

Results of Blood on the Water

Atlantean Empire: 57%

Elemental Freeholds: 43%

Victor: The Atlantean strike team successfully crosses the Roa Kaiten in force, with their mining golems intact, heads for the rich Magestone Mines at Ashon Rye.

While the Elemental sorceress Emerald attempted to destroy the Atlantean supply camp along the shores of the River Kaiten, her forces were not strong enough to disrupt Warlord Ahzan's plans to cross the river in force with a full contingent of mining golems. The battle left more than a dozen warriors dead on both sides, and placed the Elementals in a position where they are only going to be able to conduct a running battle against a better-armed and fast-moving enemy. In the upcoming battles at Ashon Rye and the Vale of Dawn, true dominance will be revealed between the Empire and Elemental warriors, with the victor taking a hefty prize as result.

Results of Food and Grog

Black Powder Revolutionaries (Bloody Thorns): 52%

Orc Khans (Broken Tusk): 48%

Victor: Forces loyal to the Black Thorn manage to prevent the Orc Khans from raiding the heartlands of Khamsin.

With the betrayal and breakaway of the Shadow Khan tribes following the rout at the Battle of Rokos, the traditional Orc Khan warriors loyal to the Broken Tusk were denied a great deal of food, slaves, and treasure that they normally would have taken from the lesser clans and used throughout the winter. Now, forced to raid the human lands earlier than in living memory, eight tribes of Broken Tusk warriors invaded the borders of Khamsin intent on gathering food, slaves, black powder and treasure of any kind. While the defenders of Khamsin rose to the occasion, the warriors loyal to Nadia os Darras and the Bloody Thorns took the main brunt of the deadly assault.

In past years, Orc mercenaries had been hired by the Atlanteans to destroy key black powder reserves and outland forts. While the nobles of Khamsin assumed that the attack was merely a typical Orc raid for food and resources, the Bloody Thorns turned out in great numbers to ensure that the Orcs were not able to weaken the outland defenses against possible Atlantean attack or treachery. But while the Orcs indeed had no other agendas than to raid, burn and pillage, as their ancestors had for a thousand years beforehand, the ferocity and rage that still coursed through their veins from the betrayal by the Shadow Khans transformed even the scrawniest Orc child into a vengeful and deadly raider.

And the Bloody Thorns met them head on, with everything they had.

By the end of the fight, four Orc tribes lay shattered, their warriors blasted or punctured with a rain of metal death. In turn, more than a hundred of the Black Thorn's finest warriors died with their swords in their hands, either chopped or torn apart by the vengeful green-skinned demons. While the Orcs were eventually driven back out of the Khamsin frontier, with their wagons stocked with food and supplies taken from burning villages, the Orcs were denied a sizable cache of black powder, and most importantly, they were unable to bring with them more than a hundred human female slaves captured from the outland communities.

The Orcs of the Broken Tusk vowed to return, and the Bloody Thorns believe them - and will be ready and waiting to defend their homeland when the Khans next return.

Results of Traitors in Fairhaven

Dark Crusaders: 54%

Atlantean Empire: 46%

Victor: Dark Crusaders Results: The Crusaders manage to prevent the Atlanteans from retaking the province of Fairhaven.

The Atlantean army sent to liberate Fairhaven from the Dark Crusade failed in their attempt to free the client-state from the hands of the enemy. While the series of running battles around Castle Fairhaven were continually favorable to the Atlanteans, and costly in body count for the Crusaders, the final day of battle revealed traitors in the Atlantean camp. At the critical moment when the Atlanteans had broken the zombie-infested battle lines and were charging their way through the front gates, with more than five hundred soldiers following their the vanguard of Technomancers and Commanders along the stone bridge leading into the castle bailey, a Golemkore officer suddenly stopped and turned upon the rushing mass of soldiers. With a flourish, he tossed his staff over the edge of the drawbridge, drew a flaming sword from his scabbard, and starting blasting human soldiers to pieces with balls of detonating fire.

Surprised by the sudden appearance of a relic-wielding enemy, the surging tide of Empire warriors slowed for a moment to blast down the dangerous threat with shots from a hundred weapons - even as the Atlantean vanguard charged headlong into the waiting horde of vampires and undead just inside the main gate. While the masquerading Blood Cultist was vaporized by the throng of battle-frenzied warriors, the main group's momentum was stopped cold, giving time for the vampires to shred the outnumbered vanguard. While Gatekeeper Bassan managed to chop down at least a dozen of the undead, by the time the Empire forces managed to reach their comrades, most of the human warriors were dead or dragged off into the recesses of Castle Fairhaven by vampires or their twisted kin.

In the end, both sides suffered massive casualties, but the Crusaders managed to hold onto the castle only by trickery and deception. While many Atlanteans wanted to take another try at Castle Fairhaven, intelligence reports indicates a massive Crusader troop movement moving to engage Bassan's warforce. As there was a great danger of being surrounded and cut off, Bassan dejected ordered a retreat to the edge of the Roa Kaiten, knowing that the chance to repel the Crusade at Fairhaven was now beyond his grasp.

Results of Flames in Duncastor

Dark Crusaders: 58%

Black Powder Revolutionaries: 42%

Victor: Dark Crusaders

Results: The armies of the Dark Crusaders spread like a tide through one of the oldest client-states in the Empire, destroying and burning everything in their path!

The capitol city of Bydalia, renowned throughout the Land for its beauty, its art, and commerce, falls under the sword of war for the first time in over three years. While the Black Thorn and Raydan Marz used the fair city as a battle ground during their quest for the Sphere of Jorandal, not even Darq the Corrupt could envision carnage and destruction on this scale. Having loosed the armies of the Necropolis to do as they like, the effect upon the Atlantean client-state of Duncastor is comparable to loosing a pack of hungry wolves in a goat pen.

The Atlanteans gave a good fight, and tried their best to hold the invaders near the eastern borders along the Roa Kaiten - but the warbands of pit-fighters, Necromancers and predatory undead overwhelmed the defenders throughout the province. While Bydalia suffered greatly under the siege, as did the ancient citadel of Tor Lendex, neither city suffered the grisly fate of Orc-torched Alrisar far to the west. Both cities, save for a few historical structures and palace buildings, were spared the wrath of fire and sparks that nearly gutted the capitol of Prieska. However, the fate of many of the citizens and soldiers of this realm were not nearly as bright.

While there is no true order to the attackers rampaging through Duncastor, as each individual Crusader warband plunders graveyards or catches and slaughters Atlantean citizens to their own tastes, the wave of fear and terror spreading across the countryside seems unstoppable. The main cities stand, confined within their walls against the swelling tide of zombies and monsters, but the countryside belongs to the horrors of the Dark Crusade. While the Revolutionaries march to the border of the Grange Valley, and the Imperial Legion is being called upon to repel the invaders, it is the deed and heroism of a well-known Atlantean leader to the south. Lord Maakha, the master of the coastal city of Darthion, upon orders of the Emperor and revered Tezla, sends an army into Fairhaven, to capture the remains of the

Stone Bridge and to cut off the Crusaders warriors west of the Roa Kaiten from further aid or reinforcements.

Results of Valley of the Mists

Dark Crusaders: 53%

Black Powder Revolutionaries: 47%

Victor: Dark Crusaders

Results: The Dark Crusaders gain control of one of the Amazon's holiest sites - and begin digging for the corpses of long-dead Amazon Queens!

Late Winter, 434 Tz

Within the hidden valley at the mouth of the Whitespray River, in the Valley of the Mists, it rains year-round without fail. The slopes of the boulder-strewn mountainside course with crashing waterfalls, gurgling streams, and displays of the most beautiful flowers and lush vegetation found anywhere in the Land. While fog is a constant within the steep-walled valley, the fierce Amazon defenders of the hidden vale are legendary for their ferocity and merciless treatment of prisoners.

But against a horde of trained pit-fighters, Necromancers, and warriors from the Vurgra Divide, the Amazons steadily lost ground to the Crusader host. Marching two by two alongside the frothing Whitespray, the warriors of the Dark Crusade payed little heed to the totem-pole guardians that stood watch over the river's edge, concentrating their senses on what they could hear and smell rather than their fog-shrouded sense of sight. While a number of Necromancers and Vampires died hideous deaths on that long two-day march into the interior, struck down by desperate sword-maidens and magically-summon totem beasts, the Crusader throng assembled in the Valley of Bones.

The Amazons, led by Queen Valia, led the melee charge against the Crusader host, running through the thick fog into the ranks of undead and battle-hardened warriors. While Valia's battle plan was to destroy the commanders of the enemy army, and then divide and destroy the rest of the invaders, the sheer numbers of undead and the ferocity of the female warriors and pit-fighters in the Crusader ranks led to her undoing. By dusk that night, the battle had dissolved into a wide number of skirmishes where the Amazons were losing more soldiers than their Necromancer enemies. Valia called the retreat before dusk, allowing many of the Amazon survivors to escape through familiarity with the mist-shrouded landscape.

Upon returning to Nepharus Mons, Queen Valia quickly found herself the target of ridicule by Queen Corella, and found many of the tribe-leaders of the lesser tribes demanding that something be done to reclaim the site. Valia, having freshly seen the strength of the Crusader army in the Vale, argued that the Amazons would need to gather resources, and that the last

thing her people could afford to do is to be hasty. Corella, demanding that vengeance be enacted swiftly for fear of angering the sleeping totem gods that lay within the Valley of the Mists, began riling up the other tribal queens to choose once and for all whether Valia or Corella would solely lead the tribes. While Corella did not go as far as to challenge Valia in single-combat, the strength of the will of all the tribes may be enough to drive Valia from power within Amazon culture, leaving Queen Corella - secretly a Solonavi agent - in charge of the mountain, and in a position to completely undermine the Revolution's main source of explosive black powder.

Results of Carving to DARTHION

Dark Crusaders: 52%

Elemental Freeholds: 48%

Victor: Dark Crusaders

Results: The Crusaders prevent the Elementals from making deals with mercenaries.

Javok'din

Moving his troops through the forests of the Wylden, the Troll warleader knew that the odds were against them. Crusader patrols were everywhere, and it would only be a matter of time before his warband was discovered. While his scouts were amongst the best that Roanne Valle had to offer, getting a warband of this size to the waters of the Galtor would take every bit of skill they possessed. He hoped it would be good enough, as did the Forest Elves, Sprites, Centaurs and Forest Trolls in his command.

It would soon be dusk, and with it the Elementals would lose the advantage of light. While many of the warriors in his command were capable of seeing by night, Javok'din preferred to fight in the daytime. Crusader warriors seemed to have an aversion to sunlight, just as much as any wise Elementalist is wary of shadow.

Just a few miles ahead, boats were waiting at the shores of the DARTHION, ready to take them to a number of mercenaries on the far bank ready to deal. Having the sanction of the Prophet-Priest of Roanne Valle, the brawny Troll was prepared to promise each of the warleaders a fair price for helping them clear out this section of the Wylden. With the avenue cleared, warriors, goods, and weapons could be transported with ease, as the Elementals had a number of secret ways to scale the high cliffs of the Wylden Plateau.

The forest suddenly went silent around them. Making the motion for his warriors to stop, in silence, and ready their weapons, he watched the trees and waited for one of his scouts to appear. But when the small, ball-shaped object flew over the top of the nearby trees, and landing with a rolling, splattering motion on the turf only a few steps away, Javok'din quickly recognized the projectile as the head of his lead scout, her neck chopped from his shoulders with a wickedly sharp blade.

Then the forest exploded with Crusader warriors, and the Elementals were fighting for their lives.

Sargoth

Sargoth savagely punched his blade into a Forest Elf's torso, shredding through the forged mail as if it were paper. Withdrawing his blade, he attacked twice more, tearing two more ragged holes in the warrior's chest. Being careful to leave the Forest Elf in good enough condition for the Necromancers to reanimate later, the Crusader commander made sure to leave the head, arms and legs untouched.

Looking around the clearing, he saw a raging Troll smashing pit-fighters and zombies aside with its massive fists. Even as the beast roared orders, Sargoth issued his own commands by blowing a pattern on a high-pitched silver whistle. At once, a half-dozen of his Crusaders broke away from their own fights, and piled into the Elemental leader with everything they had. While at first overcome by the attack, the Troll managed to break away from his assailants long enough to rip a sizable tree from the ground, and then use the massive tool to crush three of the Crusaders into pulp with a single blow.

Taking the initiative, knowing that his soldiers wouldn't hold up against the Troll for long, Sargoth ran into the melee, dodging around one of his own warriors in order to get into range. Neatly ducking under the Troll's leafy weapon, Sargoth leaped up onto the beast's back, locked one arm around its massive throat, and punched his sword through its back, piercing the lung. The Troll screamed in agony, even as a Crusader chopped out one of its legs, sending the Elemental commander to the ground. Messily withdrawing the blade from the wound, Sargoth spun the sword around, and then delivered a devastating blow to the back of the head, sending the Troll into limp unconsciousness.

All around the clearing, the few Crusaders that survived the battle were checking their wounds or cleaning their weapons. As far as Sargoth could see, every member of the Elemental host lay dead in the brown winter grass.

"My own personal Troll to play with," the Dark Elf said with a smile. "Darq will be so jealous."

Results for the Battle of Fort Wyndham

Amazon Kyma's Revolutionaries: 59%

Enhancer Nim's Imperials: 41%

Victor: Black Powder Revolutionaries

Results: The Revolutionaries maintain control of the Grange Valley; the Atlanteans retreat with medium-grade losses.

Kyma

Near exhaustion, Kyma, the Amazon leader commanding the defense of Fort Wyndham, threw down her black powder rifle and sat down hard on the stone battlement. Putting her back to the remains of the lightning-scarred parapet behind her, she wiped sweat from her brow with the back of her hand, trying not to smear her face with the black powder soot that stained her fingers. While her riflemen were keeping the Atlanteans at bay, and her Dwarven artilleryists had done well in shelling the Atlantean lines and sinking a fair number of the sprite-like Xandressan ships that dominated the Vizorr, the Revolutionaries within the fortress had suffered a great deal of damage from a host of new spells the Technomancers were using. About once an hour a storm of lightning and destruction would rain down on the fort, blasting flesh and stone with equal effect. Soon, the smell of hot lightning would start to build in the air, promising another rain of Technomantic destruction upon the weary defenders.

From Kyma's vantage atop the walls of the beleaguered fort, it didn't seem that the Revolutionaries stood a very good chance of maintaining control over the Grange Valley. News from her messengers told of Golemcore mages marching their automatons along the western side of the river, burning every Revolutionary village and town they could reach. While the Northlanders were holding their own, the freedom-fighters were more used to fighting troops that could suffer the effects of low morale or fear rather than conducting toe-to-toe beatdown fights where the strongest warrior - or golem - would win the day. The Atlanteans knew well that if they could take Fort Wyndham, they would effectively break the Revolutionary territories back into two pieces, and were using every trick in the book to ensure their victory.

While a bastion of Empire irregulars were loosely controlling the uninhabited areas to the east of the fort, they weren't perceived as any serious threat. Kyma was hoping she could sneak a sizable group of riflemen around the enemy flank without being noticed by the pesky Imperial scouts. If she could do that, and could find a way to disrupt the Atlantean lines with a few well-placed headshots to their commanders and leading mages, maybe she could buy some time to reinvigorate the defense of the ancient stone fort. It would mean sending a fifth of her army's remaining strength through one of the secret gates, but it would be a worthy gamble that might swing the day in her favor.

Enhancer Nim

As the commander of the Empire forces attacking the critical river fortress, Enhancer Nim had expected a hard fight from the Revolutionaries. Looking down upon the paper maps tacked to the top of a camp table, he was satisfied with his strategies, and knew that he would be able to claim victory by nightfall. By capturing Fort Wyndham, he would not just shatter the Revolutionary lines, but provide another solid bastion against the eventual incursion of Crusader forces from the east. Every soldier in Atlantis knew it

was a matter of time before the Dark Crusade started the next leg of their expansion, and victory here was required to ensure the safety of the western half of the Empire.

Turning his attentions to the battle at hand, he knew that it would be a hard day ahead. While the magical attacks would wear the enemy down, the only area he truly had superiority in was hand to hand skirmish fighting. While the blasts of devastating magical energy took care of the majority of the defender's cannons, giving him guaranteed control of the river, he still needed to break the gates of Wyndham. Having just given the orders for a major assault, he warily watched as the attackers approached the walls, and started the process to letting loose enough firepower to blast every Revolutionary to hell.

Then, the hairs on the back of his neck prickled, and his attentions suddenly shifted. While most of his troops were facing the western walls of Fort Wyndham, pounding the defenders with waves of crossbow bolts, energy streams and magical spells, the sound of black powder gunfire could be heard sparking and popping behind him to the south. Before he could call the alarm, his command post and most of the mages within the structure were shredded by a hail of bone-shattered bullets. Screaming orders to his lieutenants, he grabbed onto two injured Technomancers and cast a protective spell across them, shielding them from the second wave of shots penetrating through the structure.

Within moments, groups of his bodyguards were charging towards the Revolutionaries, firing their lightning rifles, scattering the assassins like mice. Then, arcs of brilliant energy were fired by swift-moving golem warriors, incinerating many of the fleeing warriors in their tracks. As Enhancer Nim watched the carnage, he knew that every last member of the rifle squad were doomed to die. But with so many of his mages either dead or near death, he'd lost the magical advantage, and knew that Fort Wyndham would likely hold its own against its enemies. With Emperor Nujarek's orders very clear - that Wyndham was not to become another Wolfsgate - it was apparent he would need to withdraw, and wait for new orders from Atlantis.

Blood Falls Epilogue

Lark rode in through the massive gates of Roanne Valle, her horse slick with lather from the day-long ride across the top of the Wylden Plateau. While Lark had been on the move ever since the final battle of Blood Falls, her trek through the Wylden had been one of secrecy and stealth. The advance scouts of the Sect army were everywhere, burning Troll villages and Centaur glades wherever they found them. While the Elementals were defending their homeland, the Necropolis seemed to have a neverending flow of undead to rip and tear the Wylden defenders apart. While Lark wanted more than anything to turn around and ride back to her homeland, to fight alongside the other Faerie struggling to survive at Blood Falls, the package she carried was crucial to the survival of the League.

For 30 seconds, Lark rode under a tunnel of stone, watched carefully by the Elemental warriors stationed along its length. When she rode back into the sunlight, she had to blink furiously to let her eyes adjust. A scout had already called ahead, and the members of the Circle of Nine were already present in the courtyard, ready to receive her. The leader of the League, the Prophet-Priest Tremelen, stood imposingly at their center, and the other eight stood around him in a semicircle, each with their own looks of welcome – or scorn. While the four Wylden Elves seemed to warm at the sight of her, the massive mountain Troll, the forest Troll, and the Centaur seemed as cold as ice. Dressed in rainbow hues, one of the queens of the Faerie – the Sprites' representative on the council – stood at the Centaur's side. The look of wrath and vengeance displayed on her face – likely from the news that her homeland was under fiery assault by the Sect – was enhanced by the blood-red crystal sword she held at the ready in her hands.

"What do you have for us, Sprite?" asked Tremelen. His voice was cool and soft as a forest breeze, but had an undertone of dominance that not even a mountain Troll could challenge.

She dismounted, and quickly took the package out of her horse's saddlebags. "I bring the plans for the Sect's invasion of the Wylden," Lark responded. "Taken from the corpse of a slaughtered Order of Vladd Vampire commander. From what I've interpreted from the writings, this attack is not just another test. This is a full-scale invasion with only one result: the destruction of every creature of the League, and the capture of Roanne Valle. They have access not only to battle-trained troops, Vampires, and necromancers, but also to an uncountable horde of undead they have generated northeast of the Black Lake."

"How is this possible?" growled the Troll representative.

"They have some kind of magical artifact that allows them to reanimate hundreds of bodies at a time, and then the leaders of the Sect control them from hundreds of miles away using the same powerful relic. While they lack the ability to create new Zombies this deep into the Wylden, the armies of undead they are sending against our people may be unstoppable.

Additionally, the peoples of the Vurgra Divide are not just loyal to the Sect in life, but also in death. From my own knowledge, all humans loyal to the Blood Goddess who die in the Divide have been reanimated to spend their second lives in service to the necromancers."

Tremelen held up the package of letters, and bowed to Lark. "Your service to the League is admirable, and your determination to get this information to us is highly commendable. You will now eat and rest, while we of the Circle of Nine ponder what is to be done."

Sack of Prieska Epilogue

All day, the pile of treasure brought to Kzar Nabar by the warlords continued to grow. Gold, furniture, paintings, and magical devices from the mage-isle of Delphane were but a few items in the growing horde. From this great gamble, from this costly raid through the Blasted Lands, Nabar had gained more treasure than any other Orc warlord in history. Even revered Kzar Rabahn, for all his strength and determination, had no taste for wealth. For Rabahn, the smell of burning woods and slaughtered humans was enough to sate his greed, no matter how much the warriors in his band desired wealth to bring back to their tribes on the Fist. For Nabar, wealth and privilege were everything, right up on the list with conquest and burning his name into the minds of every spineless human in the Land.

As another blood-spattered Orc Khan poured out a pig-sized sack of unrefined Magestone crystal before the Kzar, hoping for a blessing and favor from the ruler, Nabar waved his hand. "Everyone get out of my tent!" he demanded. "I require time to think." Two Orc females, dressed in Galeshi silks and veils, stepped forth to entice. But he waved these off as well, having no time for frivolity. When his tent was empty, and the sounds of his brethren had faded, he spoke.

"My master, Heddravalis," Nabar said. "I call upon you."

A being of blue light manifested in front of the Orc Kzar. Clothed in red armor, and bearing a glowing sword in his left hand, the Solonavi stood imposingly before his pawn. "Nabar," it acknowledged.

"We have taken Prieska. Alrisar is in ruins. The Atlantians are scattered and we stand unopposed in the human lands. But in time armies will come, and my warlords stand divided between wanting to stay and fight for what we have taken, and moving on to sack new places. I do not know what to do."

"Wait," stated the being. "Consolidate and ensure that the Atlantians do not drive you out. When the time comes, a dark messenger will arrive. Then you will have your answer."

"What kind of messenger?" the Kzar asked with some suspicion.

"He will be from the Necropolis," stated the Solonavi, "and will represent the Order of Vladd."

"A Vampire? And what message will he bring?" Nabar asked.

"Not a message," Heddravalis responded. "But an offer. An offer of destruction and terror the likes that Atlantis has never imagined. From that offer, everything shall come together as it should, and your brutal people shall spread all across the Land until all fear the name Nabar, and humans everywhere revile you as the Destroyer."

Imperial Games Epilogue

As Commander Redwyne rode on the east road away from the Atlantean capital, accompanied by his three surviving warriors on horses packed with prizes from the tournament, the Elven commander finally let his guard down. Out of the view of the dangerous Atlanteans, he let out a long, relieved sigh as the stress and fatigue of his month-long dealings with them finally rushed out of him. His victory in the arena had cost him the lives of almost a hundred of his warriors – most of them friends that he had made over the last 20 years. Now, all but three were dead by Atlantean hands. But Redwyne knew the cost in lives was worth it, and not just for some silly title or prize of gold or riches.

Redwyne's strategy against Altem Senn and the Atlanteans had been unique: confront the Atlanteans with their worst fear – a combined force of races – and see how well they adapted to sworn enemies working together against them. The ploy had worked well. While winning the tournament was inwardly gratifying, almost as much as the horrified look on Altem Senn's face as he surrendered during the final battle, the dark knowledge that Redwyne had exposed a chink in the Atlantean's otherwise invincible armor was the real victory of this painful experience.

While his warforce had been nearly wiped out, with only a forest Elf, an Orc, and a nearly crippled Amazon surviving, the triumph in the Atlantean Arena would make Redwyne's name both blessed and cursed throughout the Land. Warriors of all races and capabilities would swarm to his banner. With his victory in Atlantis, Redwyne's need to break from the High Elves was absolute. The High Elven Council in Rivvenheim would never tolerate their warriors working with the lesser races, nor would they see that the pending alliance with Tezla's descendants would bring only ruin.

Thus, fate had left Redwyne with only a single option: Find the other High Elven riders who had left the service of the Knights Immortal, and join with them. His three warriors, still loyal to him in every way, would stand at his side and help teach the ragtag Free Armies how to fight against the Atlanteans and win. Strength in numbers, unity through alliance, and

domination through diversity were his mottos. These were the lessons that Redwyne had learned these last decades, and were the tools he would use to destroy Atlantis and place Rivvenheim back into its role as the properly dominant faction in the Land.

Raising a bottle of spirits from his pack, Redwyne saluted the sky and those fallen in battle, and silently vowed that their sacrifices would not be in vain. Then, he drained the bottle, tossed it over his shoulder with a smash, and gave the order to ride east toward the Atlantean border.

Return to Wolfsgate Epilogue

As the massive Atlantean army marched toward the Khamita River Bridge, intent on crossing it to crush the Rebel city of Wolfsgate, the Technomancer Venthu engaged in a crucial sabotage mission within the city itself! Having levitated into the city under cover of darkness, the technomancer attempted to smash the city gates from within to allow the Atlantean army to surge and overwhelm the small river city. But when Whitehawk's Amazon warriors engaged Venthu in combat, risking their lives against volleys of magical blasts and technomantic Golem assaults, the climactic battle ended with Whitehawk decapitating the Atlantean mage just in the nick of time.

Upon learning that the gates were not going to be blasted down by Venthu's warband, the disappointed Atlanteans pulled back from Wolfsgate. Within an hour, after a flurry of mage-writ message exchanges, the demi-magi accompanying the warforce received new orders: Leave a contingent of warriors to guard the southern banks of the River Khamita while the main body marches to Riverdam. While Emperor Nujarek is openly disappointed about the technomancer's failure to crack Wolfsgate, he knows it is only a matter of time before the Rebels fall before the Empire.

Meanwhile, with Whitehawk promoted and charged with defending Wolfsgate, the Red Duchess and her commanders quickly ride back to the capital city, both to report the news of their victory and to prepare for the impending invasion of Khamsin by Atlantean forces! While harassing units are already positioned in the hills near Riverdam, ready to use fuser and cannon fire to prevent troops from moving across the dam below, flights of Atlantean Dragonflies are already confronting Rebel positions in order to allow a slow and unopposed crossing of the River Khamita.

Dark Omens Epilogue

Within the Pyramid

Inside, in the cold dark, the temple was beautiful. As the Wolfwitch padded down the grit-covered stairs, she felt the cool, ancient stone beneath her

bare toes. To her delight, the walls on either side of the stairway were covered with hieroglyphs of ancient and unknowable origin, signs and sigils that seemed to faintly glow in the gloom. As she fearlessly descended into the temple, she imagined the riches--and the knowledge--that would soon be hers for the taking.

The stairwell opened into a hallway, and the hallway into a massive chamber. While she could see with her darksight well enough to navigate the room, the true grandeur of the place would be revealed only if there were light. Casting a quick spell of illumination, the rings on her right hand began to give off an unearthly glow, bright enough to show her the true nature of the heart of the Pyramid.

And it was glorious. The interior of the structure was built from blackstone, a special rock with a mirror-like quality. Massive pillars rose toward the ceiling, and stone blocks formed narrow channels for torrents of rushing water. As she walked, her dancing shadow moved throughout the room, their spell-lights illuminating the engravings carved into the massive walls. Along one of the five-story-high walls, a massive scene showed a desert oasis populated by fantastical monsters whose heads were of animals. Across the room, next to a gurgling fountain, a series of more than a hundred waist-high statues showed a progression of workers heading toward the oasis, carrying with them stonemasonry and excavation tools. Lastly, by a black door lined with silver edges, there was a silver-tile mosaic of a human dressed in priestly garb reverently placing a sparkling crown into a thick stone box.

Moving toward the door, holding her ragged skirt so that she wouldn't trip in her haste, the Wolfwitch approached the silver-tile mosaic. The music she had heard in her mind, in the deep of the Blasted Lands--the sweet singing that had drawn her to this holy place--was emanating from beyond this door. Touching her fingers to the cool stone, she began to whisper incantations and words of power, trying all of the ancient words she knew. But when there came no response, she knew there was one word that would have to work.

"Temanor," she whispered, and the door ground open, revealing darkness beyond. Without a moment's hesitation, she stepped into the passage and vanished from view.

The Road to Prieska Epilogue

Blasted Lands

Crox looked around at the scouring desert, amazed that after the two-day sandstorm there was almost no sign of its passing through the craggy landscape. Already, Mage Spawns were scouring the Land looking for food; deformed birds croaked and whined from atop stunted cactus. The smell of

rain was thick on the air, though the yellow sky revealed no sign of its coming.

Crox stalked along the edge of a dry stream bed, following the slow curve toward the line of low, boulder-stacked mountains to the south. After the final battle with the High Elves two days ago, most of his Wolfskulls were dead, slaughtered in the defense of the Galeshi scouts that knew the way to Prieska. But the Elves had failed in their final mission, which was all that mattered. The sole remaining Galeshi scout lived long enough to give Crox information about the landscape surrounding the mountain pass. Now, amid a hundred miles of wasteland, all Crox had to do was find those landmarks, and he would be able to lead the Orcs into the green lands, out of this Mage Spawn - infested blight.

A day's march to the south of the army's encampment were rolling hills—and the route into Prieska. If Crox wasn't able to find the path, the food sleds would need to be abandoned, and two days of disorganized squabbling and climbing would tear Nabar's army apart. The Orc Kzar was already furious with Crox, but if the scout could just find the way out of this maze of stone and dust, he might earn back some of Nabar's respect--and drain off some of the Kzar's desire to flay him alive.

From high above the blasted plains, an eagle let out a piercing cry. Shocked by the appearance of such a revered beast, Crox watched as the beautiful bird glided over him, a brown and black silhouette drifting toward the green lands of Prieska. For a moment, Crox was stunned by the appearance of the holy bird in a blighted place far from where any earthly eagle should be found. When it cried a second time, and angled toward a destination somewhere in the sprawling hills, Crox found himself chasing after it, abandoning the winding gully in exchange for the wisdom of his new guide.

He sprinted for almost four hours, running with all his might after the divine flier, before reaching the base of a line of marching, boulder-studded hills. Exhausted and covered in dirt and sweat, he watched as the eagle soared out of his sight, lost behind the tops of the earth mounds in front of him. Despair filled him, and exhaustion threatened to overwhelm him.

But then he realized what he was seeing: three parallel stones in a line on the hills; two trees that looked like a pair of praying priests; a yellowish pool that bubbled with an intolerable stench. All of the Galeshi's landmarks were here, and by the grace of the eagle gods, Crox had been shown the pass into Prieska.

Nabar would be very pleased. But for Crox, Nabar was no longer a concern. For his path was clearer than the one before him. He had been a scout and a warrior in these last few days.

But now, he would become a shaman, for the eagle gods had shown him - and Nabar's army - the road to Prieska.

The Khan's Road Epilogue

Shadowbane sat numbly on the cold black stone floor, vaguely aware of his surroundings. Moonlight shone in through a triangular window above, casting a latticework of light and shadow across the floor of the claustrophobic prison. A metal chain ran from the wall to a heavy metal collar bolted around his neck, preventing him from making any sudden movements. While his sword hand would eventually heal from where the Orc Ironclad had smashed it, he wasn't sure if he would ever have the dexterity to play the harp again.

"You lost the battle," accused the hooded figure standing before him. Because his captor was dressed in a shapeless brown robe, the Elf couldn't tell whether the figure was male or female--or neither.

"You were abandoned by your master. Tossed aside by the powers in favor of another pawn. Now your enemy rides triumphant back into the grasslands, and your contingent of Outriders lays broken like discarded toys."

"We did what we had to do," the High Elf said with a hiss. "I know that the Orcs ride west, toward Prieska."

"You may be right," said the figure. "But you won't be able to do much about it. Not here."

"Who are you?" he asked. "Are you a Seeker?"

"You would have been a Seeker, had you won your fight. Now, you are nothing, powerless and imprisoned. But freedom is within your grasp. Assuming that you make certain . . . sacrifices."

"Sacrifices?"

"Once you heal, you will prove your loyalty. Once you prove your loyalty, you will have access to the knowledge you've looked for your entire life."

"But will I play again?" he asked selfishly, gesturing with his smashed hand. "Do you have the skill to heal?"

"You will master your instruments again," said the figure. "But not in the way you think. You may have one last question, and then I must go."

"Am I a prisoner of the Sect?"

The figure shook its head slowly from side to side, showing just a sliver of a beautiful female Elven face secreted within the cowl. "No. Here, within this lost place, you shall learn your new role in the Land."

Before he could speak, the Elf turned and walked to the small prison door. The heavy door opened for her automatically, swinging wide to reveal a torch-lit hallway beyond. As she stepped through with quick grace, Shadowbane saw something in the shadows behind her that made his breath catch in his throat.

A broken Solonavi lay upon the stone floor, bound in chains.

Burning Sails Epilogue

After the ships of the Malia clan were sunk by Rebel cannon fire, sending the panicked river-traders swimming for the shore, Captain Sarjhet beached her ship behind enemy lines and began a campaign to punish the Rebels responsible for the despicable act. For centuries, the Xandressans had traded peacefully with the merchants of Khamsin, guaranteeing their neutrality by refusing to ferry Atlantean troops or weapons. But when the Rebels fired upon Sarjhet's fleet of riverboats, believing that the Tezlacore Golem that the river-traders ferried violated the centuries-old agreement, they set off a chain reaction of violence that would bring the Xandressans fully into the Atlantean war against the Black Powder Rebellion.

After weeks of skirmishing against difficult odds, and crippled by the capture of the Tezlacore command Golem by the Rebel enemy, Captain Sarjhet was approached by a mysterious agent of the Solonavi. He offered to grant her two wishes—ensuring her family's survival and answering her oath of vengeance—in exchange for a pact of service. Sarjhet agreed to the agent's deal, assuming that for the cost of her soul she would purchase defeat over Duke Skala's Rebel forces.

But she couldn't have been further from the truth.

The morning before the final combat, Duke Skala made his own deal with the Solonavi, gaining their aid in defeating Sarjhet in exchange for his own pact of service. When the Xandressans and Rebels collided in battle, the awesome power of the Solonavi allowed Skala to capture Sarjhet's shipmates one by one, until the Captain herself was taken prisoner by none other than Duke Skala himself. Within days of the defeat, the strategic Atlantean fortress of Fort Wyndham was captured by Rebel warriors, and the Grange Valley and the Upper Roa Vizorr river became controlled by the Rebellion. The Northlands overseen by Warlord Blackwyn were now connected directly to the Khamsin homeland, providing a barrier of Rebel-controlled territory that extended all the way from the River Khamita to the homeland of the Amazons some five hundred miles east.

She and her surviving family members put into a cage-cart bound for Khamsin, Captain Sarjhet grimly contemplates her future. While Skala swore himself to the Solonavi in exchange for a single, critical victory, Sarjhet swore herself to the powerful beings for something far greater—revenge on

the Rebels and the survival of her family-clan. While she isn't sure how becoming a prisoner of the Rebellion will accomplish this, she feels by the wind and waves that her vengeance is still to come—and that the Solonavi won't forget her oath of vengeance against her captor, Duke Skala.

The Battle for Stonekeep Epilogue

Sir Mishler stared blankly at the battered walls of Stonekeep castle, watching his remaining troops pull back in retreat from the ancient Elven castle. Behind him, the setting, bloody sun was almost behind the Rivvenheim peaks, filling the entire mountain ravine with long shadows.

Retreat. The word stuck like a dagger in his mind. High Elves didn't retreat. The Knights Immortal didn't know defeat. Not on this scale. Not, he reflected with bitter irony, until today.

Commander Searle, the leader of the Elemental's defense of Stonekeep, had performed admirably in the battle. The Centaur's Trolls, Forest Elves, and assorted allies from across the Land had held off the massive High Elven assault with a combination of swords, spells, and simple ingenuity. Now, Sir Mishler was standing on the path back to the peaks, back to his home, to defeat and infamy in the eyes of all the Elves of Rivvenheim.

Stonekeep Castle would have been easy to conquer, with time and proper planning. But when Council Lord Jamus raised the stakes this morning by announcing the arrival of a Necropolis Sect army, and demanding that Stonekeep be taken in a day rather than weeks, Mishler's commander demanded the impossible. But Anthonius had tried to conquer the structure anyway, gambled with the lives of dozens of High Elves, and watched as they threw their near-immortal lives away for nothing against the Elemental defense. In all the long day of battle, not even one High Elf even reached the top of the fortress wall, and were ultimately left faced with defeat on the rock-strewn ground before Stonekeep's unbreachable gates.

Retreat. It was the only option. Sir Mishler had saved the lives of the remaining members of his warhost with the command to withdraw, but at the expense of his own career, his family's name, and his personal honor. But tomorrow night two dozen soldiers fresh from the toils of war would be at home with their families, their loved ones, and their children - and for that fact alone Mishler could live with himself for the centuries to come.

Taking off his helmet, he carefully set it onto a boulder beside him. Unfastening his beautiful cape, he draped it alongside the helm, careful not to dirty his family's crest. Lastly, the High Elf took his ancient battle standard, his family's prized possession of honor and prowess, and laid it gently beside the other abandoned objects. The collection of personal relics were in such a place where they would be seen by the High Elves still climbing up from the battleground below, placed in such a way where they

could collect the objects in a way that would prompt no questions or accusations.

A new life, Anthonius thought to himself, as he girded a salvaged longsword onto his belt. A new life somewhere away from here. Somewhere where I can put this black day behind me, and all of the dark tidings it bears. Farewell, fair Rivvenheim, homeland of my heart.

Pulling the hood of his cloak up over his brow, he nimbly stepped into a thin passage that would lead him to the green valleys of the Wylden far below, his cloaked form swallowed up quickly by the shadows of Rivvenheim.

And somewhere in the growing darkness behind him, a Vampire hissed, and stealthily moved to follow...

Vampire Civil War Epilogue

Deathspeaker Aeradon, perched high on a balcony over the assembled crowd of Sect Elves, watched the bone-fire burn on the sands below. For nearly ten minutes he'd listened curiously to Deathspeaker Spider's screams above the din of the roaring crowd, but now he couldn't hear any more protests from his nemesis, which suited him fine. The Order of Uhlrik was no more, extinguished by Vladd's mastery in the Death Pits. Now, with Uhlrik's best warriors slain, their leader Rax Coldstone reduced to ash, and Deathspeaker Spider burned alive atop a pyre of his fallen warriors, Vladd's control over the military hierarchy of the Sect was nearly absolute. The remaining Uhlrik warriors were scattering out of the Sect as quick as they could ride, and would likely be no longer of any serious concern to him by the end of the year.

An excellent night, and one that would undeniably pave the way for the Order of Vladd to become unstoppable in the years to come. With the appointment of Darq the Corrupt as the general of his personal armies, and command of the Order of Vladd falling to the hands of the capable Death Merchant, Ribhan Crag, things couldn't be better. Aeradon sipped at his marrow wine, savoring the rich, meaty taste with his withered tongue. Soon, the pyre would gutter and flicker out, and then a series of brutal pit-fights would begin, with all of Spider's Nightblades and pit-warriors fighting for the right to be acquired by new masters. The bloodshed would likely be quite memorable, as the threat of lost station to an dis-owned Nightblade always lent more to their desire to please the death-hungry crowd with spectacles of destruction.

Sipping at his wine, pleased with his train of thought, Aeradon began formulating a plan for conquest.

Ribhan Crag looked up from the edge of the bonfire to the balcony high above the arena, where his master distantly watched the flames from the

edge of shadow. The battle in the Death Pits had been swift and bloody, but Ribhan had managed to cut the life from Rax Coldstone before his counterpart could return the favor. His appointment by Aeradon as the new leader of the Order of Vladd had been of no surprise, and Darq the Corrupt's placement as the head of Aeradon's personal army a logical step. But with Darq the Corrupt conducting a secret mission to the west, there was a very small chance that Darq would fall. If he did fall, then Ribhan would rise to take his place as Aeradon's bodyguard, and would become untouchable by his enemies once and for all.

But deep down in his heart, above all else, above all the games and intrigues of the Sect, his dear Mikala was avenged. Rax had invaded Ribhan's personal quarters, attacked his lover, and taken his pet Amazon Queen's head as a prize. While Mikala's head would likely be retrieved from Spider's tower by his agents, and he could certainly have her head reattached, the walking corpse could never have the intelligence, the fire, or the fury that had been so appealing to him. Now he would be alone, forever, and Mikala would not be by his side when he finally ascended to true power in the Sect, when he could finally lay down his chipped and pitted sword and live his life without fear.

While Mikala's would likely be retrieved from Spider's tower by his agents, and he could certainly have her head reattached, the walking corpse could never have the intelligence, the fire, the fury that had been so appealing to him. He wanted more than just physical pleasure, but the emotional pleasure that Mikala had inspired in him, that no other Sect female had even come close to providing. Now he would be alone, forever, and Mikala would not be there with him when he finally ascended to true power in the Sect, when he could finally lay down his chipped and pitted sword and live his life without fear.

Vengeance is mine, Ribhan thought to himself, coldly, feeling the tears well up in his eyes. But have I lost myself in the bargain?

Across from where Ribhan knelt by the pyre, the Nightwitch Nyx directed her gaze up at Deathspeaker Aeradon's shadow-shrouded balcony, then down at the kneeling Death Merchant below. Of the four warriors that had escaped the Death Pits with their lives, Ribhan appeared to have suffered the most. The spring seemed to have left the warrior's step, and Ribhan's fury had cooled too soon for the crowd's liking. Compared to his other exuberant, celebrating Vladd warriors, Ribhan seemed to be on the edge of destruction, on the edge of a black pit he might never return from.

Nyx had spent the last hundred years cracking castles for her masters, and now she was ready for something new. She was ready for power rather than service, to hold the reins rather than to be driven by them. And on the pit floor below, crouching by the fire in reverence to his master, was her means out of the cycle of destruction, and into the vaunted halls of power above.

He will be the perfect tool, she thought to herself with a smile. And I will be the perfect one to seduce, bind, and use in order to get myself close enough to Deathspeaker Aeradon to usurp his power. She stood up from her seat, and began to make her way through the crowd towards the arena's exit, where she hoped she could stop him, make her introductions, and begin the process of capturing Ribhan's burdened soul.

Goltusep scuttled from Spider's abandoned tower, shuffling forth as quickly as he could in his characteristic gait. Ever since the experiment failed more than two hundred years ago, he'd traded much of his magic and his physical prowess in exchange for strength and eternity. But now, with the knowledge stolen from Spider's private library, Goltusep had all the spells he would need to learn to create his own Vampires, to create his own Vampiric Order that would rival even the great Order of Vladd.

But his nemesis, Digger Khep, was still out there somewhere in the Land, gathering his own knowledge for his own bid for power. Digger Khep, his one-time prized student and pupil, had sabotaged Goltusep at the moment of his greatest achievement, and left him a decrepit Zombie instead of a god-like Vampire of power and unstoppable magical capability. Goltusep knew that he would have to deal with his old student first, long before he made his bid for power in the Sect, but that was going to take resources, warriors, and a great deal of gold to take care of. Only then could he begin to conduct the research, gather the materials, and construct the magical devices necessary to the creation of one of his special Vampires.

Goltusep smiled. Looking up at Aeradon's tower, then down at the assembled books in his hands, the Zombie knew that he had everything he needed to barter for Aeradon's favor. But there was one problem amongst all of it - Darq the Corrupt, campaigning somewhere far to the west. Darq knew Goltusep, and knew what he was capable of, and would never let him gain power anywhere in his domain.

Then Darq will have to die, Goltusep thought to himself, and it will have to be at the hand of one he would never expect.

Rax Coldstone opened his eyes with a start, peering frantically into the darkness. His body felt mangled, but intact, and there was no trace of the sword-wound that Ribhan had cored through his throat. I'm alive, Rax thought desperately to himself. I was on the pyre, burning with the rest. But where am I? I've been resurrected. But by who?

A light blossomed forth in the cramped cave. Above him, an undead Draconum moved into his vision and looked down upon Rax's helpless body, with a look of utter remorseless hatred on its face. In one hand, the Draconum held a wicked black knife, its blade glinting in the torchlight.

Rax screamed as the Draconum began to cut.

Battle for the River Khamita Epilogue

The battle for Wolfsgate had promised to be a long and bloody struggle. While the destruction of the Tower of the Flame ensured that reinforcements from the city of Khamsin would arrive too late to make a difference, and the Rebellion's early failure to intercept his messenger guaranteed that they had no clue of his battle strategies, Andreus still faced a difficult fight. He faced the Red Duchess of Khamsin, a daring general well known for her cunning and inventiveness in battle. Her personal warhost defended the fortress at Wolfsgate so he would need to defeat her strategies and intuitions in order to claim the day in the name of the Empire.

On his signal, ten thousand Atlantean soldiers began the difficult task of slaughtering the Rebels guarding the strategic river-castle. For a couple of hours the battle went well enough, with Magus Tervon, his mages, and an unstoppable horde of Technomantic Golems and Atlantean soldiers steadily claiming territory for Andreus right up to the gates of the river fortress. But when squads of Atlantean troops began retreating from the fortress walls screaming of Rebel sorcery, smoke pouring from their armor, the battle abruptly turned in Khamsin's favor. When Andreus grimly noticed the colors and sigils on the retreating soldier's armor, and mentally placed them as being from the units that had been eliminated at the village of Flintford, he realized that he'd been had by a Rebel trick - and an effective one at that.

Knowing that the Atlanteans would be distracted by the sight of the 'burning warriors', the Red Duchess chose that moment to open the gates and call for a charge across the bridge, taking the fight to the Empire where the Rebels would have the best advantage. A commander first and a father second, knowing that losing Wolfsgate may well mean his son's execution at Jeet Nujarek's orders, Andreus grudgingly gave the order for his army to retreat. He could start this fight another day, and with any luck he would be able to find a solution to capturing Wolfsgate with fewer losses.

But Magus Tervon had spun on him angrily when Andreus gave the order to retreat, rage contorting his wrinkled, aged face. Tervon viciously countered the Lord's order, interceding by the authority of the mages of the Atlantis Guild. In the name of Tezla, Magus Tervon declared, he commanded Andreus to continue to have his warriors attack. Following orders, Andreus did, and watched as his soldiers died by the hundreds.

Andreus witnessed some of the Empire's best men get blown apart by barrages of fuser-fire and black powder explosions. Amazon bladewitches spun and danced amidst his Utems, cutting them down before they could even raise a standard Scythrian blocking stance. Even Magus Tervon was cut down by a hail of black powder fire, his protective spells blown to pieces by the deadly barrage. By then it was too late to retreat out of the churning tide of battle, and it was every man for himself against a deadly, unstoppable Rebel enemy.

When a Dwarf with a blood-red beard dodged past his bodyguards and drove the point of an exquisitely sharpened mining pick through his armor, Andreus thought his life was over. A dozen more times the maddened Dwarf struck at his crumpled form, smashing his armor, his sword-arm, and his ribs in a frenzied staccato of violence. Only then were Andreus' Atlantean bodyguards able to come to his rescue, driving off the maddened fiend before the enraged Dwarf could do more harm.

Darkness and fog encroached; soon Andreus was lost in what he hoped was the cool embrace of death. Soon he would be with his doomed son, Byran, and they could walk together into the night and put this dark day behind them.

But when he opened his eyes, he wasn't where he expected to be. An old man dressed in a tattered gray robe stood over him, leaning on a rickety wooden staff. To his right, one of the Rebel's cursed Leech Medics knelt beside him working to repair his shattered ribs. He knew that he was away from the battlefield as the three of them were alone, sheltered from the summer sun by the sprawling canopy of an old oak tree. What was going on? Why couldn't the fates just let him die?

"Lord Andreus," the old man said in a respectful voice, "my name is Maleficus." He smiled knowingly. "You have to know by now that your son is doomed. My condolences. Magus Tervon himself ensured your son's death this morning on the battlefield, and died for his arrogance."

"You tell me nothing I didn't already know. What do you want with me?"

"I don't want anything with you, Andreus. But after all that you've suffered at Jeet Nujarek's hands, I think I know someone who wants to meet with you. Someone who can help you avenge your son's death."

"Who?"

"Raydan Marz."