for the past year. His archaic speech and clothing told that in the outer world at least a century had passed. This man, Torele Anviras, proved to have the gift of true magic, for he was a scion of Anduiras. Torele Anviras healed the breach between the realms by means unknown, then appointed himself Mage of Talinie and took control of its many Trautha stone circles. No one cared to stop him—least of all the thane, once she saw that Anviras worked for the good of Talinie.

Meanwhile, the crisis cemented Torias Griene's position. The thane, captivated by Griene's unshakable religious convictions, made him Hierarch of the Temple, second only to the thane in authority. Griene controlled all access to the thane, and enforced with holy zeal her ban on other faiths. He has now developed a tremendous power base.

However, Griene is unblooded; he can never hold the Oak Seat. The thane therefore was grooming a lesser hierarch, the scion Priestess Siobhan Riedhie of Greensward (*FA; Pr3, Haelyn; An, minor, 21*), as her successor. Devout but tolerant of other beliefs, Siobhan aroused Griene's resentment. The hierarch, however, failed to persuade the thane away from Siobhan.

How tragic, and how curious, that the thane died in a riding accident just before she intended to announce her successor. In the absence of a designated heir, your PC was determined to be next in line for the Oak Seat. Among the many problems your character faces: the need to find out whether the death of Thuriene Donalls was truly an accident.

# the lay of the land

**T**he rugged, ragged, rolling hills of Serimset and their blue and bounteous lakes have called me back to sweet, sweet youth." So sang Talinie's most famous poet, Kennan the Blind Bard, two centuries ago. The emerald hills, decked in fog and flowers if not forests, still beckon to Talinie's people. Some of the lakes yet teem with fish, waterfowl, and the occasional giant serpent; other lakes have died, filled with the poisonous tailings of nearby coal mines. Talinie boasts many vistas of great beauty, but not as many as in the past.

The vast forests of the Aelvinnwode blanket most of the provinces, from the famous hills of Winter's Deep and Serimset to the lesser foothills and vales of Greensward and Lindholme. The thick forest and steep hills have kept the upland provinces lightly populated through Talinie's history. One region of Winter's Deep is so rugged that human residents nearby call it "the Dwarf Country"—not because dwarves live there (they don't), but because only a dwarf could.

The land descends gradually to a narrow band of lowland steppes. In decades past, the forest reached across the lowland provinces almost to the shore of the Tael Firth. But the guilds have done their worst in these provinces—Seaport, Greensward, and Ice Haven. Now the forest edge forms a frayed and ugly line across these flatlands. In their place the realm has grassy meadows, tilled fields (most of the population lives in these provinces), and wasted, gullied slopes.

Talinie's rocky coast has no good ports except Nowelton. The capital was chosen for the small nearby island which shelters this port city from the waves of the Tael Firth. Other ports include Stromness in Winter's Deep, sheltered from ocean storms by Skye Cape; Daliburgh, in Greensward; and the backwater harbor of Poolewe in the inaptly named southern province of Seaport. Submerged rocks make all these ports a challenge to sailors. [The DM may require a Seamanship or Navigation proficiency check to safely enter any Talinien port.]

**Old Lotan:** Even the remotest uplander in Talinie knows of the storm giant who lives on the Ice Haven coast beneath the water. Fishermen christened him "Old Lotan," although no one knows what his name is or whether he even has one.

Certainly no one comes close enough to inquire without dodging a boulder or—worse—a lightning bolt.

For four centuries Old Lotan has lived in many lairs along the coast and on the nearby island of Colonsay, dining on vast quantities of oysters, blue-green lobsters, seals, and the occasional fisherman or beachcomber. Some claim to have seen him in company with a nereid, perhaps his captive or his companion.

Lotan is now quite old, and his dark green hair has gone white. Fishermen hope he will die soon. His death would open up a lucrative new industry, for the coastal waters are rich in sea life. But some believe that the giant's death might open the way to merfolk, leading to new conflicts between fishermen above and below the water.

## the land itself

**Old Lotan (Giant, Storm):** AC -6 (bronze plate); MV 15, Sw 15; HD 19+1d6+1; hp 149; THAC0 3; #AT 1; Dmg 3d10+12 (2-handed sword), 3d6 (composite bow); SA see below; SD immune to electricity and lightning, casts spells as a 7th-level priest; SZ G (26' tall); ML fanatic (18); Int exceptional (16); AL CG; XP 16,000.

**Notes:** Uses the following magical abilities as if at 15th level: *call lightning* (3 bolts of 15d8 each, once/day); *control weather* (twice/day); *control winds* (once/day); *levitate* (twice/day); *lightning bolt* (1 bolt of 15d6, once/day); *predict weather* (once/day); *water breathing* (permanent ability); *weather summoning* (once/day).

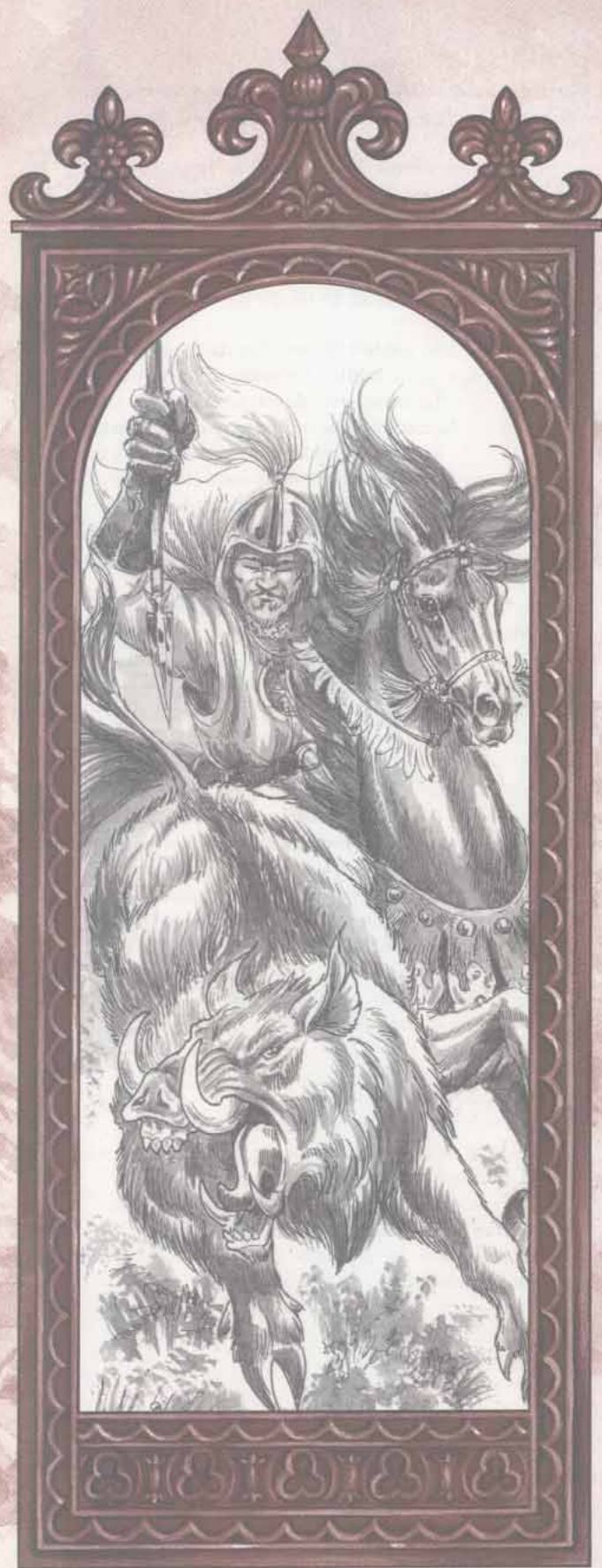
**Spells (3/3/2/1):** 1st—*command, light, pass without trace*; 2nd—*obscurement, speak with animals, spiritual hammer*; 3rd—*create food & water, glyph of warding*; 4th—*cure serious wounds*.

## climate

For most of Talinie's year, it always has either just rained, is raining now, or is about to rain. Only in the three glorious months of summer does the climate turn sunny, and even then morning fog rolls over the uplands. The temperature never grows genuinely warm.

In winter the wind is brisk and the rain frequent. Winter's Deep and Freestead become snowed in, and only the coastal provinces avoid





hard freezes.

Generally the skies offer a grim drizzle that reflects and shapes the dour, stoic character of the people.

## natural resources

The realm's great blessing is its wealth of resources—and like many blessings of wealth, this has also become a curse.

Mineral resources include great amounts of anthracite (hard) coal in Lindholme and Freestead. These provinces and Greensward also contain copper, iron, and some tin. Seaport has limestone quarries near its rocky shore.

Tantalizing reports circulate of a vein of ruby in the extreme east of inaccessible Winter's Deep. As this area lies right on the border with the goblin land of Thurazor, even the ruthless guilds exercise restraint, unwilling to face the risks involved in exploiting the rubies. Raiders would plunder the mine at once.

Timber is an even greater resource in Greensward and the upland provinces. Evergreen pines and firs make up over half the trees; another quarter are cedar, hemlock, and oak. The rest include cherry, dogwood maple, yew, and chestnut. Though still basically healthy, most forests in Talinje suffer grave endangerment by the guilds' clear-cutting.

Because of its many upland lakes, the land is dotted with peat bogs. Upland residents often build their homes of peat blocks, and also burn peat as fuel. These homes are called "blackhouses," because the smoke of the burning peat has dyed their inner walls charcoal black.

## plants and animals

To enter a Talinjen forest is to become aware at once of the beauty that inspired Kennan the Blind Bard and many other rustic poets: towering trunks, the moist smell of earth, distant bird calls, butterflies in rainbow colors fluttering in pairs. One envies the few elves who live here.

The forest wanderer sometimes glimpses red deer, foxes, badgers, martens, and wild hares. Beside a forest pond he may see brown otters at play. In the branches or on cliff sides roost grouse, gannets, and pheasants. The only predators here are small wildcats and, in the air, ospreys and golden eagles.

Along cleared mountain trails the hiker sees azaleas, dwarf willows, and saxifrage; in the lowland fields, bluebells, buttercups, shamrocks, thistles, and heather; in boggy soil, crowberry and blueberry

bushes and bog cotton. In the lowlands almost all animals, except foxes and rabbits, have been eradicated by dogs and local livestock: pigs, cattle, sheep, ducks, geese, and red chickens.

Along the coast the viewer spies sea gulls in huge numbers, which feed on salmon, tench, and sea trout. Their only competition, aside from a few fishing families and Old Lotan the storm giant, are common and gray seals that have colonized the rocks offshore.

## agriculture

Talinien agriculture is subsistence farming. Upland farmsteads, called "crofts," generally consist of a small peat or wooden cabin, a combined barn and granary, one or two sheds, a chicken coop, a goat pen, a sheepfold, a doghouse, and sometimes a cattle pen. Each croft covers 40 to 400 acres (or more in rugged areas) and is managed by one extended family of 5 to 12 members.

Centuries ago, Jarod Dannis supported the crofters and their way of life by guaranteeing low rents, protection, and the right to bequeath their crofts to their heirs. The feudal lords who own croft land take a portion of each year's crop in return for maintaining the croft.

In general the system works well, although working the croft is hard. Crofters lead lives of continual effort, scabbling to make money or earn food at small jobs. Few learn to read or write. Their worship in the Northern Imperial Temple stresses fatalism, duty, and low expectations. They are tough people, close-minded and suspicious of strangers, but honest to the bone and always willing to help someone in trouble.

Crofters' sheepdogs are as remarkable as the people—lowland residents say the dogs are smarter. These shaggy gray-black dogs obey complex commands that their owners whistle across the hills. A crofter can tell his dog to go to a given pasture and fetch three sheep there, and it will. However, some dogs this smart go mad—killing whole herds of sheep in a berserk rage—and must be destroyed. A few such dogs escape into the wilderness. Their feral packs have terrorized isolated crofts and even whole upland villages.

## dangerous wildlife

Aside from poisonous toadstools, the only major hazard in the wilds of Talinie is the alothere, a gigantic boar the size of a pony. Coarse reddish-brown bristles cover the hide of this wild hog. Its wrinkled snout has two upturned tusks which it uses to slash and gouge. The alothere is highly territorial, irritable, and aggressive.

Though these boars have inhabited the Aelvinnwode since before humans settled Talinie, they caused few problems until the past decade. With its forest habitat vanishing to guild clear-cutting, the alothere has moved onto the open hills and into populated areas. Alotheres have attacked isolated crofts, coaches on hill roads, and even guard patrols.

For generations, hunting the alothere has been a royal privilege. Only the thane and her entourage can legally kill the beast. Until recently, the crofters have cared little to hunt it anyway—they seldom encounter it, and parasites that cause fever, sweating, and sore muscles infest the boar's flesh. (Head of alothere, however, has long been considered a great delicacy.) But the alotheres' move into crofts and villages has alarmed uplanders. They now hunt the beasts, law or no law.

**Alothere (Mammal):** AC 6; MV 12; HD 7; 40 hp; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 3d6; SA disease; SD fights for 1d4 melee rounds after reaching 0 to -10 hp; SZ M (5' at shoulder); ML Avg (8-10); Int Animal (1); AL N; XP 975.

Note: Dies immediately at -11 or fewer hp. Travels in families of 2-8, of which 1-4 are young (4 HD, Dmg 1d6+1). Boars and sows fight equally well.

## provinces

**M**any of the roads that connect Talinie's provinces survive from the late Anuirean Empire. Wide, straight, and paved in close-fitting granite blocks, these roads have proven unsuitable for local trade because of the realm's hilly terrain. The Empire built its roads primarily for military communication; most Anuirean roads head straight up one side of a hill and straight down the other, no matter how steep. In contrast, the narrow, twisting trails made by traders have become Talinie's main avenues. These paths are better suited for peasant carts drawn by oxen. Unfortunately, they are also better suited for bandit ambushes.

Thuriene Donalls began a road-building program shortly before her death. Her first goal was an extension of the existing lumber road from Scalpay in central Ice Haven to Grimsay in Greensward. The road would speed the razing of the forest, but more importantly—to her way of thinking—Talinie would prosper.

## jarod's seat

The most beautiful view in Talinie can be seen from the summit of Jarod's Seat, the tall hill overlooking Nowelton. Once out of sight of the Rose Palace, a

viewer atop this hill feels it as solitary as any in the heart of the uplands.

Named for the founder of Talinie, the hill is surmounted by a huge disk of black granite carved with compass points. When the regent stands on the disk under a full moon, glowing lines indicate the directions of immediate dangers to the realm. The glow's strength indicates the degree of danger. Lines have pointed to Thurazor and the Five Peaks since the realm's founding; in recent decades one line has always pointed to Boeruine. Just before her death, Thane Donalls observed two other lines which have so far defied explanation. *[The DM will determine their directions.]*

Huge, ancient chalk drawings on the exposed hillside also mark the seat. Made by the Trautha millennia ago, these drawings of animals and fish glow brightly twice a year during the winter and summer solstices. At this time Nowelton holds its Dormancy and High Summer ceremonies, festivals of music and gift-giving.



## government

**T**alinie is a theocracy, meaning that power resides with the priesthood, the regent (also a priest, at least in title), and—to a lesser extent—the nobility.

## taxation

The regent sets tax rates based on advice from the high priest and the nobility. The Northern Imperial

Temple of Haelyn handles tax collection through a large staff of lay functionaries. Tax collectors dress in lay clothing but wear an orange sash marked with holy symbols.

Noble landowners collect their vassals' taxes and forward the money to the temple. Because Northern Imperial Temple doctrine forbids the feudal system, uplander vassals can theoretically own their land. In practice, however, they pay installments to their liege landowners at a rate that requires several lifetimes to pay off.

## regulations

All interested nobles meet for 10 days each mid-summer in a Council of Lords, where they propose and vote on civil regulations. Simple majority determines the voting results; the wealthiest nobles seem to win most votes. For most of Talinien history these convocations have been sleepy affairs with little influence.

Religious laws are handed down by the high priest, who is understood to speak for the thane. During Thuriene Donalls's reign, High Priest Griene dictated many new laws designed to make life difficult for nonmembers of the Northern Imperial Temple. The thane never disagreed.

Some past thanes have spoken for themselves, propounding new laws over the high priest's objections. However, the priestly bureaucracy proved its ability to delay or refuse enforcement of laws of which it disapproves.

## law enforcement

Each province has a sheriff appointed by the regent and approved by the high priest. Each city has guards appointed, funded, and organized by the local branch of the Northern Imperial Temple. Each village elects a constable who receives no salary.

Nobles police themselves informally. Peer pressure works well in most cases, and the

regent or high priest can arrest and try nobles who resist this pressure.

Talinie's legal system guarantees all landowners and free commoners the right to a fair and speedy trial. Feudal vassals receive justice from the landowning liege they serve. The legal system distinguishes first between civil and religious ("spiritual") crimes, and second between noble and "standard" defendants (that is, commoners and gentry). The

law considers priests noble defendants. The society is not litigious; few cases proceed to a trial.

Among the vassals, especially, crime rarely occurs—not only are they honest folk, but those criminals who do break the trust of their fellows usually receive the harsh justice of a lynch mob.

# government and culture

### Civil Crimes

The realm's civil statutes derive from a code propounded by Jarod Dannis centuries ago. It categorizes offenses according to six *schedules*, as follows:

- **First Schedule Offenses: Misdemeanors.** Drunkenness or disorderly conduct, excessive noise, hindrance of business, littering, reckless coach operation, vagrancy. *Penalties:* fines (1–10 gp), damages payable to injured party, prohibition against future conduct of that type.
- **Second Schedule Offenses: Crimes of Minor Property.** "Minor" property is property valued at less than 50 gp. Cruelty to animals, minor burglary, minor property damage, minor vandalism, unlawful entry, usury. *Penalties:* fines (10–100 gp), damages, imprisonment (6–60 days) on Nowelton Prison Farm in Ice Haven.
- **Third Schedule Offenses: Crimes of Minor Personhood.** Crimes that do no physical damage. Disobedience, impersonating a commoner, lascivious conduct between consenting parties, libel, pandering, resisting arrest, robbery, slander. *Penalties:* fines (50–500 gp), imprisonment on Prison Farm (in rare cases).

- **Fourth Schedule Offenses: Crimes of Major Property.** Alothere hunting, arson, bribery, fencing stolen goods, forgery, fraud, major burglary, major property damage, major vandalism, Second Schedule offenses against a noble person. *Penalties:* fines (500–1000 gp), dungeon imprisonment (one month to five years), hard labor.
- **Fifth Schedule Offenses: Crimes of Major Personhood.** Assault on a commoner, battery, escaping lawful imprisonment, impersonating a noble, manslaughter, rape, slavery, unlawful dueling, Third Schedule offenses against a noble person. *Penalties:* confiscation of property, dungeon imprisonment (one year and up), hard labor, mutilation, exile.
- **Sixth Schedule Offenses: Capital Crimes.** Espionage, insurrection, murder, sabotage, sedition, treason, Fifth Schedule crimes against a noble person. *Penalties:* confiscation of property and exile after mutilation, death by hanging or drowning.

A single noble jurist in a provincial court tries cases on the Fourth Schedule and below; a panel of three nobles of the province hears appeals. Fifth and Sixth Schedule cases are tried by a panel of three noble judges, including one priest, in the Royal Court at Nowelton.

The regent can pardon any civil criminal for any crime, and can usually sway noble jurists to reduce or increase penalties.

### Spiritual Crimes

Any crime involving a priest or a temple is remanded to the nearest priest or priestess. The Imperial Temple's code and penalties come from the *Aromatic Disciplines*, a quasi-scriptural tract of great age.

- **Minor Transgressions.** Blasphemy in private company, failure to worship punctually. *Penalty:* usually none. The priest may require penance, such as reciting prayers.
- **Lesser Failings.** Crimes against a priest's reputation, public blasphemy. *Penalties:* fines ("donations"), hard labor for a term of arbitrary length (until the priests decide to free the offender) at a provincial indoctrination camp.

- **Greater Failings.** Crimes against a priest's property, desecration of a temple (arson, burglary, vandalism), tomb robbing, unlawful worship by Talinien subjects (worship in assembly of any god but Haelyn, or worship anywhere except at a Northern Imperial Temple). *Penalties:* as for Lesser Failings, plus confiscation of property, excommunication where applicable, exile, mutilation.
- **Grave Failings.** Crimes against a priest's person, seditious attacks on the Northern Imperial Temple (verbal or physical). *Penalties:* dungeon imprisonment (with or without mutilation) for an arbitrary term, mutilation and exile, death in the Chamber of Forgiveness.

Penalties for Minor Transgressions and Lesser Failings are meted out on the spot by all priests present. Prison sentences require agreement from all priests present (at least three). Greater and Grave Failings, as well as appealed verdicts, are tried in the secret Chamber of Forgiveness beneath the central temple at Nowelton.

Although the code allows priests great latitude, in general they have not abused their power. Priests show little mercy, however, to nonmembers of the Northern Imperial Temple. The regent can pardon or reduce any penalty.

## transportation

Within the capital city and larger towns, Taliniens of the gentry and nobility rely on four-wheeled coaches drawn by teams of two mares. The independent drivers of these coaches use a system of hand gestures and face signals to tell one another of their destinations, the character of their passengers, and danger. *[At the DM's discretion, Talinien characters with the Sign Language proficiency can know this system.]*

A "country coach" system transports travelers between provinces. These coaches belong to the unblooded nobleman Elwin Dentern, a canny merchant prince of middle years, high ambition, and low scruples. He aspires to become a guildmaster, or at least the puppeteer of a blooded guildmaster. Dentern regards his country coach system as a possible stepping stone to that high position.

Dentern has been a long-time ally of Hierarch Torias Griene. Though the country coaches have an excellent safety record overall, an unfortunate accident last year killed two prominent nobles who happened to be vocal critics of Griene.

## communications

A regent who must send a message quickly and securely to another realm relies on one of two methods. Most often, diplomatic letters go by the Black Feather Couriers, an informal but serious organization of messengers, so called for the feather each wears in his cap while riding. For three generations the Black Feathers have carried the thane's missives through all dangers at great speed (four provinces per week), and they have not lost one yet. They have acquired a heroic and romantic reputation among the populace—many children dream of growing up to become a Black Feather Courier.

The second method, speedier but less reliable, involves a brace of carrier pigeons. On the grounds of the Rose Palace stands a dovecote of homing pigeons, each bird provided by a city mayor or province ruler. When she needs to communicate with one of her vassals, the thane places the message in a capsule on a pigeon's leg and lets the bird loose. If all goes well, the pigeon soon finds its way home.

Though they don't understand how he does it, those in power know that Torele Anviras, mage of the realm, can communicate magically with distant mages in an emergency. Doing so, however, evidently fatigues or endangers him, for he has used the ability only twice. Anviras jealously guards the secret of this power from other mages and even from the regent.

## armies

The thane currently commands six army units: three musters of infantry and one each of archers, scouts, and mercenary cavalry. These 1,200 soldiers are almost all human Taliniens. Demihumans occupy important noncombat posts, but the provincial people of the uplands object to relying on them too heavily. The scout unit has, however, recruited some dwarves to patrol the upland hills.

The units comprise soldiers from all provinces. Some advisers suggest that the thane should reorganize the military along provincial lines—the current musters, scattered among the provinces, must learn landscapes that provincial troops would already know.

**Unit assignments:** The 200 soldiers of the Thane's First Infantry Company are stationed in Winter's Deep. The Second Company occupies Freestead, and the Third Company holds Lindholme. The 200 archers in the Thane's Bowman Company are quartered in a central fortress in Serimset, ready to move rapidly to any province to provide missile support.

The domain's 18 scout units, called the Talinien Border Patrols, are organized into 10-scout squads. A command and support group of 20 officers based in Winter's Deep leads these units. Once every day or two, a five-scout team on routine patrol inspects a given part of the border.

Soldiers and scouts sound alerts by blowing small silver whistles provided by Torele Anviras. Sounds from these whistles, though seemingly no louder than those of ordinary whistles, carry to the nearest fort or outpost. Soldiers learn a simple whistling code that specifies the nature and location of the alert.

The sixth unit, Derlantra's Valorous Riders, is an unsavory cavalry company of human mercenaries from Dhoesone, Boeruine, Tuornen, and Endier. The captain, tough and cynical Theor Derlantra (MA; F4; An, tainted, 6), enlists competent soldiers without asking questions; they can (and often do) give false names. The company has become a refuge for fugitives from crime—but they're good soldiers.

## politics and religion

The Northern Imperial Temple of Haelyn is the only sanctioned temple in Talinie. Its hierarchs and priests are the realm's civil servants, tax collectors, customs agents, and forest wardens. The temple owns more property than anyone in Talinie except the thane—who, of course, heads the temple. The temple is a law unto itself everywhere in the realm.

The Northern Imperial Temple's intricate entanglement in temporal matters has led to political stresses as well as religious intolerance. During Thuriene Donalls's reign, Hierarch Torias Griene argued for the prohibition of other faiths. No matter that immigrants to Winter's Deep, Greensward, and Seaport agitated to build places of worship: Religious plurality, Griene asserted, undermines the people's solidarity and cultural unity.

Under Thane Donalls, Griene's policy went unquestioned even when members of the Hidden Temple of Cuiraécen staged a protest before the Rose Palace. Palace guards ejected the protesters, beating several. Similar protests in Winter's Deep and Greensward, on behalf of the Temple of Fortune, met the same response. In Seaport, members of the Peaceful Seas of Nesirie sect have carved hidden chapels in the coastal cliffs, accessible only at low tide. The influence of these other faiths is so minor, however, that their presences are not even considered holdings (0). Intolerance has made all these worshipers tense, suspicious, hostile, and stubborn.

## economics and trade

Though the Northern Imperial Temple receives tithes from its members, Talinie's small population cannot support the government on donations from the faithful alone. The domain supplements its treasury with the proceeds from sales of timber and minerals. Dhoesone and Stjordvik buy much of both (to resell at higher prices through the guilds there); Boeruine takes most of the rest. Smugglers carry many cartloads of wood and coal illegally into the goblin kingdoms.

Nowelton also has a budding textiles industry that processes fine wool from the lowland provinces. This wool goes to Boeruine, in return for the many manufactured goods that Talinie cannot produce. More such goods, expensive but of finer quality, come in illicitly from Boeruine's mortal enemy, the realm of Avanil. If the Archduke of Boeruine ever learned that these smuggled goods find their way even into the Rose Palace itself, he would be infuriated.

How do these goods get to the uplands? Wandering salesmen, called "drummers," travel the villages with knapsacks of knives, brushes, sewing notions, cups and small pots, and other wares. Just as importantly, these drummers also carry news and stories. The drummer has a unique advantage, in that he is the only stranger whom villagers welcome freely, without suspicion. A regent who wants to assess the mood of her people might ask a drummer, or even go so far as to impersonate one herself.

## culture

**T**alinie in recent decades has become two cultures: those of the uplands and lowlands.

## rural life

Few uplanders can read and write, but they have a strong tradition of spoken verse, folk tales, and myths. Some lovestruck youths follow the example of Kennan the Blind Bard and compose lyrical poems about flowered hillsides and springtime passions.

Upland paintings and woodcarvings exemplify unsophisticated beauty. Village woodcarvers sometimes make a sign for each family that portrays a given animal or bird, the traditional totem for that family. These signs serve as the uplander's equivalent of heraldry.

Upland folk musicians play sheepskin drums, wood pipes, and the *flotsay*. This instrument has three fretted necks, with catgut strings that cross over the sound box. Inside, a sound post resonates when notes are played. The musician cradles the *flotsay* on his lap, working the frets with his left hand while plucking with the right. The crossed strings add strange, nasal overtones to the base notes. Many *flotsayers* proclaim their skill through damascening their instruments; the more ornate the inlaid decoration, the better the player.

Architecture in the highlands consists of stacking peat blocks so the shack won't fall down. "Cuisine" means barley bread, barley beer, and stews of mutton, lamb, and chicken. Women weave cloth and cast pots, but most ceramics, glass, and manufactured goods come from the lowlands.

## city life

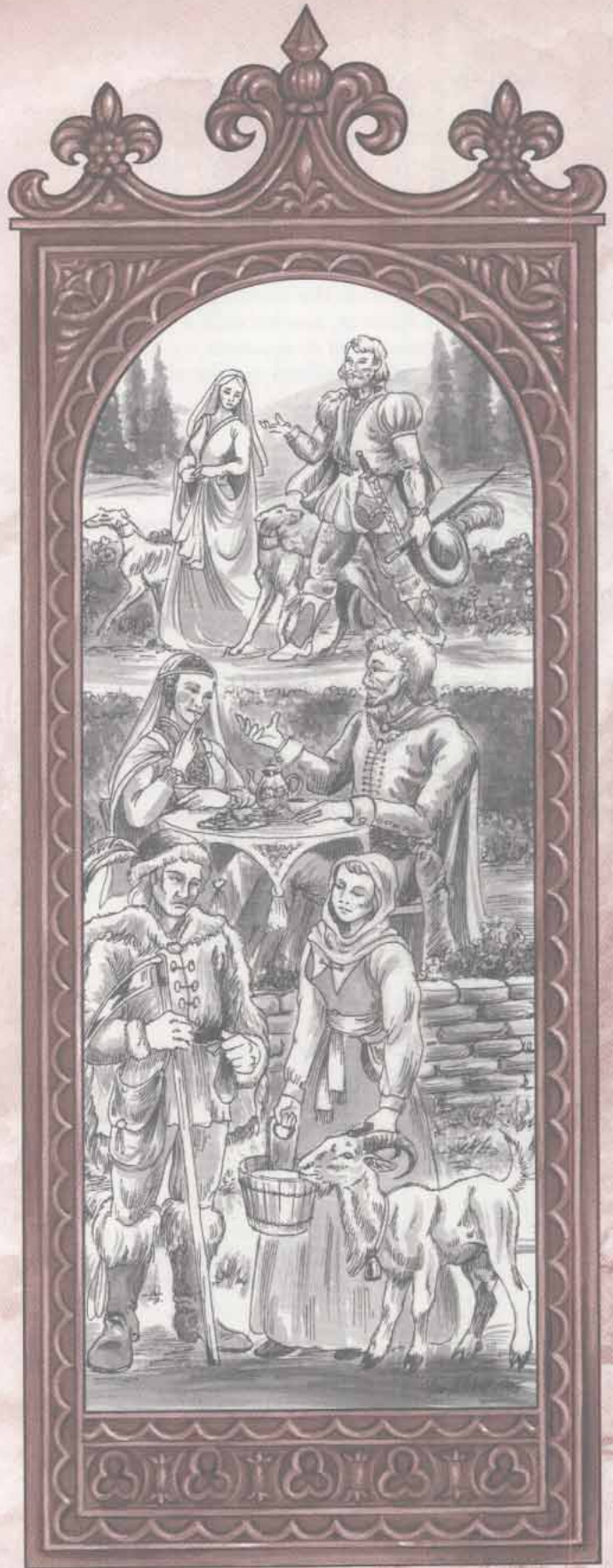
Lowlands life has a much different, more cosmopolitan character than that of the uplands. Lowlands residents more often are literate, see religious dramas and hear hymn music in the village square, blow glass, and build ornately carved wooden buildings. They pursue hobbies like stained glass, calligraphy, and weaving.

The gentry here are fascinated by incoming refugees from Boeruine, people of learning and culture. Their new music and poetry, as well as their new ideas about religious freedom, have spread rapidly among the towns. So have their textiles. Boeruinean cloth shops have become fashionable in many towns, where trendsetting women called "Silk-Worms" ramble among these shops and examine their goods—but seldom buy anything. Merchants indulge the Silk-Worms because their talk about new cloths brings in customers.

When not at work, lowlanders often gather in their town's central park. There, orators speak freely for all kinds of causes, save three forbidden topics: overthrow of the regent, questioning the Northern Imperial Temple or its priests, and blasphemy of Haelyn.

## harvest moon fair

Lowlanders and uplanders unite at Harvest Moon Fair in Nowelton each autumn. The fair offers livestock shows, contests for the best produce and best pies, races, acrobatics, furrow-plowing competitions, tugs-of-war, seed spitting contests, and maypole dances. A good time is had by all, even the regent.





**T**he capital of Talinie, Nowelton, was founded by the baron Jarod Dannis in 322 MR. Nowelton is actually Talinie's third capital city. An unusually strong storm wrecked the first, on the Greensward coast, the year it was founded. The second capital, built during winter in a sheltered cove in northern Ice Haven, proved during spring thaw to be built on swampland. The third capital, again built on the coast but sheltered by the island of Colonsay, has become a thriving city of 12,000. Almost all of its residents are human, except for a few hundred halflings and dwarf guards.

# nowelton, the garden city

Nowelton rests on six low hills. The city walls, made of sandstone, are 10 feet thick and 20 feet high. Buildings are plain and stern, as befits the teachings of the Northern Imperial Temple of Haelyn, but fine trees and flowers grow in gardens everywhere. Tantalizing incense vapors drift from the archway of each temple; the streets offer a medley of pleasant smells. Citizens are reserved and wary of strangers, but always hard-working and polite.

The city stands on the site of ancient New Town, the domain's capital during the days of the Anuirean Empire. Every decade or so, someone uncovers a passage into the old city's ruined and haunted catacombs.

## parts of town

**Jarod's Seat:** The Rose Palace, government houses, lesser nobles' homes; see page 10.

**Temples:** The most glorious temples; shrines and homes of the priests of the Northern Imperial Temple of Haelyn.

**Seaview:** The finest noble mansions.

**Market District:** Shops, open markets, and homes of merchants, tradesmen, and gentry. Many Boeruinean immigrants settle here.

**Guilders:** A district of guild meeting halls, small shrines, and some residences.

**Halfling District:** A small, peaceful neighborhood of some 40 halfling families.

**Nighthawk:** An unsavory slum, refuge of thieves and fugitives; also most workers' housing.



# Garden City



**T**he Thane of Talinie rules almost 70,000 people, most of whom live in the provinces of Lindholme and Ice Haven. Crofters, nobles, merchants, leatherworkers, miners, dowagers, religious zealots, courtesans, chambermaids: All can be unique and fascinating citizens. This section details only a few of your more significant subjects, so feel free to populate the kingdom with your own characters. What is the Rose Palace chamberlain like? Who is your character's personal coach driver? When you create one of these nonplayer characters, give the description to your DM, who can approve or revise the description as desired. Together, your creativity will bring the realm to life.

## demographics

**A**dventurers are rare in Talinie. No more than five or six people per hundred have a character class and level, and only a few per thousand ever become adventurers and rise above 3rd level.

A few hundred priests, almost all of the Northern Imperial Temple, live in Talinie. (Many lay officials of the temple who handle mostly secular matters have the title of "priest," though they do not command priest magic.) The realm also hosts a few hundred fighters, rangers, and bards. Thieves and magicians are scarce; there are several of each in Nowelton, but only one or two in any uplands province. Note that most are 1st- or 2nd-level characters.

## commoners

Ninety-five percent of Taliniens live off the land or ply humble trades in the towns. They are stolid, unlettered, close-mouthed people. Hard-working, thrifty, and deeply honest, they seem to expect disaster constantly. They wrap themselves in furs to stave off inevitable pneumonia, and raise their large families with strict vigilance to forestall the children's inevitable slide into vice and improvidence. This fatalistic world view is shaped by the Northern Imperial Temple. Every believer, attending

worship twice a week, hears the priests' stern admonitions about offenses against Haelyn, whom they portray as a demanding and reproachful deity who allows only the most diligent, austere spirits into his Sweet-Scented Paradise. Those who prove themselves unworthy inevitably fall to perdition. In his secret heart each commoner thinks himself unworthy. So he works all the harder.

# notable citizens

## the gentry

This 4% segment of the population does not think itself unworthy. These self-satisfied trades workers and merchants believe that Haelyn has rewarded them for hard work and innate superiority to the rabble. Secure in comfortable and well-furnished town houses in Nowelton or the lowland towns, they delight in novelty and "wicked" flirtations with new ideas. Patriarchs work at their shops or dispatch houses; giggly wives make social visits and hold stylish teas; bratty children learn reading, numbers, and music from Boeruinean tutors.

Some new and fashionable members of the gentry are intellectuals who emigrated from Boeruine. They fled the heavy taxes and militarism imposed on their homeland by the archduke. In Nowelton the immigrants have promoted (consciously or not) religious friction between the Northern Imperial Temple and several other faiths, friction that Thane Donalls could not repress despite her aggressive intolerance.

## the nobility

Fewer than 200 titled nobles live in Talinie; most are unblooded. They live with small families on large incomes, in small castles on large wilderness estates. Most lowland families also maintain mansions in Nowelton's luxurious Seaview district; upland nobles view the capital as a den of debauchery and want nothing to do with it. Nobles are wealthy landowners, but only the royal family

and a few important barons control political power.

To acquire status, many nobles cultivate extravagant gardens which emulate the Rose Palace's magnificent Yearlong Gardens. Nowelton law gives residents tax deductions if they donate a fine botanical garden to the realm, and so manicured parks dot the city, bringing life and color to otherwise gray, forbidding places.

## the royal family

**T**alinie has three blooded families. Two are branches of the royal family descended directly from the baron Jarod Dannis: the Thane's Line and the so-called Lesser Line. No one in the Lesser Line has yet held the Oak Seat.

The third blooded family, the Halloravants, are a collateral line that traces descent through Clarice Vitalic's second husband, the rogue Halloravant. No one disputes the Halloravants' lineal claim to royal status, but few Halloravants in the past, and even fewer today, would have made good leaders.

The last thane, Thuriene Donalls, is assumed to have died without officially designating an heir. She had been publicly grooming a temple priestess of the Lesser Line, Siobhan Riedhie, as her successor.

Your character may come to the regency in one of three ways: With the DM's approval, you may decide Thuriene Donalls (*FA*; *Pr6*, *Haelyn*; *An*, major, 30; *LG*) did not die after all, and play her; your regent may be a character of your own design, a descendant of the Thane's Line next in succession for the Oak Seat and invested with Thane Donalls's regency; or you can play Priestess Siobhan Riedhie, who is described in this section. [*The DM may adjust her statistics to fit better with the other player characters in the campaign.*] The family lines are shown on the cover of this sourcebook.

## the anduiras bloodline

All scions of the royal family belong to this bloodline. The energies of the late god Anduiras, symbol of nobility and leadership, have given various thanes resistance to magical charms, abilities to detect and protect against evil, great strength and courage, iron will, and even an aura of divinity. These powers work best when the thane uses them in service to the realm.

The bloodmark of the royal family is bright red hair, of a more intense color than any common hair in the realm. At the DM's discretion, your character may automatically have this mark as a blood ability.

## the rose palace

The thane lives in a gray granite castle atop Thane's Hill, the highest hill in Nowelton. Though the Rose Palace itself is somber and somewhat forbidding, as befits the Talinien character, the Yearlong Gardens that surround it are the wonder of the realm. Each of these 12 meticulously kept gardens holds plant types that bloom during a single month; in any given month, one of the gardens is always in bloom. The Yearlong Gardens possess a transcendent beauty that brings serenity to the spirit. (See the front gatefold for maps of the palace and gardens.)

## people of importance

**B**elow are some of the many personalities whom the regent of Talinie may meet. All of these NPCs are humans of Anuirean descent, unless otherwise noted. These are exceptional figures—leaders in their fields—and not typical of the population.

## torias griene

*Hierarch of the Northern Imperial  
Temple of Haelyn, 7th-level priest*

S:	9
D:	10
C:	10
I:	17
W:	18
Ch:	16
AC:	10
hp:	41
MV:	12
THAC0:	16
#AT:	1
Dmg:	1d4

**Bloodline:** None.



**Equipment:** *Amulet of proof against detection and location, ring of mind shielding, dark green cassock, black surplice, holy symbol (rose with thorns, superimposed over sun/sword symbol of Haelyn), prayer book.*

**Typical dialogue:** "Does it benefit our realm that you, Your Highness, lead us? Of course it does. Would the realm benefit if Your Highness were deluded and spoke with three minds, or five? Of course not. Just so, the people of Talinie benefit from the strong leadership of a single faith, and would be harmed by division and wrong teachings."

**Description:** 5 feet, 6 inches; 140 lbs.; age 54; bald on top (wears dark green skullcap), fringe of long white hair, short pointed white beard and mustache. Smooth, silky voice; rigid posture; controlled, capable manner.

**Background:** Griene shows great ability, uncompromising integrity, diplomatic skill, and shrewd knowledge of political tactics. He often recounts how, during a long fasting retreat in the Greensward priory, he experienced a vision that compelled him to "drive out the unfaithful." In the two decades since, he has followed that vision. He says he will do whatever is necessary to further it.

Griene rose to the position of High Priest of the Northern Imperial Temple through exhaustive knowledge, diligent energy, and unyielding adherence to the faith. Along the way he earned the friendship of the timber and mining guilds, which admired the way the temple taught its workers doctrines of hard work and low expectations of return. Having led the temple to greater strength during the previous regent's reign, Griene also enjoys the respect (if not affection) of nearly every temple priest.

Griene adheres rigorously to the temple's doctrines. He lives modestly and has no conventional vices. Though Griene fostered a close relationship with Thuriene Donalls, he could not dissuade her from her choice of Priestess Siobhan Riedhie as successor. After months of quiet but intense discussion, the thane pointedly asked Griene to schedule an investiture ceremony. The next day Griene suddenly left on an unexpected tour of the eastern provinces, and two days later the thane died in an accident.

The new regent can't remove Griene from power without angering

the temple and the guilds, doing irreparable political damage. Griene and the guilds together wield great power; they can work covertly against the thane's every command. And someone might decide that this new regent, too, could have an accident. . . .

*Note: The DM may need to adjust Griene's level to suit the PC regent's level, following the lieutenant guidelines in the BIRTHRIGHT campaign setting rulebook.*

## harrin stalban

*Viscount of Grimsay, 4th-level fighter*

S:	14
D:	9
C:	14
I:	13
W:	12
Ch:	10
AC:	5
hp:	28
MV:	12
THAC0:	17
#AT:	1
Dmg:	1d12



**Bloodline:** None.

**Equipment:** Chain mail, long sword, dagger.

**Typical dialogue:** "I greatly admire the tenacity with which the good hierarch urges the temple's causes. Some in the nobility, however, feel that his zeal for virtue has perhaps caused him to overlook certain points. I would like to indicate these points now, Your Highness."

**Description:** 6 feet, 2 inches; 210 lbs.; age 42; straight red-brown hair, heavy eyebrows, full beard; gruff voice; rigid posture; avuncular manner.

**Background:** Until six years ago, Stalban served as a magistrate in Greensward. He was scholarly and fair, shrewd and intemperate by turns, but a man of integrity—or so everyone thought, until an outraged plaintiff accused him of accepting a bribe. The scandal forced Stalban to resign, and only three years later (long after everyone had forgotten him) did an investigation vindicate the viscount. By then his political career was long past.

Stalban looked on uneasily from the sidelines during Thuriene

Donalls's regency. Without drawing attention or making enemies, he quietly learned what he could about Torias Griene, the growing influence of the timber and mining guilds, and the rest of Talinie's problems. Now he has volunteered his services as the new regent's adviser.

As Viscount of Grimsay, Stalban has a vested interest in increasing the nobility's influence. Beyond that, he seems free of hidden agendas. He is too plain-spoken to serve as a diplomat, but the regent may rely on him as a lieutenant, adviser, and messenger—if the thane's enemies don't assassinate him.

## siobhan riedhie

3rd-level priestess of Haelyn

S: 9  
D: 10  
C: 11  
I: 13  
W: 17  
Ch: 16

AC: 6  
hp: 18  
MV: 12  
THAC0: 20  
#AT: 1  
Dmg: 1d4



**Bloodline:** Anduiras, minor, 21.

**Blood abilities:** Bloodmark (red hair), courage, resistance (charm spells).

**Equipment:** Ring of protection +1, leather armor, dark green surplice and hair veil, holy symbol (rose with thorns), prayer book.

**Typical dialogue:** "Soldier! As the Aromatic Scriptures say that the scent of Paradise lingers in the rose grown with love, I must ask you to return to that bush you just crashed through and apologize to it."

**Description:** 5 feet, 7 inches; 130 lbs.; age 25; bright red hair (bloodmark) concealed by a veil; green eyes, fair skin. Wears armor under robe. Confident, calm manner.

**Background:** Although Siobhan (show-VHAN) was not born into the priesthood of the Northern Imperial Temple, she felt spiritual devotion to Haelyn at an early age. At 16 she joined the Thane's Third Infantry Company, stationed at the fort of Newcayne in Lindholme, and over the next six years rose to command it. Her title is now Watcher of Newcayne.

Siobhan interprets doctrine literally and honors temple law above all else, but she feels compassion for all Taliniens regardless of their faith. Siobhan was the late thane's greatest supporter and most sincere admirer. The death of Thane Donalls has led Siobhan to consider her own mortality, to live a more active and adventurous life, and to bring the word of Haelyn alive through action. The new regent can consider Siobhan a loyal supporter, and an adviser with less bias than many other temple priests.

## torele anviras

10th-level true wizard

S: 8  
D: 10  
C: 15  
I: 18  
W: 16  
Ch: 8

AC: 10  
hp: 40  
MV: 12  
THAC0: 17  
#AT: 1  
Dmg: by spell



**Bloodline:** Anduiras, major, 35.

**Blood abilities:** Courage, protection from evil, resistance (charm spells), unreadable thoughts

**Typical spells:** Audible glamer, cantrip, mending, unseen servant; alter self, continual light, invisibility, whispering wind;

*clairaudience, clairvoyance, fireball; enchanted weapon, polymorph self; telekinesis, wall of force. Realm magic: alchemy, dispel realm magic, raze, scry, summoning, stronghold, warding.*  
**Equipment:** Oak staff, many magical items.

**Typical dialogue:** "Yes, Your Highness, what now? You'll forgive me, for I am quite busy and cannot spare much time. The goblins are at it again. Impertinent? Me? How unjust. Besides, what would you do about it?"

**Description:** 5 feet tall; 110 lbs.; apparent age 28; blue eyes, slight build. Humble crofter's clothing in brown and green. Impatient, high-handed manner. Once Torele had red hair, the bloodmark of the Anduiras line; when he emerged after a century in the Aelvinnwode he still looked young but his hair had turned pure white.

**Background:** A good-for-nothing scion of the Anviras noble line, young Torele Anviras ran away from his family's Freestead estate and vanished into the woods. His line died out, his homeland changed, guilds began cutting down the forests, and war with the elves of Tuarhievel looked imminent.

A century to the day after he vanished, Torele returned from the woods, appearing not a month older. His personality had changed greatly, however, and he used newfound magical abilities (and connections with the elves that he has never explained) to settle the war before it began. He then declared himself mage of Talinie and, overnight, erected a tall tower in the deepest woods of Freestead.

Torele is loyal to Talinie, but after his long stay in the Elven Court he feels alienated from both elves and humans. He's rude, bad-tempered, and melancholy. He gives the regent no more respect than he does his wretched, distorted servants. No one likes

Torele, but everyone regards him as an indispensable aid to the realm's defense.

Torele is still young for so powerful a wizard. His servants report that he shows signs of loneliness and a longing for love. However, Torele seems to find human women brutish and unattractive. If he met a pretty elf or half-elf woman, romance might temper his ill nature.

## murdoc sanford myles

*Master of the Fine Crafters of Timber & Minerals, 4th-level thief*

S: 12  
D: 17  
C: 12  
I: 10  
W: 6  
Ch: 9  
  
AC: 7  
hp: 30  
MV: 12  
THAC0: 19  
#AT: 1  
Dmg: 1d8



**Bloodline:** Anduiras, minor, 9.

**Blood ability:** Bloodmark (red hair).

**Equipment:** Leather armor, short sword, dagger, *ring of invisibility*, snuff box.

**Typical dialogue:** "Ooh, you'd like the guild to stop cutting down the trees, would you, Your Royal Thane-ness? Why, I'll tell them right away! Perhaps you'd also kindly suggest a way to keep the realm from going bankrupt, the people from starving? Because they would, you know, not that I presume to tell Your Great Majesty what you already know."

**Description:** 5 feet 7 inches; 140 lbs.; age 26; bright red hair (bloodmark), green eyes. Clean-shaven, sallow skin, weak chin, thin build. Shrewish manner, arrogant and skulking by turns.

**Background:** A lesser member of the Lesser Line of royal descent, Murdoc is an ambitious mediocrity who always resented

his obscurity and the thane's fame. Murdoc chose a foolish path to power:

He became the willing puppet of Bannier Andien, a Dhoesonean guildmaster. (See the following entry for Talinie's other puppet guildmaster, Anphelan Halloravant.)

## anphelan halloravant

*Master of the Fellowship of Miners & Sawyers, 4th-level thief*

S: 11  
D: 15  
C: 13  
I: 11  
W: 8  
Ch: 8

AC: 1  
hp: 25  
MV: 12  
THACO: 19  
#AT: 1  
Dmg: 1d8



**Bloodline:** Anduiras, minor, 18.

**Blood abilities:** Bloodmark (red hair), unreadable thoughts.

**Equipment:** Leather armor, short sword, dagger, brooch of shielding, pipe.

**Typical dialogue:** "Oh, Your Highness, would that I could command the guild as you require. But they are a willful lot, those miners, prone to extravagant action without regard for my wishes. A shame, really. Tut, tut. . ."

**Description:** 5 feet, 11 inches; 185 lbs.; age 61. Bright red hair (bloodmark) streaked with white; large nose; lined face; stooped posture; big belly. Smokes constantly. Genteel, morose manner; pretends sincerity, unconvincingly.

**Background:** Long an ignored junior member of the collateral Halloravant branch of the royal family, Anphelan used family connections to enter his guild as a hobby. He took to the political infighting well, and cultivated stealth and deception skills that he used to discredit his enemies. But in his long career he never found true power—until Storm Holtson visited from Stjordvik.

Holtson sought an intermediary—a puppet—to run the Fellowship of Miners & Sawyers under the control of his Stjordvik Traders. He bribed Anphelan with a huge salary, then exerted all his influence to establish Anphelan as guild leader. Within a year Holtson, through Anphelan, was directing the destruction of the Talinien forest and earning vast profits. His earnings prompted his rival, Bannier Andien, to look for a similar royal puppet. Andien could find nobody better than Murdoc Myles (see previous entry), but Myles served well enough. The thane cannot prosecute either puppet, for they both have royal immunity. Also, they enjoy popularity with the guilds, which are prospering at the forest's expense.

## lady carissa castamona

*0-level gentlewoman*

S: 6  
D: 9  
C: 9  
I: 11  
W: 9  
Ch: 15

AC: 10  
hp: 5



**Bloodline:** None.

**Description:** Lady Carissa is young, tall, blonde, thin, rouged, corseted, and usually dressed in a flouncy bouffant skirt of purple satin. She giggles often and calls everyone "darling."

**Background:** One of the gentry's "Silk-Worms," Lady Carissa serves as a secret informant about society. When past regents wished to know how the gentry would react to a proposed action, a messenger brought Lady Carissa for a covert night-time rendezvous in one of the Rose Palace gardens. Though often saucy, this lady knows surprising gossip about nearly every important member of society.

Carissa married an elderly man when she was quite young. He died (happily) a year later, leaving her adequately supported but bored. Catty rivals intimate that Carissa conceals a dark secret related to her life before marriage.



# holdings

The Thane of Talinie rules its provinces and gains Regency Points from all its temple and most of its law holdings. There are, however, others who control domains within Talinie's borders: Torele Anviras controls its magical sources, while two foreign guildmasters struggle violently for total control of the guilds. Even the law is not entirely under the thane's control. The regent must coexist with

these other powerful figures or, when necessary, move delicately to reduce their influence.

The following are maximum law/source levels for each province: Freestead (2/5), Greensward (2/5), Ice Haven (3/4), Lindholme (5/2), Seaport (1/4), Serimset (2/5), Winter's Deep (3/4).

## law

The thane's law holdings include the armies garrisoned in wooden stockades along the eastern borders, as well as a bureaucracy of tax collectors, constables, and minor officials. In Talinie these are, of course, priests of the Northern Imperial Temple, but their secular functions give the thane control over the law in six of the seven provinces.

The thane controls a level 1 law holding in Freestead, a 1 in Greensward, a 2 in Ice Haven, a 3 in Lindholme, a 1 in Serimset, and a 2 in Winter's Deep.

Early in Thuriene Donalls's reign, during major goblin incursions across the border into Lindholme and down into Seaport, she unwisely asked Aeric Boeruine for aid. The archduke gladly sent several units of elite infantry and pikes to help repel the goblins. Then the troops stayed to build fortifications. Then Boeruine kindly loaned Donalls watch units to patrol the areas.

In this way the Archduke of Boeruine gracefully inserted himself into two Talinien provinces; he now controls a level 2 law holding in Lindholme and a level 1 in Seaport. His strength in southern Talinie almost equals the thane's, and his army, the third largest in Anuire (22 battle-ready units), waits

beyond the border. Donalls soon saw her error. She did not compound it by asking Boeruine to leave. Had she done so, the archduke simply would have seized the territory—as he certainly will if the

new thane tries to drive him out.

## guilds

The bane of Thuriene Donalls' regency, and now of the new thane's, is the political meddling and destruction of the land by Talinie's two timber and mining guilds. Their foreign guildmasters own no property in Talinie—officially. But through their puppets (see pages 22–23), Banner Andien of Dhoesone and Storm Holtson of Stjordvik wield great influence in the domain.

The guilds cause two problems. First, they hate each other, and every few seasons the hatred breaks into open feuding in the uplands. Guild timber cutters or miners, angry at some incursion by one faction on the other's territory, set fire to opposing camps, attack rival workers, and cause general unrest. In the late thane's last three years, four feuds broke out in Lindholme, Serimset, and Seaport. Rebuilding after the feuds proved costly.

Second, the guilds' clear-cutting and strip mining produce income that benefits the local people, but these practices devastate the land. The guilds cut acres of trees every day, far more than can be restored by magic such as *plant growth*. Coal mines—open wounds on the land—make people and livestock sick, increase erosion, and produce mudslides.

"Sad, of course," say most people (including the late thane), "but we must make a living. Why should we move away from the land to do so?" The Northern Imperial Temple's teachings bolster this argument. It preaches that the land exists for humans to use.

## optional devastation rule

To simulate degradation of a province, the DM may assign it a "devastation point" during any domain turn in which the guilds collect more than half (round down) the GB allowed by the province's guild holdings. For instance, Lindholme's guild holdings total 5; if the guilds collect more than 2 GB from them in a turn, Lindholme receives 1 devastation point.

Every 20 devastation points permanently reduce the province's magic potential by 1 level. This means Seaport (which has a magic potential of 4) could be completely deforested—and therefore stripped of its magic—in 20 years. In contrast, Lindholme's magic could be exhausted in just 10 years.

If the guilds stop cutting and mining in a province, the DM should subtract 1 devastation point per year until it heals completely. However, the citizens' loss of income will cause loyalty in that province to drop by one grade.

## guild holdings

Talinien holdings belonging to the wealthy firm of Andien and Sons, run by Bannier Andien (*MA; T7; An, minor, 21*), include timber and coal interests. Andien controls a guild (2) in Greensward, a (2) in Ice Haven, a (3) in Lindholme, and a (2) Serimset. Andien also administers guild holdings in Alamie, Dhoesone, and the Siren's Realm. Alamie is unforested (partly because of Andien's clear-cutting there in decades past), so Andien has moved into mining there. Many believe he cut a deal with Alamie's regent, Carilon Alam (*MA; F2; Ba, major, 46*), a scoundrel as ruthless and ambitious as Andien himself.

Storm Holtson's holdings in Talinie include a guild (2) in Freestead, a (2) in Lindholme, a (3) in Winter's Deep, and a (1) in Seaport. Holtson (*MRj; T6; Br, major, 23*) has also gained a foothold (a level 0 guild) in Ice Haven, where his paid assassins stalk the guild puppets of his bitter rival, Bannier Andien. Storm Holtson controls additional holdings in the Boeruinean province of Tariene and in the realm of Dhoesone. Holtson's interests in Dhoesone are second only to those of Adaere Doneim (*MA; T5; Re, minor, 17*).

## temples

The thane serves as the Supreme Hierarchy of the Northern Imperial Temple of Haelyn and sole regent of temple holdings both in Talinie and in six provinces of adjacent Boeruine. These holdings represent regional temples of up to 100 priests, acolytes, scribes, and attendants; smaller shrines scattered across each province; and four upland monasteries. In Talinie, the Northern Imperial Temple controls a holding (2) in Freestead, a (2) in Greensward, a (3) in Ice Haven, a (4) in Lindholme, a (0) in Seaport, a (2) in Serimset, and a (2) in Winter's Deep.

## history

Founded shortly after the cataclysm at Mount Deismaar, the Temple of Haelyn once existed as a unified religious order. However, the temple splintered in the wake of the Anuirean Empire's fall, as dissenting priests debated how best to serve their god. One such zealot was Fitzalan the Blessed, a charismatic priest who lived during the "Wasted Centuries" just before the founding of modern Talinie. Fitzalan promoted his unyielding, fatalistic philosophy of work to all the land's nobles. These petty landowners saw in Fitzalan's work ethic a way to milk still more wealth from their vassals. They spread his teachings across the population, founding the Northern Imperial Temple of Haelyn.

Crofters took Fitzalan's message to their hearts because it had no nonsense about it. "Work, behave, avoid ambition, and you will be rewarded"—this appealed to the commoners because they were already working, behaving, and avoiding ambition.

Though not noted for mysticism, the new northern branch of the Imperial Temple received an important boost during Talinie's early history from the mystic preacher Janna Many-Tongued. When smelling roses, Janna would sometimes fall into transports of ecstasy and shout of heavenly visions. Attendants carefully transcribed her episodes and circulated them as the *Aromatic Scriptures*. Seeing a copy, the baron Jarod Dannis invited Janna for an audience. They fell in love, and he made her his chief concubine. In her long life (she lived to be 105) she preached a gospel of gardening, of raising beautiful and sweet-scented flowers as tribute to Haelyn. Janna's influence made Nowelton the Garden City and established flowers as the Northern Imperial Temple's primary symbols. This "softer" side to the temple's otherwise harsh and demanding philosophies did much to win over those who had until then resisted its teachings.

## flowers

Every child recruited as a new temple disciple quickly learns the scents associated with the Five Perfumed Virtues: honesty (gardenia), prudence (sage), thrift (heather), cleanliness (violet), and work (rose). Youthful acolytes memorize the 108 varieties of flowers in the Yearlong Garden and their associated legends and symbolism.

Once inducted into the priesthood, a novitiate journeys to an upland monastery and learns to concoct the Heavenly Aromas used in the Seven Annual Ceremonies (Flower Fest, Garden Moon, High Summer, Leafturn, Harvest Moon, Snowfall Contemplation, and Dormancy) and the Five Rites of Life (Birth, Induction, Breaking of the Voice, Marital Union, and Sweet Passage).

## temple holdings elsewhere

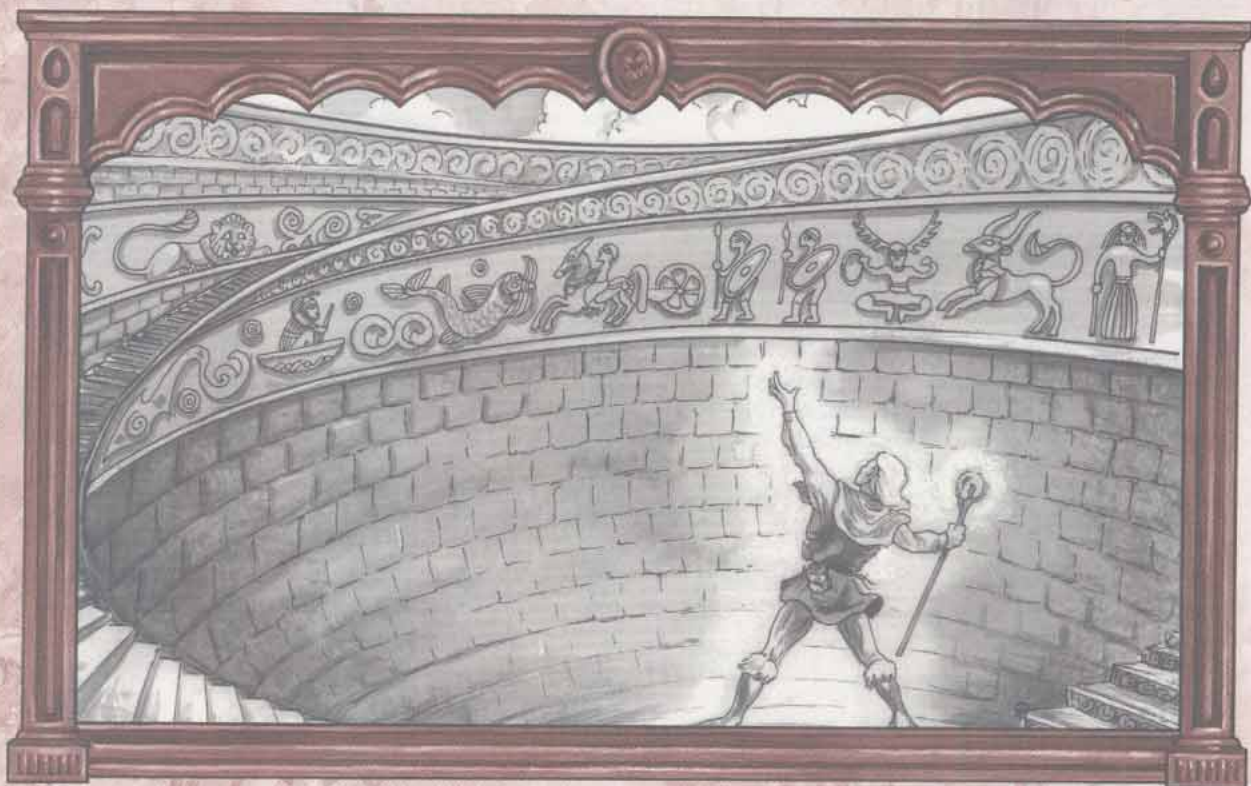
In Boeraine, the Northern Imperial Temple currently dominates a bitter struggle for influence against its despised enemy, the Hidden Temple of Cuiraécen. The Northern Temple has unrivalled control of the provinces of Rivien (a level 6 holding) and Floruile (a level 2), just over Talinie's southern border. The Northern Imperial Temple also controls

a holding (2) in Calant, a (5) in Tariene, a (3) in Seasedge, and a (0) in Dha-laese. In Boeraine's three southern provinces—Nietier, Bacaele, and Redoubt—the Northern Imperial Temple has no holdings.

## sources

**T**orele Anvira, the greatest wizard of Talinie, controls all magical holdings in the realm.

The seven sources take the form of ancient stone circles fashioned by the Trautha. These landmarks are not monoliths rising from the earth, but hemispherical excavations 60 feet in diameter and lined with carved granite blocks of immense size and weight. So finely fitted are these huge blocks that one cannot fit a fingernail between them. The carvings on the blocks depict scenes apparently from Trautha myths and folk tales, but no one has yet deciphered their meaning. Standing in one of the circles, an observer can hear surrounding forest



sounds with incredible clarity, and his skin prickles with power.

The Trautha built their stone circles in locations which, centuries later, allowed Torele to create his ley lines in two straight vectors across the landscape. At the intersection of the two lines, in central Freestead on a high deserted ridge beside the most powerful circle, Torele constructed his tower, The Misskill. Torele claims that the name derives from the original name given to this ridge by the Trautha. The wizard has not revealed how he discovered this fact.

Torele also controls sources in the neighboring domain of Thurazor. From these he clairvoyantly surveys an evil wizard of the Five Peaks—the Eyeless One—who also holds sources in Thurazor. With extensive supplies of *mebbaighl* (magical essence) generated by the land and concentrated in his circles, Torele maintains constant vigilance against the Eyeless One, the scoundrels of the Five Peaks, the goblins of Thurazor, and his rival wizards: Arlen Innis of Boeruine and Harald Khorien, Count of Taeghas. Neither wizard matches Torele's skill, but Khorien commands great magical sources, and in the past Innis has shown cunning control of the powers of illusion.

## income and expenses

**T**alinie's provinces, holdings and people generate sufficient income to run the realm—provided the regent spends it wisely. Previous thanes have managed to build a small surplus in the treasury through conservative fiscal decisions.

## taxes and collections

Assuming moderate taxation, the seven provinces produce an average of 16 Gold Bars per turn. The thane also receives income from temple holdings, about 12 GB per turn on average.

The regent receives no income from Talinie's trade routes. Their income—possibly as much as 8 GB—goes instead to Banner Andien and Storm Holtson through the puppet guildmasters. Although the late thane repeatedly demanded tribute of 2 GB from the guilds for these routes, she never received it. For years the guilds produced financial records (probably forged) that showed no profit; in recent years they simply refused to pay, claiming it would mean a loss of employment in the upland provinces. The issue was approaching a crisis when the thane suddenly died.

## domain maintenance

The seven provinces, seven temple holdings, and five law holdings together cost 4 GB per domain turn to maintain. Fortifications require additional maintenance: The four fortresses in the uplands and the Rose Palace in Nowelton cost an additional 1 GB apiece per turn.

Payroll for Talinie's six army units amounts to 7 GB per turn—2 for the mercenary cavalry, 1 apiece for the other five.

The court creates additional expense. Thane Donalls detested pomp, but she regarded it as a show of strength to persuade the Archduke of Boeruine against invasion. Her expenditures (6 GB per turn) made for a pleasant, if not opulent, life at court—upkeep of the Yearlong Gardens accounted for most of the money.

This overhead totals 22 GB. Ordinarily the domain's budget would have about 6 GB to spare in most turns, but guild infighting has created constant problems. Cleanup after the upland feuds costs about 1 GB per turn, and countering the guildmasters' relentless espionage and intrigues costs still more. The amount left barely covers the regent's routine travel expenses.

Given this, the 22 GB currently in the treasury becomes impressive. The late thane prized prudence almost as much as religious faith. For Taliniens the two are inseparable.

As your character takes the Oak Seat, the regency is already plagued with problems and hard decisions. Some of the following intelligence—gathered from nobles, hierarchs, and secret informants—presents new crises, but some provides opportunities to face problems and make decisions.

## rumors and plots

All of these rumors and plots can lead your PC into new adventures. Look them over and show them to your DM, indicating the ones you would like to resolve in the campaign. He can then customize planned adventures and random events to fit a Talinien setting.

### bringing out the truth

Just after your PC's coronation, a mysterious messenger pressed a slip of paper into her hand, then vanished in the crowd. Later, in the privacy of the regent's large (yet not too luxurious) chambers, your character reads it.

*Yoor Hiness*

*I am only a croftr and not bi and lumed like yoo I got my frend Alver to rite this lettr I hope yoo can reed it*

*I saw the thayn ridin that day I was tendin sheep on the hill*

*I saw her go ovr the fens she did not fall lik thay say she came down fine but thin a big man drest lik a preest cam at her frum the trees pulld her off the hors and bit her with a malet and she was ded*

*If they find me or Alver they wil kil us so I cant say mor but she did not di like thay say that is all a LOYAL croftr*

The note confirms whispered suspicions, but gives no evidence, no clear clue, nor a path of investigation. (Could it be a fraud? A decoy to waste the regent's time while the author puts a new plan into motion?)

Perhaps the wizard Torele Anviras can discover who wrote the note or where it came from. The regent would probably have to visit the wizard at his tower in Freestead, because he seldom feels obliged to answer the thane's summons. If the note proves genuine, the next step involves finding the author or "Alver" before the priests of the Northern Imperial Temple do.

Talinie's courts would never accept the word of a

## rumors, secrets, and plots

humble croftr against that of a priest. The regent may want to

consider investigating the site itself in hopes of finding physical evidence, or staging a deception that would lure Griene into a compromising revelation. If your character is lucky, whoever killed Thane Donalls won't come after the new regent, too. . . .

### guild power play

Talinie maintains moderate sea trade with the coastal Rjurik realm of an awnshegh called the Siren. Her realm buys Talinien timber and coal in return for craft work, herbs, fish, and a few weapons. As awnsheghlien go, the Siren is almost tolerable—legend claims she was once a mortal woman of Talinie—and her business dealings with Talinie so far have been fair.

The Siren's island territory, Dantier Island in the Sea of Storms, sends Talinie small shipments of a rare seaweed useful in divination spells. (The Siren keeps most of the seaweed for her own use.) Torele Anviras uses these spells to discover new plots in the goblin kingdoms. However, the last two shipments of this seaweed have inexplicably vanished. Recently a courtier who visited Dhoesone's coastal city of Nolien reported seeing sailors unload the seaweed from a ship—a ship that bore the crest of Andien and Sons.

Dhoesone's wizards pay prices no higher than Torele for the seaweed, so Andien has no economic reason to divert the shipments to his homeland. Perhaps this operation is a guild attempt to reduce the wizard's power. Is Andien up to something that he does not want detected? More to the point, how should your character restrain Andien's manipulation of Talinien imports? The regent cannot expect cooperation from

Andien's local lapdog, Murdoc Sanford Myles. Myles treats the thane with open contempt, and in any case he has no influence over his not-so-secret master, Andien.

What would work? The thane's advisers have heard that Bannier Andien wants, more than anything, to turn his four good-for-nothing sons to a worthy purpose. When Andien next arrives in Nowelton on one of his frequent visits, perhaps an offer could entice him. The regent might offer to take the young layabouts, drunken and crazed pranksters, into Talinie's court or the Northern Imperial Temple. If the court or priests manage to instruct his sons in common decency, Andien may relent in his secret seaweed embargo. If the plan fails, though, Andien would become an even greater enemy.

If that doesn't sound attractive, perhaps Storm Holtson would be willing to interfere with Andien. Holtson, Andien's bitter rival, also visits Nowelton frequently. He has no offspring to worry about, but he does despise Andien and also suffers from over-riding greed. If the regent gives Holtson a substantial bribe (5–10 GB) or otherwise makes interference worth his while, he could experiment with piracy (or privateering) on the Sea of Storms. Talinie wouldn't necessarily get the seaweed, but Andien should eventually decide that interference with Talinie's imports has become more trouble than it is worth.

If your character feels truly ambitious, the new regent might find some attractive bait (real or fictitious) that would tempt both guilds, then try to manipulate them into destroying one another.

## finger bones

Priests in Nowelton's Market District report that a charismatic old man, evidently a commoner playing on the religious tension in the lowlands, has gathered followers who believe him the avatar of Haelyn.

This madman, one Jacob Figgerman, formerly worked as a crofter in southern Greensward near the Black River. On a smuggling trip into Boeruine, Figgerman's coal scuttle overturned and hit him. In the weeks he spent healing, he experienced powerful visions that told him to go to Nowelton and unite the faiths.

In the Market District, Figgerman has earned money selling bones, skulls, and teeth that he claims came from the old gods on Mount Deismaar. These spurious relics have aroused the populace, who attribute to the bones miracles beyond the power of routine priest magic. The priests of the Northern Imperial Temple ordinarily would have jailed Figgerman. But after Torias Griene's sudden departure and the death of Thane Donalls, many other matters occupied them. Meanwhile, Figgerman has drawn a following that grows by the day. People of all faiths flock to him, believing he will soon destroy the city and carry them to the Sweet-Scented Lands. A religious riot may erupt soon.

The thane cannot bribe or intimidate Figgerman. If Talinie officials have him arrested or executed, he will become a martyr. But the Supreme Hierarch of the Northern Imperial Temple of Haelyn cannot stand by and let Figgerman's power grow. If the regent permits freedom of worship in the lowlands, the religious tension fueling this frenzy will gradually evaporate—but will temple priests obey the decree? Perhaps your character can develop a better solution.

## old lotan acts up

The storm giant who inhabits the rocky coast, Old Lotan (see page 7), has seized several fishing vessels in the last month, letting their crews swim to safety but smashing the hulls. Crew members of other, more fortunate, ships report that Lotan uses the hull wood to build something on Colonsay, the island just off the Ice Haven coast. A cabin? A pyre? No one knows, but speculation runs rampant in Talinie's coastal provinces.

Colonsay, though uninhabited, has inspired its share of legends over the generations. Some say that ghosts of dead priests go there to perform devotions to Haelyn forever. Other accounts suggest that the elves of Aelvinnwode maintain an observation post there, entering and leaving

undetectably by some magical means.

Highly suspicious nobles think the Siren, an awnshegh whose realm lies to the northwest across the Tael Firth, might use Colonsay as a staging ground for an invasion.

Lotan's curious behavior does not seem to require direct intervention. Still, his behavior interferes with the fishing, and no one but a blooded hero has the power to face him. Torele Anviras has declined to involve himself. That leaves the regent, or perhaps a group of close associates, to find out what is happening.

## a royal spy?

A recent goblin raid from the Five Peaks inflicted heavy casualties on the scouts in Lindholme. The goblins and orogs knew exactly where the scouts would be.

Before they fell, the scouts slew the orog leader, and moments later new troops arrived to chase off the goblins. On the orog's body the soldiers found a note: *Spy says scouts two leagues south of Newcayne one hour past sunset. Someone at Newcayne Outpost is a spy!*

Preliminary investigations have determined that several people at the stockade knew details of the patrol's travels. Speculation credits the chief lieutenant—your own distant cousin, Harden Halloravant—as the likeliest suspect. The notion that a member of the royal family would betray the kingdom shocks many, but most of the Halloravants hold a familial grudge against other branches of the family. That grudge, and their skulking nature, makes treason easy to justify in their own minds.

Harden's aged father sent him into the army in hopes that the youth would learn discipline. Instead Harden has learned only how to deal with goblins. The thane could have him put to the sword, but lacks hard evidence to prove his treachery.

Still worse, Harden's father, Ramsden Halloravant, owns much of Lindholme and only barely tolerates the regent's authority. If the thane killed Harden on any evidence short of absolute proof, Ramsden could agitate the entire province to revolt. Does he have the will and influence to give the province over to Boeruine?

The thane might simply transfer Harden to another unit, but he would just create trouble wherever he went. Sending him on a suicide mission into the Five Peaks probably would fail to solve the problem—if he's in league with the goblins, they might not kill him. Once more, your character must find a more creative solution.

## a devastated forest village

For the past year, a family of alotheres (see page 9) has terrorized the forest village of Tarbet. The thane can easily arrange harvesting the boars, but the village's problems don't stop there. Tarbet used to be a village of guild loggers and woodcutters, but now the ancient forest has been cut down everywhere within a day's walk. The local timber workers have no employment, and the loss of the forest has allowed rain to erode the topsoil so that farmers' crops are failing. Any hero can kill a boar, but solving this village's problems calls for the authority and vision of a true ruler.

## secrets

Every good regent keeps state secrets that may help in a crisis. Here are a few belonging to Talinie's thane. The DM may approve others as well, so try inventing a few of your own for your PC. Take care to respect the balance of the campaign, and don't propose a secret that would instantly solve all your character's problems. That might make ruling easier, but it would be much less fun.

## new magic, powerful and dangerous

Torele Anviras has recently discovered a way to draw *mehbaighl* (magical energy) from cultivated lands. With Torele's breakthrough, a province's sources could provide magical power as though the province were entirely uninhabited! This discovery is an advance of tremendous import in the magical arts, for until now the more a province has been cultivated, the less magical energy it retains.

But Torele's method has two major drawbacks. First, a province requires a full year of continuous preparation, during which time Anviras can do nothing else and the province's sources must remain untapped.

The second disadvantage has far more drastic implications. Torele's method traps the province's inhabitants in their current time. To outward appearances they continue to live their lives normally, but from day to day they learn nothing, forget nothing, and age quickly. Essentially, they give their life energy in place of the missing source energy.

A horrible fate? An evil act? Perhaps. But a method with such great potential rewards calls for examination of every option. The regent could evacuate a province and have convicts or volunteers work the land, or recruit nonhuman creatures of low intellect. The loss to society would be minimized. However, this idea not only raises objections of conscience, but also strongly conflicts with the teachings of the Northern Imperial Temple. Even if the regent commands the hierarchs to tolerate the scheme, the people of Talinie would lose all respect for their thane.

## wasp trouble

This secret, at least, comes with no strings attached. One of Talinie's courtiers, a pleasant lady named Delphinia, recently returned from a lengthy pleasure jaunt to Tuornen and Endier. There she had a whirlwind romance with a roguish attendant from the court of Aeric Boeruine, and they talked about the archduke far into the night. By this chain of informants the thane learned certain secrets of great interest.

Aeric Boeruine, a man of tremendous strength and vitality, who has never been sick, who matches himself against the best swordsmen in his kingdom and comes away victorious—Aeric Boeruine is deathly allergic to wasps. A single wasp sting on his thumb knuckle once swelled his entire arm and knocked him cold. Had a priest not been present to heal the tiny wound, Boeruine might well have died.

No doubt the wealthy archduke has since secured magical protection against wasps. Scrolls, rings, potions: All are possibilities, and all can be neutralized. If Talinie's regent could neutralize the protection, then somehow introduce a hive into Boeruine's bedroom, there would soon be one less claimant for the vacant Iron Throne.

## discovery in a trautha ruin

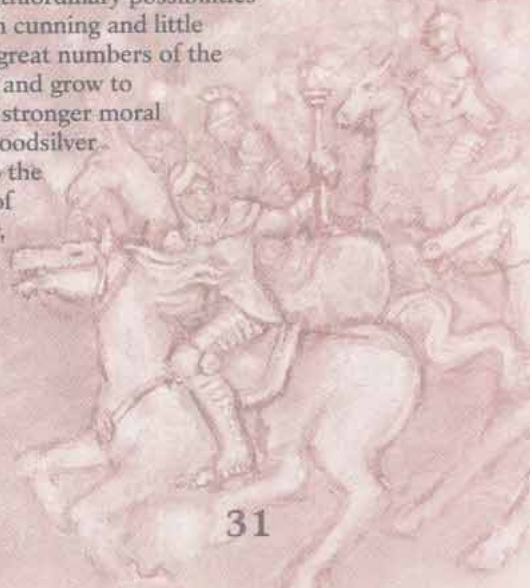
Just before the previous thane's death, a Freestead forester stumbled upon a previously unknown elven ruin dating back to Trautha times. The ancient structure, an amphitheater of some kind, featured a central stage. In a concealed, partly submerged hole under that stage, the forester found a necklace of 333 bright, sharp steel needles no bigger than sewing pins.

At least, they looked like steel. The forester fearfully delivered the necklace to Torele Anviras at his nearby stronghold, The Misskill. Anviras quickly realized that the necklace chain was common metal, but the needles were made of the rare magical alloy *tighmaevril*, or bloodsilver.

Bloodsilver was created by the elf smith Ghoigwnwd two millennia ago. Conventional wisdom holds that Ghoigwnwd fashioned all *tighmaevril* into weapons, for the alloy has no other known purpose than transferring bloodline strength from a blooded victim to the weapon's wielder. But these needles hardly seem like weapons. What does one do, get the victim to swallow them? Pierce him with 300 needles and hope he bleeds to death? The metal cannot be reforged, for this process destroys its magic.

Anviras maintained a lethal silence about the *tighmaevril*, but the forester leaked news of the discovery. Donalls insisted the wizard turn the necklace over to her. He did, albeit amid complaints and declarations that the artifact would remain safer in his keeping. Meanwhile, the forester's loose tongue has drawn scions from all over Anuire, and even a couple of Khinasi adventurers from Khourene—about as far away from Talinie as one can get. All these ambitious scions think they're searching for a sword or other weapon, thank goodness. No one except the new regent and Anviras knows that the necklace lies in the thane's treasure chamber beneath the Rose Palace.

The necklace presents extraordinary possibilities and perils. A regent of much cunning and little conscience could eliminate great numbers of the visiting scions in one sweep and grow to immense power. A thane of stronger moral convictions could use the bloodsilver against awnsheglie to keep the realm safe. But before any of these possibilities can occur, someone must unlock the secret of how to use the needles.





Once you take the Oak Seat, you must move quickly and decisively to resolve your many crises. However, take care to choose subtlety over blunt action. You have too many enemies at hand; if you dispose of one in a direct, clumsy fashion, the rest will gather and destroy you.

## investigate the death of your predecessor

This situation is delicate, but you must resolve it immediately if you hope to rule safely. You have good reason to suspect High Priest Torias Griene of

arranging the assassination of your predecessor. But you cannot just kill, imprison, or exile the hierarch, for he wields too much power and influence.

Instead, arrange a clever way to remove Griene from power without

triggering hostility from the temple. Remember: He is a smooth and resourceful opponent.

## don't alienate boeruine

If Aeric Boeruine thinks you have turned against him, he will attack and destroy you. However, you can safely finesse the issue. First, delay sending armies or other support to Boeruine on a variety of pretexts: goblin incursions, poverty, even plague.

These delays will work for only a few seasons at most, so try to divert Boeruine's attention to his other borders. Consider opening secret

channels to the realm of Avani, Boeruine's chief enemy. Play off the two against one another, if possible. Just be careful

that Avani does not play you off against Boeruine!

## increase tolerance

Consider loosening some of Talinie's restrictions on religion. Such a controversial move on the thane's part will inevitably create friction, perhaps even occasional riots, but these reactions will—in the long term—be less dangerous than the results of oppression.

Religious freedom weakens the Northern Imperial Temple's—and thus your own—power base. Therefore, pursue alliances with tolerant priests in other temples. As regent, you can dangle attractive bait in return for their loyalty: freedom to proselytize in new provinces, donations, approval of permits for temple construction, and so on.

## restore the forest

The difficult problem of deforestation has not yet reached crisis stage, but it threatens serious consequences if neglected. Consider taking a threefold approach:

First, try (subtly) to install new leaders for the timber and mining guilds. The realm will only benefit from having guildmasters loyal to Talinie instead of Dhoesone and Stjordvik.

Second, recognize that both Talinie's treasury and the guild members depend on income from clear-cutting and strip-mining. Take steps to reduce this economic dependence. Perhaps the elves of Tuarhieval can teach you less wasteful forestry practices, for they know how to conserve the forest. Educate the guilds in the new practices, and provide financial incentives for miners and timber cutters to change their ways. In the long term, diversify Talinie's economy.

Finally, consider ways to attract druids to your realm, and give them the authority to begin restoring the devastated forest. In doing so you invite another faith into Talinie, but the result will benefit all your subjects.

## build up your army

Reorganize Talinie's military forces as provincial levies, and recruit fighter heroes to train them. (Be ready with a list of plausible explanations to pacify Boeruine and other neighboring kingdoms: "We're having great trouble with goblin raids.") Release your mercenary company as soon as convenient; mercenaries are expensive and vulnerable to subversion by enemies.

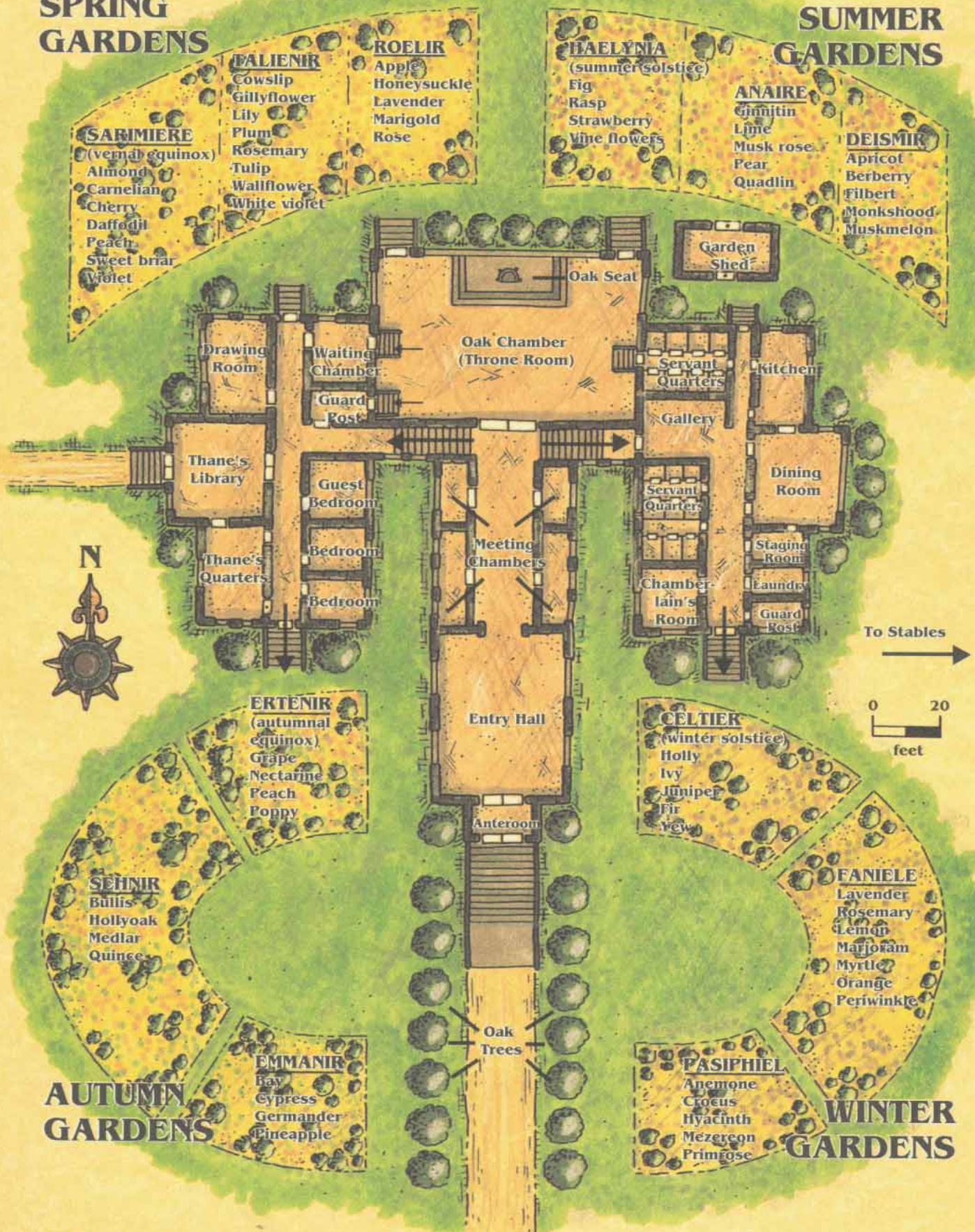
# strategy tips for the new regent

# The Rose Palace and Yearlong Gardens

Nowelton

## SPRING GARDENS

## SUMMER GARDENS



	Forest		Town
	Plains		Temple
	Hills		Fortification
	River		Capital
	Lake		Source
	Trade Route		Clear-cut forest
	Road		Ley Line
			Border



**TALINIE**



**Tael Firth**  
Storm Holtson  
Banner-Andrien

**SEAPORT**

DEADWATER BAY  
POOLEWE BAY  
Poolewe

Melvaig

Daliburgh

To Taeghas

**GREENSWARD**

**ICE HAVEN**

Lindholme River  
Black River

**BOERUINE**

Broom Lake

Grimsay

Laxford Lake

Benbeeula

Morvern

**LINDHOLM**

Sleat Lake

Scalpay

COLONSAY  
COLONSAY STRAIT

Nowelton

**SERIN**

Barva

Black River

Skye Cap

# Talinie

**Current Dynasty Founded:** 319 (Michaeline Reckoning).

**Population:** 78,000.

**Government:** Theocracy (Northern Imperial Temple of Haelyn).

**Ruler:** The Thane of Talinie, Chief Hierarch of the Temple (controls most law and all temple holdings).

**Capital:** Nowelton (population 12,000).

**Other regents who control holdings:** Torele Anvira, Mage of Talinie (all sources); Archduke Aeric Boeraine (law); Bannier Andien (guilds); Storm Holtson (guilds).

**Economy:** Timber, coal, copper, iron, tin.

**Treasury:** 22 GB.

## Provinces:

**Freestead (2):** *Terrain:* Forest. *Population:* 7,500. *Towns:* Clashness (1,000), Talladale (1,000). *Holdings:* Law (1), Thane; Temple (2); Guild (2), Storm Holtson; Source (5).

**Greensward (2):** *Terrain:* Forest. *Population:* 5,000. *Towns:* Daliburgh (1,000), Grimsay (1,500), Morvern (1,000). *Holdings:* Law (1), Thane; Temple (2); Guild (2), Bannier Andien; Source (5).

**Ice Haven (3):** *Terrain:* Forest. *Population:* 17,000. *Cities and Towns:* Nowelton (12,000), Scalpay (1,000), Dunbeath (1,000). *Holdings:* Law (2), Thane; Temple (3); Guild (2), Bannier Andien; Guild (0), Storm Holtson; Source (4).

**Lindholme (5):** *Terrain:* Forest. *Population:* 20,000. *Cities and Towns:* Benbecula (3,500), Balvanish (2,800), Flodday (2,000), Newcayne (1,000). *Holdings:* Law (3), Thane; Law (2), Aeric Boeraine; Temple (4); Guild (3), Bannier Andien; Guild (2), Storm Holtson; Source (2).

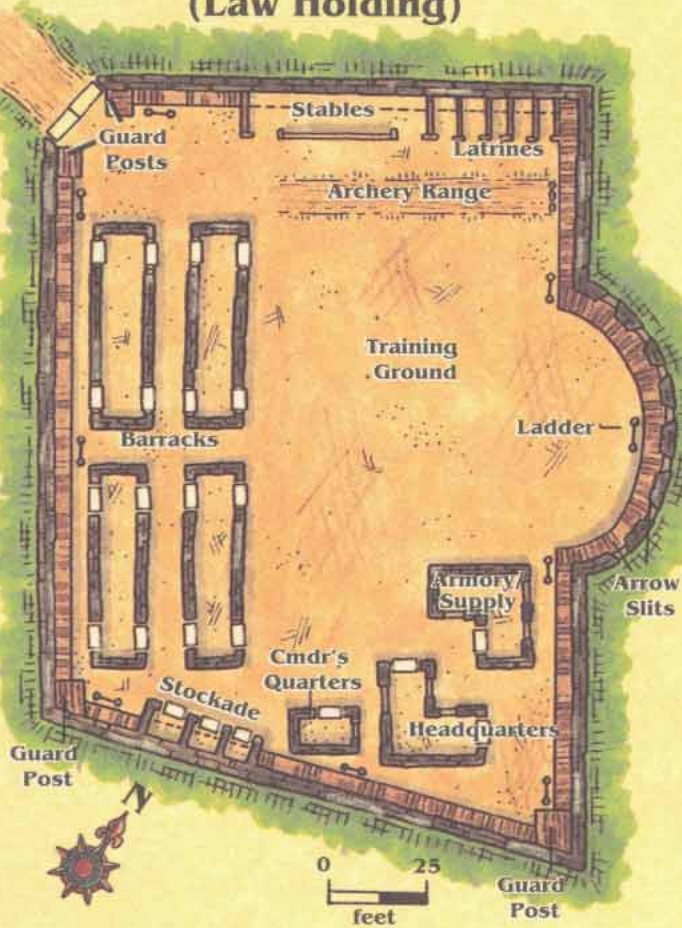
**Seaport (1):** *Terrain:* Plains. *Population:* 3,500. *Towns:* Poolewe (800), Melvaig (600). *Holdings:* Law (1), Aeric Boeraine; Temple (0); Guild (1), Storm Holtson; Source (3).

**Serimset (2):** *Terrain:* Forest. *Population:* 7,000. *Towns:* Strathcarron (1,000), Ardvreck (1,000). *Holdings:* Law (1), Thane; Temple (2); Guild (2), Bannier Andien; Source (5).

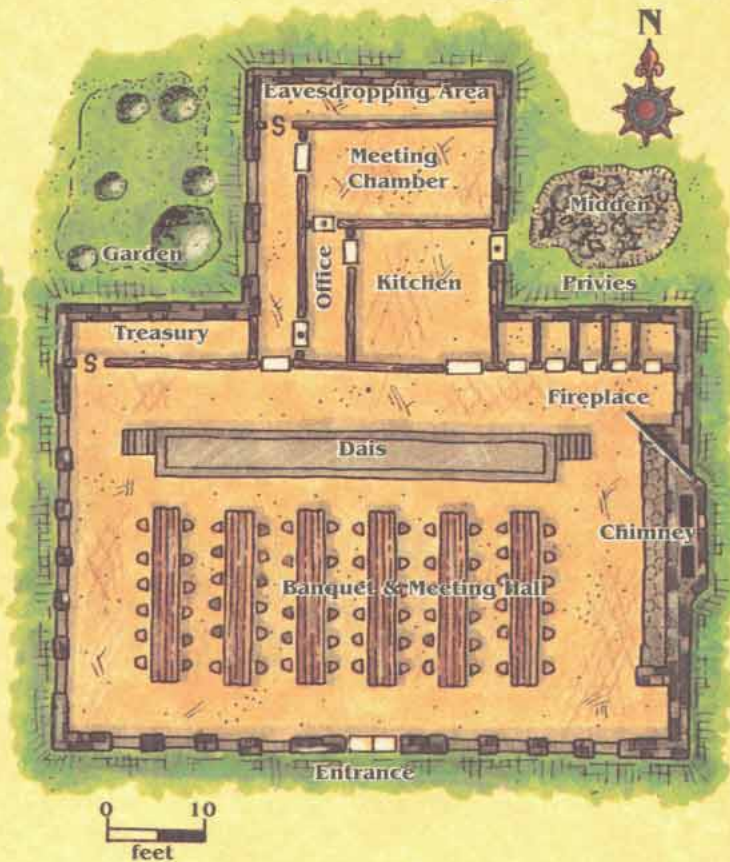
**Winter's Deep (3):** *Terrain:* Forest. *Population:* 8,000. *Towns:* Culkein (1,000), Stromness (1,000). *Holdings:* Law (2), Thane; Temple (2); Guild (3), Storm Holtson; Source (4).



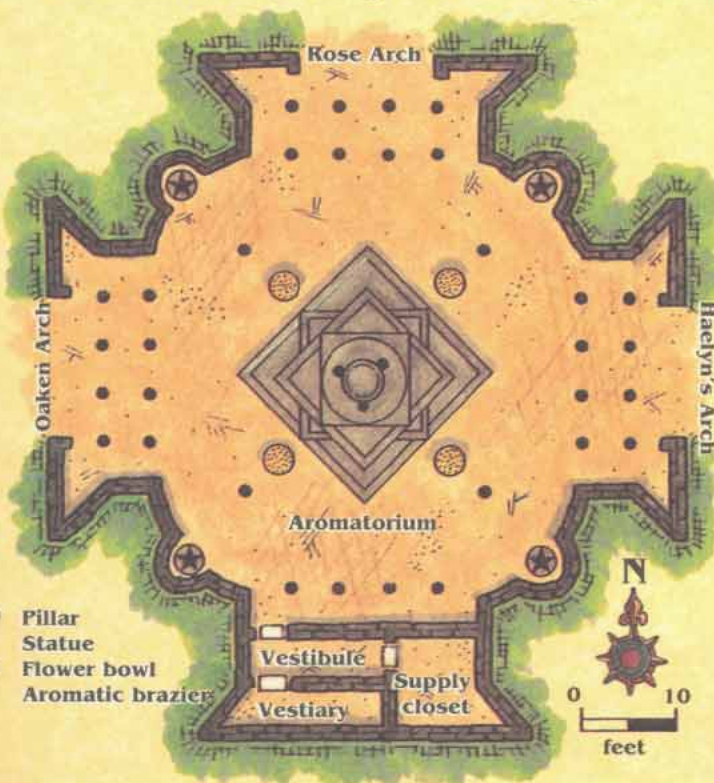
**Newcayne Outpost, Lindholme  
(Law Holding)**



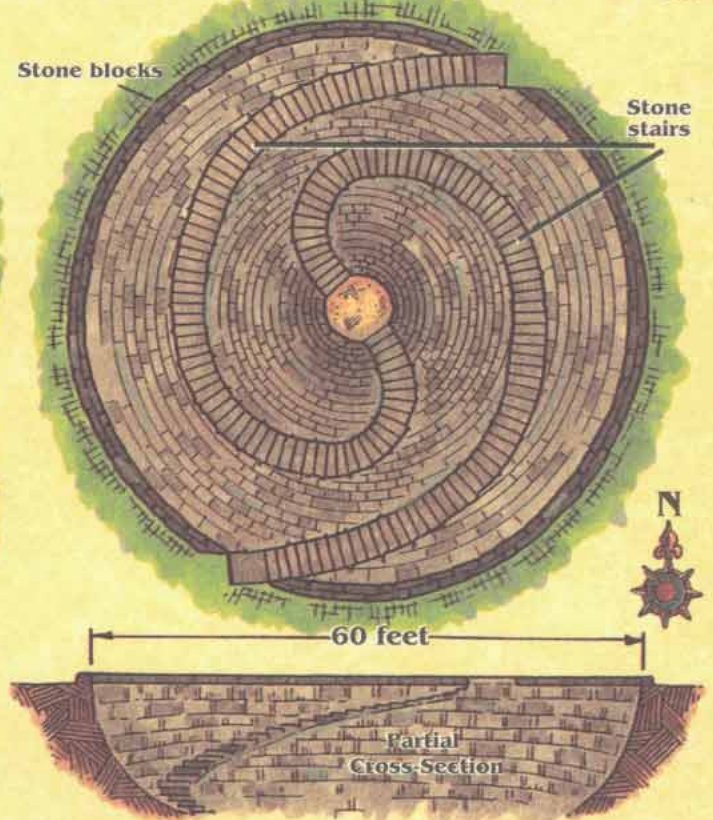
**Fellowship of Miners & Sawyers  
Guild House, Nowelton  
(Guild Holding)**

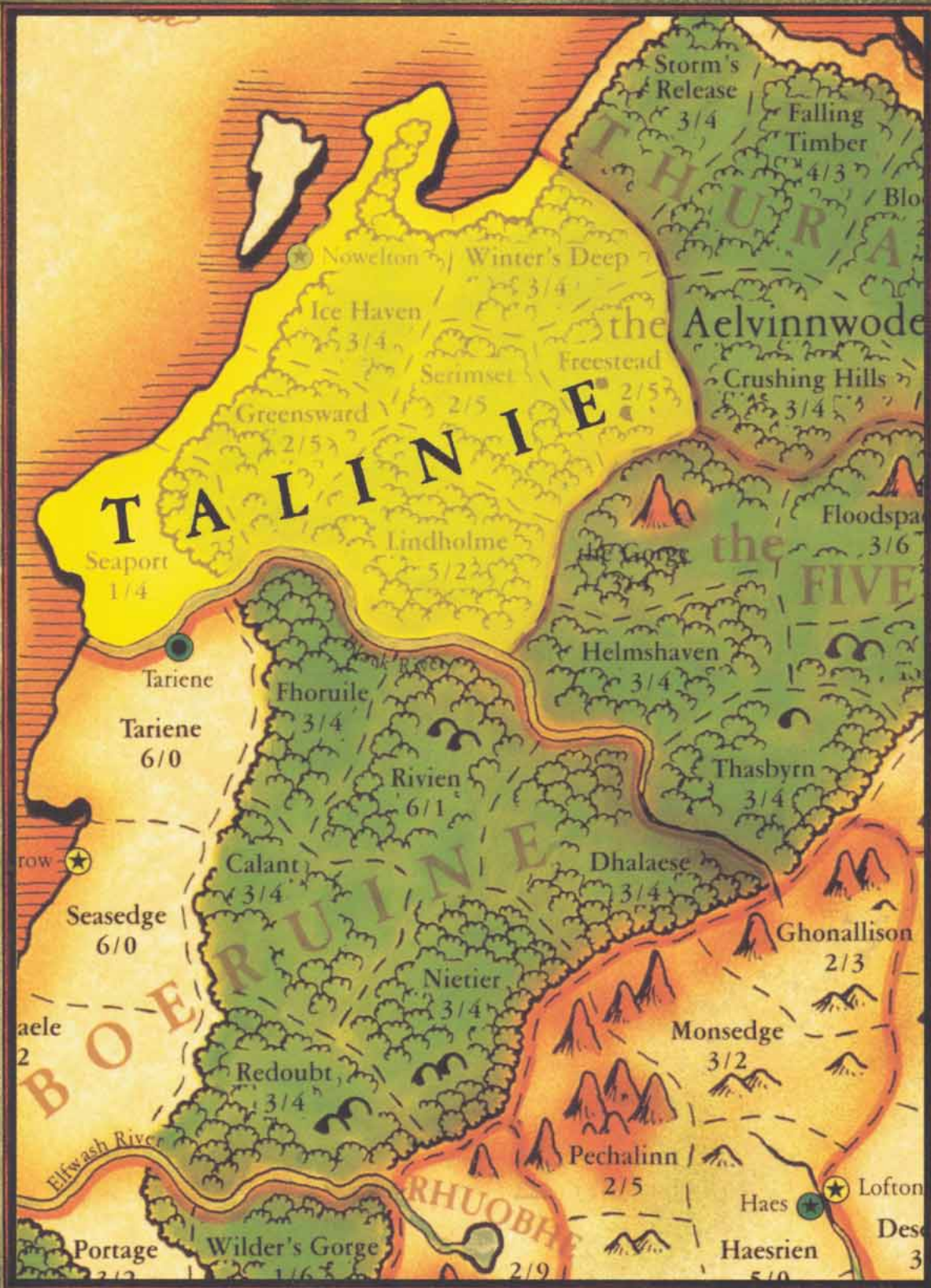


**Northern Imperial Temple,  
Lindholme (Temple Holding)**



**Trautha Stone Circle,  
Outside Nowelton (Source Holding)**





Player's Secrets of

# TALINIE



by Allen Varney

**T**o the casual observer, the realm of Talinie seems a pastoral place full of hard-working, law-abiding citizens. But those who look beneath the surface—as a regent must—will see what lies beneath the beauty.

From the south, a power-hungry archduke has moved troops into two of Talinie's seven provinces, supposedly as a safeguard against goblin invasion. From the north, greedy guildmasters have encroached upon Talinie's lush forests and have ravaged large areas for the timber and ores they yield.

To keep yourself on the throne known as the Oak Seat, you must control these foreign interests without giving them reason to rise up against you, and at the same time beware of traitors within your own court—it is whispered that the death of your predecessor was not really an accident.

This package includes:

- ❖ A full-color, eight-page foldout cover containing detailed maps of the domain and other information every Talinien needs.
- ❖ Facts about the realm's history, geography, economy, and laws.
- ❖ Descriptions of the major NPCs in Talinie, friend and foe alike.
- ❖ Secrets and strategy tips to help the new regent manage the realm.

This BIRTHRIGHT™ domain sourcebook is designed for players who want to take the role of Thane of the realm, playing either a lawful priest or a paladin. Players of nonregent characters who live in or come from Talinie will also find this sourcebook useful.

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