

THE PROTECTORATE OF THE DUSKLANDS

A SUPPLEMENT FOR THE ELDRITCH LIVE ACTION ROLEPLAYING GAME

The ELDRITCH Live Action Roleplaying game is a lovingly crafted work of fiction created by John Kozar, Faye Ferguson, and Spencer McGhin, with additional input from, and content created by Megan Durham, Jessica Sills, Thomas Marshbanks, Galen Hall, and Joe Meyer. Special thanks to Lehanna Allen, Carl Holzbog, and anyone else who ever listened to us prattle on about the project. Thanks to everyone who helped to make this strange dream a reality.

A very special thank you to our Kickstarter backers: Jillian Bendixen, David Paul, Charles Cadwallader, Sam Fitterman, Megan Durham, Todd Branch, Joseph Walterbach, Mark Cockerham, Edward Febish, Aaron Alberg, Talieson C. Solmon, Josh Fryer, Alex Gardipe, Adrian Lippy, Chris Pozsgai, Tony Davis, Amanda Pink, Mario Medina, Sarah Robicheau, Josh Dillard, Jeff Kramer, Thomas McFarland, Stephan Empson, Alexander West, Jenna Montgomery, Erika Shaffer, Kathy Empson, Kerry Beckett, Kevin Bryan, Gabriel Taylor, David Hollingsworth, Joseph Klas, Nick Reno, Jen Coghill, Edite Forman, Will Bishop, Phillip Brown, Daniel Slentz, Russ Skurski, Tony DeFrancisco, Mark Butler, Cefyn Shryock, Sethron Bowman, Marc Schiermeier, Elyssa Lind, Jenna Jennings, James Yarton, Julie Iaccarino, Luke Barker, Mae Empson, Cass McQueen, and Peter Whale.

All art by William Weird and Mel De Carvalho.

Art direction by Spencer McGhin and John Kozar.

WELCOME TO THE DUSKLANDS ...

The Dusklans is an otherworldly realm of overcast skies and craggy peaks, of desolate volcanic plains, misty bogs and lonely moors haunted by the baying of distant wolves. It is the home of ancient secrets and treasure buried beneath in hoary crypts and abandoned mines long before the Age of Man. Here, the Dusklans take precious resources from the Vale's bosom and the hands of ancient craftsmen turn them into masterful instruments of war and death. The Dusklans are a logical, stoic, and war-like people, driven by an all-consuming passion to create, even as they continue to master the arts of destruction. This is a dangerous land, a hard land, filled with people who have become as hard and cold as the iron they mine. Once, the Dusklans were very pinnacle of power in the Kingdom of Arnesse and none could stand before them, but now the mountains from which they were made have laid them low in a moment of fiery apocalypse. Through sheer will, they have clawed their civilization back from the brink and Dusklans now stand at a crossroads in their redemption, one path leading to glory beyond even the dreams of their fathers; the other, the path to annihilation.

USING THIS GUIDE

The player supplements for Eldritch are intended to provide detail information beyond that which is known to the general player population. All information in this guide is to be taken as in-play information, known by you and others in your corresponding faction. You may over the course of Eldritch events discover new information that corresponds to your faction, however you will be able to share this information as you wish.

MAJOR FIGURES OF THE MARCHES

Giles Bannon II

His Majesty, Giles Bannon II, King of the Ardan, Lord Sovereign of the Seven Protectorates and Defender of the Vale

While King Giles II is often not held in high esteem in many places, he is very well thought of by the people of the Dusklans. Seen as a visionary and brilliant leader, the King is lauded by many for attempting to bring a new morality to the Kingdom and to restore it to greatness once again. While

they can recognize some of his more zealous failings, the harsh way he deals with threats and those he deems profane strongly appeals to the Dusklans, who themselves feel that the King has been too merciful at times. Given his belief in the Aurorym religion, most Richter nobles have kept silent on the matter and it has led to a situation where the political relations between the two protectorates have fallen off in recent years, but the comradery between the people only continues to grow as more and more convert to the Aurorym faith. Though the Richter forces were defeated at the Battle of Lanton, Giles II is portrayed in tales and stories as a hero, who defeated the Richter nobles when they made the poor choice to back King Giles I and his 'Witch Queen', Maeve Innis.

Aline Bannon

Her Majesty, Aline Bannon, Queen of the Ardan, Queen of Flowers

Few can find fault with Queen Aline, given that she is almost universally loved for her outreach to the poor and needy. Most Dusklans find her to be terribly soft and a bit too cheerful for their tastes, with her bright flowers and cheery personality. That she is a Blayne daughter leaves many in the Dusklans wondering if she even has the qualifications to be Queen and many suspect that her husband manages most of the affairs of state because she lacks the experience to do so. If the Dusklans had their choice they would certainly have a more harsh, serious, and experienced woman on the throne. Not a few of them blame King Giles II's lack of progress with the Kingdom on Aline, claiming her incompetence as a major reason he is being held back from making the Kingdom great.

Hawken Richter

The Primehammer, Lord Paragon of the Dusklans

Lord Paragon Hawken is a man prone to bouts of mania and malaise yet possesses the patience of a mountain. Though beset on all sides by those who would see him deposed, he is like the iron hammer; steadily and patiently pounding away on the metal as it grows hotter and hotter. He is surrounded by tools to create, yet he is only able to destroy. Lord Paragon Hawken would see the Dusklans made shining and beautiful once again, yet all around him are those who would see it burn.

Eronessa Richter

Lady Eronessa Richter

Wife to Lord Hawken Richter. From outward appearances, she is a cold woman; quiet in a way that that suggests she thinks far more than she speaks. It is said that the Lady

Eronessa has been taken by a fit of madness and withdrawn from daily life and activities, including her duties as a mother, a task which she seems to have delegated to her attendants.

Gustav Richter

Advisor to Lord Paragon Hawken Richter

Lord Gustav manages the affairs of the Noctuary. Shrewd in everything, Lord Gustav is quite the foil to Lord Hawken's passions and malaise. Gustav is the picture of practicality and logic. Rumors say he is less interested in fighting wars and more on developing lands that the Richters currently control.

HISTORY

The following section details that common historical information known to those who call the Dusklands their home. While there is certainly more history to the faction, it will need to be discovered via the proper in-game channels.

THE AGE OF KINGS

Long is the litany of wars within the Dusklands – a record of victories so long as to be nearly uncountable. On the fringes of the people's memory, the Bastards War, a conflict between the would-be Queen, Eleanor of House Bannon and her many unworthy bastard siblings. The Bannons joined with their long-time allies, the Richters, and the combined armies, led by Lord Paragon and Primehammer Cillian Richter routed the upstarts and rebels over the next six years. Eleanor joined in marriage with her half-brother Royce Wolf, who was crowned King Miles I and she, Queen Eleanor. What happened between the Richters and the Bannons in the wake of the Bastard War is unknown, but both Houses had a falling out. House Richter largely retreated to their lands. There they grew new alliances among Houses not often considered friendly, including the much-maligned Rourkes. Queen Eleanor worked to rebuild a kingdom torn asunder by decades of war, but without Richter iron and engineering, she struggled to do so and was unsuccessful. Though she is well thought of in the Kingdom, many of the Dusklanders are loathe to speak of Queen Eleanor Bannon and when they do, they curse her name as a breaker of oaths. Similarly, the Dusklands were left largely unrepaired during Cillian's reign. Largely ignored by the Kingdom as well, the Dusklanders struggled in the isolation. It is said that structures damaged during that war still lie abandoned and unrepaired.

A new Lord Paragon and Primehammer, Drachard Richter rose to power. His mother taken by the Lady of Death, King

Giles I, the son of Queen Eleanor Bannon assumed the throne. Primerhammer Drachard opened talks with other realms again and seeking to reestablish political alliances. Health began to return to the Dusklands once again even as the Kingdom of Arnesse grew in wealth and prosperity beneath the rule of wise King Giles. Giles I enacted a number of administrative reforms and made fundamental changes to the King's Laws that gives more rights to the people but also gives more power to the nobles. Both the restoration of the realm's prosperity and the further empowerment of the local nobles sat well with the lords and ladies of the Dusklands, but the people grew increasingly restless as their rulers funnelled vast sums of coin into the Richter war machine for a war that never came.

King Giles' personal life was plagued by trouble. He married Lady Rosalind of House Bannon shortly after his coronation and had a son by her, Giles. When he made legal changes, he enabled couples to annul marriages and shortly after, he ended his marriage to Queen Rosalind, who took her son and fled through Richter lands to the Everfrost. King Giles took Lady Elysande Corveaux as his second wife and in less than a year she bore him a daughter, Emma. Some years later, Elysande was accused of adultery, put on trial, and executed for her crimes. About the same time, tensions began to rise on the southern border of the Dusklands over a border dispute with House Bannon over the town of Hollowmere. The dispute quickly escalated into a wider conflict, culminating in one of the bloodiest battles in modern memory – the Battle of Vale; over four thousand soldiers were killed in the multi-day battle.

The conflict may have expanded were it not for a disaster of titanic proportions. The mighty volcano known as the Shardmount, erupted in 743, sending a wave of devastation across the Dusklands. Those nearest the Shardmount were incinerated, swept away in a roiling cloud of ash and flame. Plumes of ash and smoke rose miles into the air and blotted out the sun itself for months. Without the sun the crops died and as the ash fell to earth it tainted the soil and made it so that nothing could grow. Almost overnight the protectorate fell into a panic. Some tried to flee the Dusklands for other protectorates; some would find homes while others paid with their lives. The Woodfolk of Thornwood killed hundreds of innocent men, women, and children who tried to seek refuge there for no other reason than daring to cross their borders. Many were turned away, but some showed great kindness, including the Bannons and Corveaux, who gave coin, food, water, and other resources to aid the stricken Dusklanders.

The next decade was a time of darkness, famine, and disease. All that was green in the Dusklands withered and died, the

trees themselves becoming little more than barren husks. The people had to learn to live again – to find food where none could be grown and water that was not tainted by the taste of ash. Thousands died and whole Vassal Houses collapsed into nothing but dust. The world moved on, and in the eyes of many, the mighty House Richter withered into a shadow of its former self. King Giles I would take another wife, Lady Alice, also of House Corveaux. She bore him a son, but both mother and child perished in childbirth even as the Dusklands languished in darkness. Into this chaos and despair, a new Primehammer took the seat of the Nocutary – Hawken Richter, the son of Drachard. Bent but not broken, the Dusklands began to salvage what remained of their homeland.

By 750, the reign of Giles I was in jeopardy as he took Lady Maeve Innis, the sister of the Lady Paragon of House Innis as his Queen. Rumors spread throughout the Dusklands that the King has been bewitched and that he was now in the thrall of a crone from the Thornwood. Cries for rebellion spread and unrest gripped a land still suffering badly. Heeding the call of his faith, the son of King Giles I, Giles the Younger, made his way South in 751 with a massive force of Hale splinter clans and Blayne knights, bent on taking the throne from his father. King Giles I called for his banners to aid him in defending the throne. Against the counsel of his advisors, Lord Paragon Hawken sent 10,000 elite Iron Guard to join Giles I, a move seen as widely unpopular among many people in the Dusklands.

The Iron Guard were sure to win Giles I a resounding victory, save that two thirds of them came down with a virulent illness shortly before the battle and were unable to fight. Rumors ran rampant of Aragon sabotage as a similarly large contingent of the Tarkathi troops were also at the battle but forbidden to fight by the King. As a result, Giles the Younger won the day at the Battle of Lanton against King Giles I's numerically superior force. It is said that the knights of the Fervent Order of the Vellatora carried the victory that day almost single-handedly, a rumor which empowered the nascent Aurorym faith within the Dusklands. King Giles I and Queen Maeve were put on trial and found guilty of using witchcraft. Both of them were burned at the stake mere days before Giles the Younger was crowned King Giles II. The King cemented his alliance by wedding Lady Aline Blayne, the daughter of Lord Paragon Frederick Blayne and gifting the Blaynes the Hearthlands Protectorate.

THE PRESENT

Once a people defined by their love of fire, the Dusklanders have become slaves to it. Dusklanders often refer to the fact that they 'live in the shadow of the mountain', a sign of just how oppressive and impactful the Shardmount is to their lives. Once, they were a people of industry, craftsmen and engineers who invented wonders never before seen in the Kingdom of Arnesse. Their armies never knew defeat and the very mention of their name invoked fear and awe in allies and enemies alike. But in a single cataclysmic moment, everything changed, and in the aftermath, the mighty were brought to their knees. Now, they are a people whose litany is written in ashes. They often hunger and thirst, struggling to accomplish things that are trivial to many others, but the Dusklanders were born with iron in their souls and the fire that enslaves them only tempers and hardens their resolve.

Life in the Dusklands is hard for most and even the wealthy struggle to get what they need. Desires or luxuries are often little more than a dream. The problem isn't coin, it's a lack of basic resources. Even before the Shardmount erupted, the Richters strained the natural resources of the Dusklands to the limit to feed the fires of industry and their relentless desire to create. The eruption was the tipping point that sent the protectorate into a truly desperate state. While in the twenty years since the Dusklands has stabilized, it is a place where hunger and disease are common and the nobles only retain control through an iron hand upon their subjects. This has transformed the Dusklands from one of the most orderly protectorates into one of the most dangerous. Thievery is a common threat throughout the protectorate, but the deadliest elements are desperate commoners and despotic rulers, all of whom will do whatever they can to survive.

The Dusklands has little time or will to focus on the world beyond their borders; most are just trying to survive. King Giles II has been on the throne for twelve years and spent much of his time focused on morality and the Aurorym faith. House Bannon's aid to the Dusklands in the years following the cataclysm are not forgotten and most Dusklanders are positively disposed towards the King. This is helped along by the growth of the Aurorym faith within the Dusklands. In their time of desperation, the people turned to religion and the Aurorym faith, with its empowering message, gave hope to many. Over the last twenty years, adoption of the faith has grown faster in the Dusklands than any place else in Arnesse. This has caused significant friction with many nobles in the Dusklands, as they disapprove of the rebellious overtones of the faith. Every time the Richters have tried to stamp out the

flame of the Aurorym, it has come back even stronger, and the nobles of the Dusklands can ill afford full-fledged revolt.

However, only the unwise would underestimate the Richters and the industrious Dusklanders. Even now, their mighty forges burn within Ember and a hundred workshops throughout the Dusklands. The Dusklanders were born of war and there are many among them who feel it is to war they should return; that they must take what they need to restore themselves to greatness once again. The border dispute with House Innis in the Western Thornwood has seen Richter troops set foot into the Northern Marches for the first time in as long as anyone can remember. The Dusklands is bled dry and its people are tired of being fed upon dust and dreams. They have grown weary of their ruler's excuses and empty promises. Hope has turned to bitterness, bitterness to malcontent, and malcontent into a desire to act. The Richters must direct this insatiable desire for action somewhere and all Arnesse waits with bated breath to see where the Dusklanders will turn their attention.

DUSKLAND HIGH HOUSES

HOUSE RICHTER

Castle: The Noctuary

Ruler: Hawken Richter, Primerhammer and Lord Paragon of the Dusklands

House Richter has ruled the Dusklands for as long as anyone can remember, and by all accounts, they are one of the oldest noble families in Arnesse. Their seat of power, the Noctuary, sits in the shadow of the mighty Ironhead, a mountain said to be made entirely of metal. The Noctuary is known to have some of the finest craftsmen in all Arnesse, specialists in smithing, engineering, and warcraft. Below the castle, night and day, the forge-fires of the Ashfall burn hot and the sound of hammer on metal rings in the distance. Beyond the walls that ring the keep, encampments and training grounds ensure that Richter troops are not only well armed, but well trained. Lord Paragon Hawken Richter is the ruler of the Noctuary and while the early part of his reign was marked by a time of rebuilding, in the latter years, a strange malaise has set in that has seen much of that productivity disappear. The Richter family is rarely seen outside the Noctuary these days and some say that they have fallen under a dark curse. Hawken's penchant for falling into malaise and mania have given rise to rumors he has been driven mad and murdered his family.

HOUSE RICHTER OF EMBER

Castle: The Embercrown

Ruler: Gustav Richter, Lord of Embercrown

The Richters of Ember are perhaps more of a grounded lot. A life spent administering the bustling trade town can make many things that do not fit the necessity of the now seem very unimportant. Their heavily fortified keep of Embercrown sits snugly among many shops, modest houses, and warehouses that house the many goods and foodstuffs that move through the Dusklands, out of the Midlands and the Hearthlands. The master of the house is Gustav Richter, cousin and advisor to the Lord Paragon, himself. A pragmatic and shrewd man, he takes his duties to family and to the Embercrown seriously.

HOUSE HARDINGER

Castle: The Hammerfall

Ruler: Lord Kristoph Hardinger

House Hardinger, to the east, runs the mining operations in and around the Forgebound Mountains. This vast mountain range stretches hundreds of miles along the eastern border of the Dusklands and is the predominant source of ore and other raw materials that has allowed House Richter to maintain its martial supremacy, in addition to its relative isolation, among the realm. Any excess stone and base metals are processed in the large refineries of the region and shipped out to the neighboring kingdoms. There, they are used to construct the myriad keeps and armaments that have brought not only a renewed sense of security, but the hope of peace and civilization, to a once untamed and formidable landscape.

HOUSE BEIL

Castle: The Black Keep

Ruler: Lord Undine Beil

Presided over by Lord Undine Beil, House Beil holds the blighted western Dusklands from their home in the Black Keep. Among their current household are those old noble families whose lands were ravaged when the Shardmount exploded, turning much of the surrounding land into a blackened ruin. Because the house has little to contribute in the way of resources, they host and train the largest number of soldiers and Iron Guard in the Dusklands. As of late, they have begun to take matters into their own hands by helping House Hardinger to settle the northern Dusklands. They also have contributed knights to the defense of the border city of Elminsk as they expand their operations.

HOUSE VARGA

Castle: The Deephold

Ruler: Sylvane Varga, Lady of the Deephold

House Varga's lands are located in the southern Dusklands in a place known as the Nightvale. There, they farm what little arable land was left after the eruption of the Shardmount, which scorched thousands of acres of once verdant valleys. The farmers here, however, have adapted their techniques to make the best out of what, for years, was an exceedingly dire situation: House Varga developed the practice of deep farming, repurposing abandoned mines and large caves to grow those flora that could thrive in such an environment. As they began expanding the practice, they came to discover entire ecologies and ecosystems that had hitherto been unknown to save but a few. Lady Sylvane is a peaceable woman, having grown up immersed in the agrarian lifestyle of her house and its people, a rare trait among the Dusklenders.

TRADITIONS OF THE DUSKLANDS

EMBER FAIRE

Though Dusklenders honor all of the Kingdom's proper holidays, they do have one unique event: the Ember Faire. A celebration of the harvest and a stark reminder of the fickle nature of the earth, the day begins with faire-vendors and farmers showcasing the bounty they have to offer. As dusk approaches, the faire-goers withdraw to change into costumes, either poor or fantastical. Each masked reveler is clothed in the same dour colors, except for a hint of flame hue somewhere on them. It may be red lips, a bit of golden-orange trim on a cloak, dark gloves sewn with amber beads - a crown of autumn leaves is the most popular of accessories.

No matter the garb they come in, all the celebrants come masked and they all bring a failed crop. Some farmers bring pumpkins that are half-eaten by rot, some nobles bring grapes that died and withered on the vine. Some women bring flowers and half-finished baby clothes. It is at once a solemn occasion as the failures pile higher in a wooden pit, and a chance to mingle and meet amongst those you would never otherwise speak to. The quality of costume is usually a clear indicator of social caste, but people dress both above and below their station tonight, if their desire so wills it.

As dusk gives way to night, the men gather and choose an Amber Queen, some unmarried woman who is a picture of vitality. Once picked, she's given three tasks - to lead the people in lighting the waste and rot of the old and draw fire

to the new. The third task ends the evening. She takes a torch and sets fire to the kindling that surrounds the rot pit, and that same flame she takes to a second fire, and there the evening truly begins for many people. As the night grows colder, once the rot fire has burned through all its fuel, the secondary fire is banked to allow for a ritual which holds roots in old House legend. Women of all classes line up to jump the fire, a ritual which was thought in ancient times to ward off bad spirits that would blight the crop. It was thought that the bravery of the women leaping through the coals, kicking up sparks, would frighten the bad spirits into retreating and thus the next year's crop would thrive.

When the last embers have been scattered, the Amber Queen performs her final task. She takes up a white ceramic bowl that has been prepared and sets it in the ashes of the second fire, pulling off her mask and using it to light the bowl's fire. Each person who has passed the evening without regrets does the same as everyone leaves the celebration. Some avoid the bowl and leave still-masked, and the more pious among the House say that those who leave still wearing a mask will carry that shame with them until next year's Ember Faire.

LEGENDS OF THE DUSKLANDS

'NEATH THE NOCTUARY

The Noctuary is said to have been built atop a great forge used during the time of the ancients. Curious Richters and servants who have found themselves wandering in and amongst the lower floors and sub-basements of the keep have noted sources of intense heat emanating from beyond collapsed stone passages and barred oaken doors. Stories tell of a lost hammer buried somewhere within the keep that is said to have belonged to a mythic hero from a forgotten time.

FATAL FLAW

Rumors tell of a Richter tradition to forge small but critical flaws and imperfections in any weapon destined for market or trade. No one is quite certain from where this tale originated and if a smith were caught doing so, they would be punished.

THE SHARDS OF ACHERON

The legendary hammer, Angrist, allegedly forged by Richter Ironhand himself, was said to have created the Shards of Acheron when it shattered into many pieces when wielded by a mighty titan in a war that took place long before the age of man.

THE GODKILLERS

At the top of the Black Stair there is a courtyard. Low, rough-hewn stone walls covered in ivy support high lattice work that keeps the area obscured by a perpetual gloom. Stone and metal statues of superb craftsmanship line the low walls, depicting the lords and ladies of Richter who have come before. In the center of this courtyard there is a pedestal upon which rests the statue of a man, bowing upon a knee as though prostrate before his ruler. Singularly odd in its appearance is the crudeness of its craft. Whereas the others are exquisite in their detail, this work of art seems to be only half-finished and hasty in its execution. Some say it is in fact the Old God, Acamar the Ironlord, to which House Richter owes their moniker, frozen in time as a constant reminder to those who would ever doubt the Richter's power and brutality.

KARNIGE

A place of myth, Karnige is a place of torture and death that is said to be haunted by the spirits of those who died there. Spoken of in hushed tones to scare children into good behavior. It is ruled over by the mysterious All-Bright, Overseer of Karnige.

GRYMM TALES

The Grimm Tales is an anthology of macabre fairy tales that is popular among the people. The tales tend to be focused on the supernatural and usually have a dark element. They also often have a moral or warn of a specific or set of behaviors that are best to avoid. The exact origin of the author of the anthology is unknown, but he is called Grimm and many suspect he may be of Faerie origin.

THE SINGING BONE

*Oh, dear shepherd
You are blowing on my bone.
My brother struck me dead,
And buried me beneath the bridge,
To get the wild boar
For the daughter of the king.*

In this tale, a boar lays waste to a country, and two brothers set out to kill it. The younger meets a hunter who gives him a spear, and with it, he kills the boar. Carrying the body off, the man meets his older brother, who had joined with others to drink until he felt brave. The older brother lures him in, gives him drink, and learns of the younger brother's adventure.

They then set out to deliver the body to the king, but on passing a bridge, the older kills the younger and buries his body beneath it. He takes the boar to the king and marries his

daughter.

One day a shepherd sees a bone under the bridge and uses it to make a mouthpiece for a horn, which begins to sing on its own. The shepherd takes this marvel to the king. On hearing the song, which tells the tale of the murder, the king has the younger brother's skeleton dug up from his grave. The older brother cannot deny murdering him and is executed. The younger brother's bones are buried in a beautiful graveyard.

THE ROBBER BRIDEGROOM

*Turn back, turn back, thou bonnie bride,
nor in this house of death abide.*

A miller wished to marry his daughter off, and so when a rich suitor appeared, he betrothed her to him. One day the suitor complained that the daughter never visited him, told her that he lived in the forest, and overrode her reluctance by telling her he would leave a trail of ashes, so she could find his home more easily. She filled her pockets with peas and lentils and marked the trail with them instead as she followed the ashes.

They led her to a dark and silent house. A bird in a cage called out "Turn back, turn back, thou bonnie bride, nor in this house of death abide." An old woman in a cellar kitchen told her that the people there would kill and eat her unless the old woman protected her and hid her behind a cask. A band of robbers arrived with a young woman whom they killed and prepared to eat. When one chopped off a finger to get at the golden ring on it, the finger and ring flew and landed in the lap of the hiding woman. The old woman discouraged the robbers from searching further, because neither the finger nor the ring were likely to run away: they'd find it in the morning.

The old woman drugged the robbers' wine. As soon as they fell asleep, the two women fled. Wind had blown the ashes away, but the peas and lentils had sprung up into seedlings: the two followed the path and reached the young woman's home.

When the wedding day arrived, and the guests were telling stories, the bridegroom urged the young woman to tell a story. She said she would tell a dream she had and told the story of going to the murderers' den, in between each sentence saying, "This was only a dream, my love!" When she told the part of the finger falling into her lap she produced the finger. The robber bridegroom and his thieving band were put to death.

THE STOLEN DRAGONS

A couple was having dinner with a guest. At midnight, the guest saw a girl in white dress came in the house and go straight into the next room. The same thing happened again the next day and the day after that. The guest told the father what happened. The father said he had never seen the girl before. One night, the guest peeked in the room. He saw the little girl sitting on the floor and digging up something between the boards of the floor. He reported what he saw to the mother, and she told him that it was probably their child who had died a month ago. The child received 2 silver dragons from the mother and was planning on giving it to a poor man. She changed her mind and decided to hide them between the floorboards, so she could buy biscuits later. However, she did not get to use them before she died. Thus, it came back to check on the farthings. They donated the farthings to a poor man and the ghost never came back.

INDUSTRY OF THE DUSKLANDS

The people of the Dusklands make their livelihoods on those goods that can be produced from the heavy ores and minerals pulled out of mountain and mine. The dark stone quarried from the Shards is hewn and shaped into massive blocks which are shipped out all over the realm to build the strong walls and keeps of the other kingdoms. Large veins of iron course through the Shards of Acheron, and particularly the Ironhead, wherein ancient mines yield the vast deposits that are forged and hammered into all manner of weapons and armor. Those armaments not requisitioned for the Duskland's vast military host is sold off to the other armies of the realm.

The Noctuary is said to sit atop the largest and oldest mine in all the Dusklands, if not the eight protectorates. The Empire mine is a vast network of underground tunnels and winding passages. Every successive Primehammer has pushed deeper and deeper into the mountain, each swing of the hammer tempting a cataclysmic cave-in. More and more, tremors shake the grounds in and around the Ironhead, some opening cracks in the earth that have swallowed up whole houses. Even the Noctuary has a large crack winding jaggedly from the base of the Black Stair, to the large, iron-barred, oaken doors of the keep. Through the ages, the mine has yielded many wondrous and strange artifacts. There are even those that claim to have unearthed gigantic wooden doors that, while unyielding to any means of entry attempted, are said to glow from beyond, and radiate a sulfurous and stifling heat.

While mining and craftworks comprise a great deal of the industry in the Dusklands, the art of war and the soldiers to fight it are also a common export from this ashen land. If one

is looking to be trained in swordplay or warcraft there are few better tutors than to be found in the Dusklands and some of the most renowned warriors in all Arnesse both train and fight for House Richter. Those searching for a sword-for-hire need look no further than about any tavern in the Dusklands to find a mercenary willing to do knife-work for coin. In addition, several large mercenary companies hail from this land and have headquarters there. Of note are the Sons of Steel, the Grey Company, and the legendary Duskblades. The Richters have also been known for exporting military training officers to other protectorates to instruct their armies, typically for high fees. Those who purchase the services swear by them and say that there are few finer troops a general would want on their side than those trained by the Duskland warmasters.

THE PROTECTORATE OF THE DUSKLANDS

The Dusklands of the day is a foreign, alien place among the regions of Arnesse, save perhaps Tarkath to the south. What was once a mountainous region with ample and beautiful farmland is now a land in the painful, long process of healing; a bud reaching for the sunlight amidst the crushing, black soil. The Dusklands has yet to fully recover from the eruption of the Shardmount two decades ago, after it buried whole towns and villages under suffocating piles of ash and even carried them away in molten lava flows. The destruction was total; as though the dragons of Aragon had somehow risen from the dead to finish their cruel and fiery work. Three Houses became one, as the field Lords of Oberst and Dresden take refuge with House Beil in Acamar's Cage. In addition to Varga, they had hitherto been the main supply of foodstuffs for the Dusklands. With their fields barren, they pooled what resources they had to expand the High House of Beil, turning many of their people over to the forges or the barracks.

The Dusklands sits just to the west of the Innis's Thornwood and to the north of the Bannon Sovereignlands. Flowing west out of the Blayne Hearthlands and into the wetlands of the Stravad Moors, is the Living River. Named so by the recent occupiers of the Hearthlands, those of the Dusklands call it by another, much older name; the River Olander. It once brought a nutrient-rich silt to the Dusklands before becoming polluted by the runoff of the forges and the waste of civilization. The relative lack of trees and vegetation in the Dusklands has made for warmer summers than in recent memory, while the cold winds of winter rip across the bleak landscape, unimpeded by the pine, oak, or ash. The Shards are an imposing backdrop to the flat expanse of the Richter homelands. The Shardmount lies sleeping for now, yet who

can say for how long? It is a mountain engrained in oral tradition, many such stories claiming it is the hellish prison of a slumbering fire giant. The commonfolk say that when he awakens, he shakes the mountain so violently that it erupts, wreaking terrible chaos and destruction throughout the land.

The Ironhead is the home of the Richter's home keep, the Noctuary. This peak stretches high and wide across the Shards, offering a safe redoubt from which Richter may maintain a vigilant redoubt over their domain. It is also the edifice of the Empire Mine, the vast, tunnel-carved pit from which is extracted the precious metals that feed the forges and power the machines of war. The conditions in the mine are grim. Cave-ins happen frequently while the air is said to be toxic, and if the life expectancy of the miners is any indication, there is some truth to this. The mountain itself is fortified with a troop of artillery manned at all hours by a unit of Dragoons, the Iron Guard's special gunnery unit. It is said that were they to fire upon an invading cavalry, not even the iron shoes of the horses would remain.

The Dusklands are carved into thirds by the Aurean Road, headed west towards the coast, and the North Road, heading due north straight into Hale's Everfrost. It is by this road, in fact, that Hale raiders make their way into the Dusklands when the snows begin to thaw, hungry for plunder to take back and hide away in their frozen hovels. This part of the Dusklands goes largely unguarded, making it dangerous to traverse.

The Dusklands is a northern protectorate and the climate during the winter months tends to be cold and wet, with snowfall being quite common. In the spring, it seems to rain every day, mixing with the ashen soil to create an often stinking, cloying type of mud that is renowned and reviled throughout Arnesse. Next to the Thornwood and the Sovereignlands, this region receives some of the most rainfall in the Kingdom. The rain abates throughout the summer months and is instead replaced with a humid, oppressive heat that attracts countless biting flies and insects. The only time most Dusklanders get a small reprieve is during the autumn months, when the weather cools off and the precipitation of the winter has not started. The Dusklands are so called because the sky is so often overcast, and it is considered the dreariest of all the realms.

THE NOCTUARY

Atop the Ironhead sits the Noctuary, the seat of the Lord Paragon of House Richter. Often called the Crumbling Keep, the castle and surround have fallen into some disrepair in recent years. A single set of narrow steps known as the Black

Stair winds precariously up to the castle, which sits prominently overlooking a labyrinthine maze of alleys and streets known as the Ashfall. There, in the shadow of the Noctuary, blacksmiths and craftsmen work day and night to feed the Richter war machine. The sound of metal on metal fills the air and the heat from the forges can be felt as soon as one passes beneath the keep's outer walls. Few make their home permanently in the Noctuary and the houses of the Ashfall are mostly the quarters for local craftsmen or military officers. The taverns and whore houses in town, mostly frequented by off-duty soldiers and mercenaries, are bawdy affairs and can be rough places, especially late in the evening. While a few shops are also present, almost all the industry in the town is designed to support military logistics, or to entertain the soldiers during their off-duty hours. The town is kept orderly by House Richter's Iron Guard, and while one has little to fear from criminal elements, there is no shortage of individuals who are spoiling for a fight. Beyond the castle's walls are training encampments and barracks that house a portion of the Richter army. At most times of the year, the barracks and encampments are full of soldiers training to either improve skills or new recruits to replace any losses.

EMBER

The town of Ember is one of the last remaining major trade hubs in the Dusklands, sitting at the nexus of where the Aurean road splits off to become the North Road, while continuing into the west until it meets the coast. Herein you may find the Richters of Ember, whom have held this small border town since House Richter has dwelt in the Noctuary. Some say it was the first village to be built in the Dusklands. At its center sits Embercrown, the small stone keep from which radiates the surrounding village. Upon the stone walls that offer the village its modicum of protection are ornately carved reliefs depicting smiths at their craft, miners at their work, and all manner of historical imagery. The buildings are supported by fanciful ironwork, turned and bent into all manner of scrollwork; testaments to the skills of the Richters.

HOLLOWMERE

Founded in 729, shortly after King Giles I ascended to the throne, Hollowmere sits on the border of House Bannon and House Richter lands, just on the edge of the Vale of Shadow. In 742 a border dispute erupted between House Richter and House Bannon when a surveyor claims that the dividing line between their territories was incorrectly drawn. The nobles were unable to come to a resolution, tensions rose, and both sides sent armies to the area. When House Bannon moved to occupy the town, the Richter army moved to block them and what resulted was the Battle of the Vale, a bloody multi-day battle that costs the lives of over four thousand soldiers on

both sides. The Richters, unwilling to continue the bloody fight for territory, met and agreed to a new dividing line that split Hollowmere in two along the river known as the Dread Run. House Bannon owns the South bank and Richter the North. Hollowmere is the gateway to the Vale of Shadow and the Annwyn. The people living there have made the best of being so close to their neighbors and in some ways, this has brought the almost ten thousand residents closer together. Given the long tradition of craftsmen between both Houses, this is one of the best towns to find an item of high quality.

ELMINSK

Elminsk is a newer settlement that is part of efforts to push at the corners of the Dusklands. Elminsk is a moderately sized town on the northern border of the Dusklands, abutting the Innis's Thornwood. The peoples of House Hardinger and House Beil have moved en masse to Elminsk to cultivate the land, fell the vast forest, and expand their mining operations into new territory. The Lord Paragon Hawken has been wary to expand here given the parcel's proximity to the Thornwood and those that watch from within, yet, his two High Houses have taken it upon themselves to establish what they see as no more than a town well within the domain of the Dusklands.

Lately, there have been several Vellatora knights and Aurons making their way to the Dusklands outpost. Lord Hardinger claims it is his solution to the growing problem of what the commonfolk think is a supernatural sickness. For all of Lord Hawken's attempts at halting the spread of the sickness, invoking the help of both the Apotheca and the Corveaux Order of Mercy, he has been unable to do so. If there is a powder keg in the Dusklands, it is the town of Elminsk.

DRESDEN

Dresden is little more than a shadow of its once former glory as home to the High House of Lord Ivan Dresden. Swallowed up by the Shardmount disaster, what little remains has been turned into a home for the refugees, cutpurses, and rogues of the Dusklands and even the areas surrounding. Given its relatively remote location, and that no one would willingly travel through Dresden if they could help it, it has become a thriving market of its own, though not for the same sorts of goods that can be found in Ember. In Dresden, one can find those goods deemed illicit and illegal; slaves, deadly poisons, rare and dangerous animals, and hedge sorcerers willing to sell you whatever hex, charm, or curse someone could name.

HOUSE & GUILD RELATIONSHIPS

The following details how the people of the Dusklands generally feel about factions in Arnesse. This information is to be taken as in-play by you and other members of this faction.

HOUSE CORVEAUX

Most modern Dusklanders look upon the bounty of the Midlands with jealous and desirous eyes. The Midlanders live in a realm of plenty, where few want for much and rarely do they feel the oppressive yoke of nobility around their necks. Traditionally the Dusklands and the Midlands have both strongly supported the Crown and thus been allies by proxy. Though they have two very different lifestyles and societies, they both share a long martial tradition. The Midlanders tend to view the Dusklanders as too brutal and mercenary while the Dusklanders see their Midland allies as too idealistic and merciful. The Dusklanders are quick to cite their much longer list of military victories as proof of which is more effective. In the years following the eruption of the Shardmount, Midlander food was vital to keeping the Dusklanders alive and many feel thankful and indebted to the Midlanders. In reality, many Dusklanders secretly would escape to the Midlands if they could and not few have even proposed taking more severe measures to acquire Corveaux resources. The last twenty years have seen an increasing number of marriages between nobles from both these regions and not a small amount of friction over the rapid spread of the Aurorym faith in the Dusklands, given the typical Midlanders' negative view of religion.

HOUSE ROURKE

House Richter is one of the few bonafide allies of House Rourke, a union that was sealed with the marriage of Eronessa Rourke to Lord Paragon Hawken Richter. Despite this, the Dusklanders have mixed views on the Rourkes. Many can't understand why their allies' ships continue to raid Duskland ports and ships along the Copper Coast. Given the proximity of the Freeport or Scyld, members of the Rourkes and the Seaborn are somewhat common sights in the Dusklands. While local bards are quick to spin tales of Rourke heroics and their dashing lives on the waves, most Dusklanders view them as little more than thieves with little honor who are more apt to run from a fight than not. Many Dusklanders envy the freedom and lives that the Seaborn live, longing to climb aboard a ship and leave the Dusklands behind. Not a few have joined a Rourke crew and done exactly that in recent years. As the rulership of Richter continues to sink into despair, the rumors of curses have begun to spread among the people.

Some have said that Rourke sea witches seeking to destroy the Richter nobility in the hopes of conquering the Dusklands.

HOUSE HALE

Though the Barrier Mountains separates the Everfrost from the Dusklands, this has not stopped the Northmen clans and House Hale from consistently raiding the lands of House Richter. As a result, the Northmen are greatly feared by the common people, especially those living along the northern borders of the Dusklands. These raids continued even after the eruption of the Shardmount and risked driving the Dusklanders to the brink of social collapse - a fact few in the Dusklands have forgotten. More than once, these raids have almost led to an open conflict between House Hale and House Richter. Several times the leaders of both lands have tried to establish a peace between the two peoples but always it is broken within a short period of time by one party or another. Most Dusklanders consider the Northmen to be little more than uneducated savages who swaddle themselves in the furs of animals. The rumors among the Dusklanders allege that these Northmen are possessed by the spirits of the dead and that they not only steal the goods of those they raid but also devour the flesh. The rivalry between the Dusklands and the Sovereignlands is an ancient one that is said to predate the formation of the Kingdom. House Hale's aid to Giles II in crushing the Richter forces at the Battle of Lanton have ensured there is little chance of the old wounds healing anytime soon.

HOUSE ARAGON

Dusklanders have a long and conflicted history with the people of Tarkath. House Aragon has long blamed the Richters for the death of their dragons centuries ago; a crime they see as unforgivable and still unpunished. This ancient enmity has colored interactions between these two peoples for as long as anyone can remember; and would have likely led to conflict if not for two factors. The first is that a significant distance and multiple protectorates lie between their lands. The second is that the Dusklanders feel confident they can beat any military or political challenge from the Tarkathi. So, while the Tarkathi fume and swear oaths to kill Richters, the Dusklanders rarely give them a second thought. Most Dusklanders have never met someone from Tarkath but they often view their people as decadent, excessive, and drug-addled. The fiery passions of the people of the South are seen as a liability and a weakness by the logical, level-headed, and fiercely practical Dusklanders. Most Dusklanders at least respect the Tarkathi for their martial prowess and strong sense of honor. The fires of resentment have only been stoked by recent history, where, even as both house's armies fought for King Giles I at the Battle of Lanton, the Richters accused the

Aragon forces of poisoning their Iron Guard, making them unable to fight and costing King Giles I the battle.

HOUSE BLAYNE

House Blayne presents both great opportunity and a good deal of trouble for the Dusklands. In the last decade the Blaynes have been aggressively expanding their army and outfitted thousands of knights with Richter armor and weapons. This has represented a significant business opportunity and the Dusklands has grown wealthier at the expense of its neighbor. However, these close business dealings have also brought more Hearthfolk into the Dusklands, particularly religious proselytizers who flooded into the region in the wake of the Shardmount's devastation. Many Dusklanders see the Hearthlands as a protectorate in its infancy and want to cultivate a better relationship with its people so that they can guide them to a better future. Dusklanders generally seem to disapprove of the rumors of corruption and incompetence among the Blayne rulers, but they don't get overly caught up in other protectorates' internal affairs. The talk is that the Dusklanders have eyes for conquering the Thornwood, but such a fight would cost them dearly, especially if they went at it alone. But not a few in the Dusklands have spoken of the possibility of a stronger, more formal alliance between Richter and Blayne in hopes that the Richters may be able to facilitate a bloodless conquest of its small but resource-rich neighbor. Of course, any conquest of the Hearthlands would no doubt involve a wide-scale adoption of the Aurorym faith, a gesture that the Richter nobles have been reluctant to even consider.

HOUSE BANNON

House Bannon has had a long and complicated history with the Dusklands. Long have the Lords of the Dusklands backed the House of Kings and their claim to the Crown. Though the Worldspine Mountains sits between their lands, they are a people who share much in common. The two Houses have also been rivals for the strongest political and military powers in the Kingdom since its founding. The people of the Dusklands are at least as renowned in crafting as those of the Sovereignlands, but they tend to focus on metalwork more than artifice. As with the Midlanders, many in the Dusklands well remember the Bannon coin that aided them in their time of need and most are positively disposed toward the Crown and the people of the Sovereignlands. The biggest source of friction remains the Aurorym faith, which, encouraged by the King and his faithful vassals, is spreading its way through the Sovereignlands. This has further enamored many Dusklanders to the Crown and those Valefolk who have converted to the faith. This has also been a massive source of tension for the

Richter rulers, who are almost universally opposed to the faith growing stronger, leaving many Duskland nobles in the unenviable position of wanting to forge stronger bonds with their powerful Bannon allies, but also knowing that to do so only hastens the spread of the Aurorym faith in their lands.

HOUSE INNIS

Of all the Houses in Arnesse, the Richters hold the most enmity for Innis and the Woodfolk. The feeling is mutual, as these two rivals have been in a silent war for centuries. The Woodfolk blame the Richter for the murder of their precious Old God, Mediena, and the Ironlords wear the moniker of Godkiller as a badge of honor. These facts alone would ensure that these two peoples would never be at peace with each other. The Richters are not welcome in the Northern Marches and the Innis are not welcome in the Dusklands. Many Dusklanders greedily eye the resource-rich forests of the Northern Marches as an expansion opportunity. Both sides rarely take captives unless a high ransom can be demanded. Even then, the Woodfolk have been known to murder Richter captives even if they could get coin for them. This conflict has escalated within the last few years as the Richters have claimed that ancient documents discovered in the vaults of the Noctuary have revealed that the eastern border of Richters lands extend further into the Northern Marches. Though this claim has neither been supported or denied by the Crown, the Dusklanders have begun to gather resources there. This has led to a state of all-but-open conflict that risks plunging the entire region into open war, an outcome that Dusklanders feel has been too long in coming.

THE APOTHECA

The Apotheca is, as in most regions, widely respected in the Dusklands. In a land often torn by conflict, famine, and disease, the Magisters are welcomed by the people wherever they go. Most nobles in the Dusklands have at least a few in their employ and it is also not uncommon for Magisters to travel about the Dusklands countryside, typically accompanied by several mercenaries to ensure they are not harmed. The Dusklands is an ancient land full of lore and lost knowledge and many Magisters go there to attempt to uncover those secrets. Unfortunately, the Dusklands is also good at hiding that which it does not want known, and in recent years, Magisters have found the Dusklands to be a surprisingly dangerous assignment. In the last few months alone, several Duskland Magisters have met untimely and unnatural ends, a fact that has somewhat dulled the desire of their peers to visit the Dusklands, but the Richter nobles are wealthy and pay very well for the services of the Bonesmen, so it is difficult for many of them to turn down such an offer.

THE FAYNE

To an old realm like the Dusklands, the Sisters of the Fayne Moirai are a relatively new arrival, having only appeared in the noble courts of Richter within the last several hundred years. Since then, they have come invaluable to the nobles of the Dusklands, with whom their martial and political skills are highly valued. The Sisters are almost universally welcome in the Duskland courts, but in the countryside, the Dusklanders are slightly more skeptical of these oracles. Dusklanders are a practical people who do not believe in magic, mysticism, or gods. Thus, not a small amount of people in the Dusklands believe the Fayne are charlatans or even malevolent witches. The spread of the Aurorym faith has not helped matters. There are not a few among the common people who speak of the Fayne as harbingers of doom and that their presence in the Dusklands has brought the cataclysm of the Shardmount upon this land and a fingered them as the perpetrators of the alleged curse which has befallen the Richter nobility. Most Fayne do not travel openly in the Dusklands and if they do, they are escorted, protected from those that would see them harmed.

THE HEXEN

The Dusklands are a dark and dangerous place where rumors of ancient evils and ghosts of the past are told in every tavern in every town in the protectorate. In few other places are the Hexen held in such high esteem. While many of the tales are just stories, a Hexen who spends long enough in the Dusklands will likely find one of them to be true. The Schola Exteris is in Darkhallow in the eastern Dusklands and many Hexen who operate in the Dusklands use it as a base of operations. To many Dusklanders, especially those in regions faithful to the Aurorym, the Hexen are treated as heroes and they are welcomed into villages with open arms, often earning free drinks, food, and board on the off chance they might stay there longer and keep a town protected. In other places, particularly among the Richter nobles, their close alignment with the Aurorym faith has led them to be distrusted, with some seeing them as spies. This doesn't stop the nobles from employing the Hexen as needed, for few in the Dusklands can disregard the dangers that lie just outside their front doors.

THE CIRQUE

The Cirque has been traditionally been at odds with the Richter nobility. Some have said that it has roots in the sale of guns and gunpowder, an exclusive trade that the nobles of the Dusklands have no desire to give away. However, the Cirque has done much to keep up its image in the Dusklands. In the wake of the Shardmount's explosion, they were one of the few guilds who actively worked to assist the people and provide supplies to the stricken. Of all the protectorates, the

Dusklands has the least to pass around to the less fortunate and it is they who often suffer the most. Though the Cirque cannot provide for everyone, they are often a safety net that provide food and other goods to the poor, homeless, and jobless. They are known to be one of the larger employers in the protectorate and many who can't find work on the land or in a mine will go to work as Cirque caravaners, roustabouts, or join a work crew. The lucky few who truly demonstrate their skills are brought into the ranks of the Cirque and given a chance at a new life. That is what has made the current situation in the Dusklands so complicated. Rumors as to how the conflict began are unclear but it is well known that the Cirque Ringmaster in Ember is at odds with the Lord Paragon. This has further placed Lord Paragon Hawken in the awkward position of not wanting to yield to the Cirque but increasingly inciting their guild and his own people by being at odds with them. This friction has boiled into open conflict and the streets have already run red with blood as a result.

THE AURORYM

The Aurorym faith is spreading faster in the Dusklands than in any other region of Arnesse. The Aurorym faith strongly appeals to the people of the Dusklands because it asks them to embrace their inner strength and will to become something more than they are. It calls them to be heroes and to be the light in a land of darkness. To a people who have been stripped of their dignity and power and forced to live beneath the yoke of an oppressive nobility, this message is powerful. In the last twenty years, thousands of commonfolk have joined the faith and the religion has a powerful stronghold in the eastern Dusklands, centered around Darkhallow in House Hardinger's lands and south into the territory of House Varga. Emissaries of the faith can be found throughout the Dusklands and most towns and cities host chantries and shrines. To date, the Richter nobles have not come out strongly against the faith, but many of them not only see it as a direct threat to their power but as a manifestation of the same Old Gods they destroyed so many centuries ago. With powerful ideals and wills on both sides, the Dusklands is rapidly coming to a point where a critical decision will have to be made. Unrest among the people about the nobles' stance is already starting to grow. Coupled with the already depressed living conditions, some regions of the Dusklands teeter on the edge of revolt, with the local nobles maintaining control only through military force.

PLAYING A DUSKLANDER

The Dusklands embodies the brooding artist, and the loathing that comes from building your corner of the kingdom on the blood of the empire. When your welfare depends on peddling

the instruments of death, the only thing you can do to secure a position is make them more terrible. Though many portray a stoic countenance, on the inside is something else. Theirs is an obsessive compulsion with establishing a legacy rooted in the things they craft, even if those things are made to destroy.

True to their creed, a Dusklander is the point at which cinder meets steel; where the heated, fiery, yet fleeting passions of the artist meet the grim rigidity of steel. Cold, distant, honest, brutal, obsessive; words that have been used to describe many a Dusklander. While they may be a secretive and distant lot, every action is taken in the open, consequences be damned. A Dusklander hides nothing and all matters are approached head on. While this makes them predictable, other lands have found it also makes them dangerous. When they say they're going to do something, it happens. A Dusklander stands steadfast behind a cold logic and a stoic, grim persistence that extends to almost every facet of their life. Like the hammer to the metal, under enough pressure and heat for a long enough amount of time, nearly anything can be shaped to one's will.

This has created a strange and conflicting duality between how a Dusklander sees themselves and how they are. For all their stoicism, they are apt to bouts of melancholy and malaise, originating from an obsession bent on perfection in everything. It is the curse of the artist; the never-ending pursuit of the unattainable, for it is the imperfections which make things perfect. This is the ember from which is sparked their brutality. For as hard as they are upon others, they are infinitely harder upon themselves. No one could be more critical of a Dusklander than a Dusklander. Theirs is a tragic legacy built on creation yet cursed by the need to destroy.