

The  
Dead Lands  
of  
Atlas

**A SUPPLEMENT FOR THE DARK SUN GAME**

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**NEW LAYOUT AND ACROBAT READER (PDF) ADAPTATION  
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## An Introduction to the Dead Lands

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The Dead Lands is a geographic region located far south of the Tyr region. It was first detailed in the "Wanderer's Chronicle" (from the Second Edition Dark Sun boxed set), albeit in sparse detail. It is from that book, other people's great ideas, and my own imagination that I am able to present to you "The Dead Lands of Athas."

About five months ago, I began expounding on the small bit of information made available in the above mentioned "Wanderer's Chronicle." Things started off slow at first, and it was an arduous journey (one that caused a large rift in the Dark Sun Mailing List, I'm sorry to say). But soon I had won the support of many people, and it was because of them that I actually finished this project. I'd like to take some room here to thank them:

The Dead Lands of Athas would not be possible without the following people's ideas and support: Steven Bell (Esme), Gabriel Power, Ilkka Arnkil (Zanakar), Carrie Salvin, Chris Flipse (Flip), Aleksej Andrievskij, Teos Saa Abadia, Lodewijk Gonggrijp (Rokan), Adam White (White), Peter Nuttal (Brax), Dark Knight, the whole DS Mailing List, and my DS gaming group. Thank you all VERY much!

Furthermore, some information is pertinent to understanding the following supplement:

- 1) The Dead Lands are referred to as "the Dead Lands" and as "the Obsidian Plain".
- 2) The Dead Lands are covered by a thick layer of obsidian.
- 3) The event that caused the formation of the Dead Lands is referred to as "the Obsidian Wave."
- 4) The undead of the Dead Lands cannot leave the confines of the Obsidian Plane. This is due to a phenomenon known as the Spirit Net. The Spirit Net can be found along all sides of the Obsidian Plane.
- 5) The Dead Lands could very well be the harshest land in all of Athas. It is because of this that characters should be of at least 12th level before venturing in, unless you want them to die of course :)

In the future I will add other features to this project, including an adventure that deals with Gretch and his tower, plus another section called "The Politics of the Dead Lands."

Thanks for reading!!!

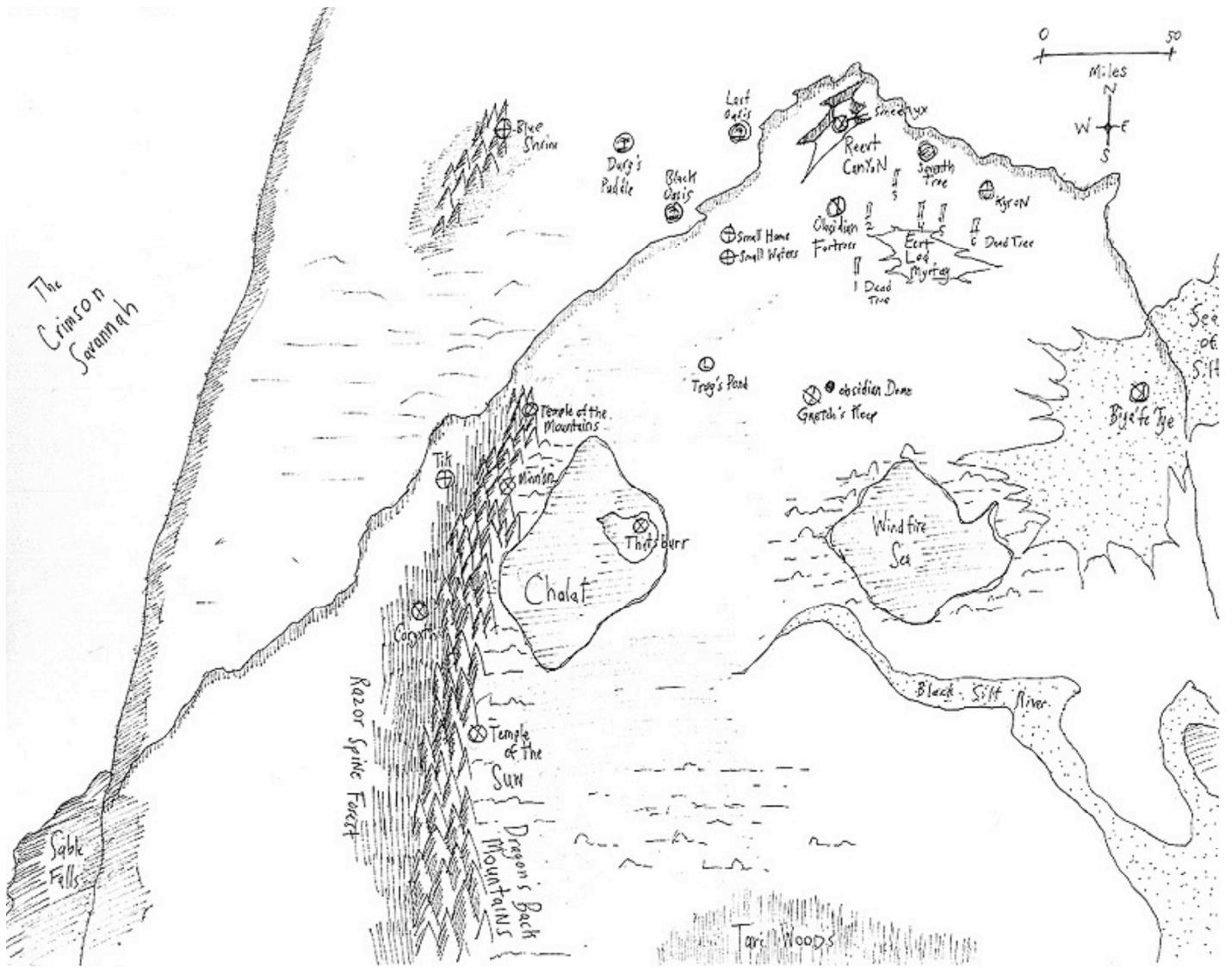
Gerald Lewis

*Version notes: This is version 1.1 of the "Dead Lands of Athas." All spelling and some grammar mistakes were corrected by Nightfall of the pristine tower. Much thanks to him for all his hard work! More updates will be made, but at a rate proportional to how much free time, help, and sleep I have.*

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# Map of the Dead Lands



The following is a short story written to give you, the reader, a better feel for the Dead Lands.

## E'maie

E'maie's gaze swept over a vast expanse of cold, black obsidian. Thankfully his Elven eyes allowed him to see in almost pitch darkness; the black of the night couldn't keep him from continuing with his trek. The dark, azure sky was mottled with large clouds of ash, constantly threatening to constrict the little light E'maie was receiving from the reflective lunar body of a full-faced Guthay.

Pressing a blood-soaked rag against his left shoulder, E'maie silently cursed himself for letting one of those beasts get so close to him. He had barely escaped his last encounter with a horde of Undead, and knew that he may not be so lucky the next time. Luckily for poor E'maie the interval between encounters with the fiends had steadily lengthened as he travelled through the night.

"Could it be that I am nearly out of this stinking pit?", E'maie wondered aloud. Optimism, a feeling E'maie hadn't felt since entering the Dead Lands, seized him from the icy grasp of despair that had taken grip on his mind. E'maie looked down to his hand, suddenly slipping back into a grim mood. In his fist a broken, rusted, steel sword stood ready to crumble at the slightest touch.

"'Riches' *they said*. 'Metal' *they said*. 'You'll be famous, you'll be a hero, you'll be *rich*' they said," E'maie stated quietly. The only thing this middle age Elf had found was a rusted, practically worthless sword and a legion of blood-thirsty monsters. Not to mention the wound he got a few short hours ago that had become infected within minutes, turning a mottled black, green and grey a bit later. The festering wound seemed to be spreading, E'maie knew he would have to separate his arm soon if he wanted to save the rest of his lanky body from the ever-spreading infection.

"If only I hadn't killed that blasted Cleric! What a fool won't do for greed!", shouted E'maie. E'maie regained his composure, checking over his shoulders to confirm that he had not make his presence known to anything that might not take kindly to his company.

Trembling, E'maie walked over to a large building (covered with a thick layer of obsidian) that would provide adequate cover if any Undead decided to show up. He slowly, dreadfully, unsheathed his knife; a large, sharp bone blade he had stolen in Celik. E'maie put the knife to his upper arm, closed his eyes as he turned his head away and bit his lip as tight as he could. A faint scraping sound forced E'maie to open his eyes. He then realized he needn't cut his arm off... he would have no use for it in a few seconds.

"crunch"

# The Undead Powers of the Dead Lands

-- As Told by the Wanderer

True, the beasts of the Dead Lands are powerful and dangerous in the extreme, but they are nothing compared to some of the free willed Undead that I have met (some under less than pleasant circumstances). The power of some of these monsters could possibly rival one of the weaker Sorcerer Kings. The following list includes the names and behaviors of some of the more powerful entities I have encountered, fought, or otherwise learned about. I did my best to stay away from some of these beings, I suggest you follow my precedent.

**Amion:** By far the most kind, gentle, and humane of all the Undead I have ever encountered. I have spoken to him in length, and he is both interesting to speak with and a wonderful host. He even went so far as to provide me with food and drink, two things rarer to the Dead Lands than gold to a slave in the Tablelands. Amion is quite unique, as he is what was once known as a Gnome: a race of short, bearded (males only) demihumans. I was quite fascinated with his unique appearance and, I must admit, it did take some getting used to (for the most part because of his age and the fact that he didn't have too much skin left on his frail frame). Amion did have his quirks though. He often danced around the subject of a female named "Qwith," I believe the two may have once had a relationship. Possibly the oddest thing that happened when in Amion's company occurred on the last day of my visit. He seemed to be debating on whether or not he could trust me, and was unusually quiet that day. The old Gnome silently lead me to an old weather-beaten tower. He opened doors that had obviously not been opened in centuries and took me down a steep marble staircase. Halfway down, Amion unexpectedly stopped, turned around, and silently lead me back up the stairwell. To this day I have no idea what it was that Amion nearly showed me down there, but I could tell it was powerful. Very powerful.

**Evar'li:** Evar'li is the complete antithesis of Amion. He is a vile and uncaring beast, with as much humanity as the Dragon and a disposition to match. I've never met Evar'li (and would not want to), but Amion did tell me what he has learned over the years of that enigmatic figure. Amion says that Evar'li was once an Arena Necromancer, working for Hamanu in Urik's deadly arena. Hamanu knew that Evar'li was growing too powerful, so he gave him an ultimatum: find the sorcerer "Gretch" of the Dead Lands and attempt to form an alliance between the mage's land (the Dead Lands) and Urik, or die. Evar'li chose the Dead Lands. He travelled for many months before finding the Obsidian Plains, and upon arriving he had lost everything and everyone he had started his quest with, except his Spellbook, his mastery of the Way, and a esoteric spider who is believed to be Evar'li's reincarnated lover, "Aye." Evar'li found Gretch and, instead of making the alliance, he became Gretch's student in the art of Necromancy magic. Evar'li was given the gift of Unlife from his mentor, and so became a Kaisharga. Here the details got sketchy.....it is believed that Evar'li turned on Gretch, attempting to destroy his teacher and gain control of the Dead Lands using the Way as well as the magic Gretch had taught him. It is unknown if Evar'li was successful at destroying Gretch, though Amion now believes he failed, as powerful Undead have been amassing around Gretch's castle lately.

**Bhra'go:** I have personally met Bhra'go, and while he was not quite as genial as Amion was, he was an agent of good and his indifference to me was not taken with offense. I could understand his view point--2,000 years of Undeath will make one apathetic to all but the most important of happenings.

Bhra'go was third-in-command of the organization known as 'the Council' (to which many of the powerful Undead once belonged to) and leader of its military forces. I spoke to him about his tactics once and wouldn't have been able to come up with a single one of those schemes had I ten millenia. He is a natural leader--charismatic, determined, optimistic and, most importantly, has a great understanding of the innerworkings of the mind. He practically knows what his opponent will do before they do. Couple these with his amazing use of the Long Sword and a mastery of the Way and you have a force to be reckoned with.

I travelled to the city in which Bhra'go makes his residence (Aveg), and upon seeing it I gasped. The entire city was engulfed by a translucent green flame. Nearing it I learned that the flame was not hot, nor could it burn the flesh. The inhabitants (all giants) inside the city walls felt differently though...each of the sullen, charred corpses of the animated dead wailed and groaned. At one point I thought I would lose my mind if I heard but another minute of the terrifying cacophony of screams. These giants are forced to remain here by Bhra'go, and when I inquired as to why he did not just let them leave, Bhra'go snarled and whispered softly: "penance." And with that he showed me the door.

**Goran:** Chubby, tall, and green, Goran is a member of a now extinct race that he calls "Orcs." Goran doesn't seem to fit into the Dead Lands, his character isn't grim or mysterious like his peers, but he resides on the Obsidian Planes nonetheless.

I expected the worst when I was first brought to Goran--he's nearly eight feet in height, has thick, leathery skin, and his wild eyes set in his sunken head flare with an unnatural red glow. Despite his frightening appearance, Goran is a master trader, rivalling even the best Elven merchant. On my three-day visit to his domain (Bíga'fe'tye), Goran convinced me to trade my prized wooden walking stick for a large bag of polished obsidian rocks. His silver tongue convinced me to trade my good sandals for a pair of decrepit ones, and a small painting I had done of the Ringing Mountains (which he was very impressed with) for some information on the mysterious sorceress, Qwith (which is included in her entry in this chapter). His constant haggling made getting a word in edge-wise a near impossible task, but in between his offers of "the purest raw obsidian in the world" (which could be found anywhere one walks in the Dead Lands) and "the finest rubies ever to be found" (which were obviously fake) I did manage to learn a bit of what Goran was doing in the Dead Lands, and what he had in mind for the future.

It seems his race lived for trading (and some orcs will tell you of their fondness for warfare), this love has not left them in their Unlife. The orcs have been working on a major project to supply massive amounts of obsidian to the Tablelands for an estimated 600 years. Goran wasn't very liberal with all the details (as he thought I might somehow become a competitor after hearing his idea) of how he was to transport all this obsidian so far, but he did hint at spending many years developing ships that could travel through the Silt Sea that are constructed mainly of wood. Why on Athas he insisted on constructing these vessels from wood is beyond me, it's taken Goran centuries to dig up a small amount of the timber necessary for the fleet.

**Grekko:** Not two hundred feet below the floors of his illustrious manor lies Goran's biggest rival: Grekko. Grekko is an Undead Fael--a type of Undead with a supernatural appetite. I personally met Grekko, though under less than pleasant conditions. After leaving Goran's manor I was assaulted by a

group of undead orcs who dragged me below the surface of the obsidian ground. These orcs blindfolded me (though I was still able to discern the layout of the underground complex) and led me to a large chamber filled with the most water I'd seen since visiting Saragar. Here lay an ancient stream that gushed with all the power of the Howling Winds of the North. In this cavern I was questioned extensively by Grekko's henchmen and finally, when they were sure I wasn't in league with Goran, my blindfold was taken away and by my request was given an audience with Grekko himself. Goran and Grekko are both Orcs, but that is where their physical similarities end. Grekko stands just under five feet and appears to be about that wide also. He is the fattest creature I have ever seen, in fact, when he shifted position in his huge chair I could hear his skin tear from the weight of all his blubber. His stretched skin was a sickly bluish purple, with clumps of green interspersed throughout. Though I was thoroughly revolted by his grotesque appearance, I was able to open my mouth up wide enough to squeak out a few questions, which he gladly gave me all the answers too (though I don't know how truthful he was being with me). It seems Grekko has been undermining Goran's trading plan for some years now. He's also been gaining great strength, power, and a strong following. His goal, it seems, is to overthrow Goran and take control of Biga'fe'tye. Supposedly, Grekko's main problem with Goran as the ruler is his diverting of Orcs to the city of Kyron. These Orcs could be used for the large trade project, but Goran insists on sending them to guard Kyron. I sensed that the fael's reasons were a bit more sinister--possibly having something to do with the fact that he has an insatiable appetite and has not eaten in a millennium (I had to bargain with him for two hours before he decided that one of my rods was a good exchange for him not eating my flesh).

**Alpín:** A short while after entering the Razor Spine Forest, I was accosted by a group of insane pixies. After showing proof that I was no enemy of theirs, I eventually persuaded the band to take me to their leader. I was led to a magnificent tree, which, although it was covered by a thick layer of obsidian, still retained a majestic bearing. The tree was their leader's (known as "Alpín") palace. Because I could not fit inside the structure, Alpín was good enough to meet me outside the palace, something he rarely does, as I am told. The tiny being had many quirks about him. Alpín was neither warm nor cold to me, and he always spoke in riddles. He seemed to possess an uncanny insight, though it was hard to understand him through all the other gibberish he was spouting. Occasionally he would answer a question of mine directly, but Alpín would usually answer my queries with his own question, all this giving me a full impression of how much more wisdom this creature possessed than I.

**Poinan:** What I know about the mysterious figure "Poinan" is merely hearsay. The information I have gotten from the people I've talked to through my journeys has usually been sketchy and incomplete, and frequently contradictory. There have been a few common elements between what I have been told, points that everyone I have talked to agrees with. The first, and most generally agreed upon is that Poinan is an undead being. It also seems that Poinan (or Parranin, as I have heard him called from time to time) feeds off the life energy of living beings to sustain himself. How he acquires living beings is unknown, but it is rumored that he has a small civilization of humans that he keeps in his underground domain. Where his domain lies is also unknown (::see the Thattsburr entry::), and those who have tried to find it have either failed their mission, or not returned at all. What worries me about this recluse is what I have heard Amion say of him. Amion tells me that Poinan has somehow managed to breach the Undead Barrier surrounding the Dead Lands (my theory is that he can teleport using the Crimson Monolith, but I am uncertain). He went on to say that Poinan's appetite has been growing as of late, and he may be planning to invade the Tablelands to quench his insatiable hunger.



**Gretch:** Where do I begin with Gretch? To start, if it wasn't for him, the Dead Lands would not be covered with all this obsidian. If it wasn't for him, millions of life forces would not have been snuffed out in such a terrible fashion. If it wasn't for Gretch carrying on Qwith's unfinished work, Rajaan may not have ever found out about Kyron. This abomination was thought to have been destroyed six hundred years ago by his student, Evar'li, however, all that remains unclear now. Undead have been amassing around Gretch's castle for the past ten years, causing many to believe that the death was a hoax--a hoax that would allow Gretch to plot without interruption and gain the element of surprise when he returns...

If I were asked to speculate as to what Gretch can and would do when his presence is made known again, I wouldn't be able to give a precise answer. I am not without theories, mind you. From what I have heard, Gretch was very interested in something beneath the city-state of Kyron. I've learned from the History that there may be a creature still imprisoned beneath the city, but this could quite conceivably be a mere myth. If Gretch were to gain control over the creature and somehow breach the barrier surrounding the Dead Lands, he could wreak some serious havoc, especially when considering the lack of several Sorcerer Monarchs and the Dragon to protect the Table Lands.

**Qwith:** I have heard both good and bad things about Qwith. I am unable to verify any because my meeting with her was far too short. I, personally, chose to believe the good things. So who is Qwith? I do not know. It is rumored she was the first person to study the Grey under Rajaan's supervision. It is also said that Qwith betrayed Rajaan in some way. The stories all differ from this point, so I will pursue the one that I find the most logical.

Qwith does all the experimenting she can with the small amount of access she has to the Grey. She realizes she needs a much larger source to draw energy from, one that will provide her with ample power. She also realizes that the gate she opens will be large enough to leak great amounts of negative energy over the country side, meaning death, disease and hardship for all the beings who live in the surrounding area. Qwith decides not to go through with the rest of the experiments. She openly defies Rajaan, and for this she is punished with death. But let it be known that Rajaan would never *just* kill someone, he would make them suffer. So Rajaan trapped part of her essence in the Prime Material Plane, just as she was dying. With one part of her self in the Grey, and one part in the Prime, Qwith became one of the walking dead.

Days later, Qwith's position was given to one of her underlings, Gretch. Gretch was evil and power hungry, making him the ultimate candidate for the task. Gretch opened the Gate, which spilled enormous amounts of negative energy across the land.

People started dying, crops failed, disease went rampant. Gretch had to be stopped.

Qwith wasted little time feeling sorry for herself. She found her way to Gretch's keep, and there a huge battle ensued. For all Qwith's power, she could not stop Gretch, as Rajaan had bestowed on him the power to use the Grey to power his spells. With the Gate to the Grey nearby, Gretch easily outfought his foe, sending Qwith into a state of torpor.

Many months went by, and the Gate tripled in size, but Qwith finally awakens and searches for aid to battle Gretch. She finds a small group of druids who made their home in a thick forest. They were extraordinarily powerful, and put their feelings aside for the Undead to help Qwith. She tells them her plan to stop the Negative Energy leak. Meanwhile, a huge surge of Negative Energy gushed from the Gate, and the Grey's power would soon envelop all of Athas.

With her strong magic, Qwith teleported each of the Druids to a separate, remote location. The youngest, most powerful of the seven druids, Nommam was teleported the farthest north, he was to be their last, best line of defense.

With each of the Druids in place, they began their casting of arcane spells. Their objective was to make themselves into elemental magnets. If they could do this, it would be possible to send a wave of elemental power through the conduit that connected the Prime to the Grey. This, they hoped, would form a "clot," stopping the Negative Energy from leaking into Athas. It was a desperate move, but the times called for it.

The Druid's magic worked, each became a magnet for the elements, drawing each one through the Grey, but their plan didn't work exactly as they had planned. Unfortunately, they weren't strong enough to pull out the amount of energy that was necessary to plug the Gate. When the elements combined with each other and mixed with the Negative Energy, the mixture was hideous: Liquid Obsidian.

The black solution took on a life of its own, crawling across the land, melting people, incarcerating structures, and the flood of ash that spewed from the conduit killed all the winged creatures who could have otherwise escaped the Obsidian Wave.

Horrified with what was now happening, Qwith put all her strength into finding more druids to help the first seven (three of which had died at that time, only Nommam was holding the connection without harm). Months later, as the obsidian had covered every druid but Nommam, Qwith finally found who she was looking for. She found a Guardian of the Land who could help the last Druid strengthen the connection. With their combined efforts, the Obsidian Wave died down, and eventually stopped its movement altogether.

Unfortunately, Qwith still cannot rest, and the feelings of guilt she feels for causing so much destruction may keep her Undead forever.

## Geographical Regions and Other Points of Interest

Italicized text is in the words of the Wanderer. All other text is told from a rules perspective.

*One morning, as I was walking across the Obsidian Plain, I tripped over a large chunk of obsidian that had blended in well enough to the ground to escape my notice. I fell face first and had a terrible fright at what I saw when I hit the ground. Though I still find it inconceivable, beneath my very nose, actually swimming through the solid obsidian, was the bones of a small fish, a creature I first encountered in Saragar. As I travelled I came across more and more of these odd swimming creatures, until one day I happened upon a truly magnificent sight. Before me, moving with the breeze, an enormous ship of petrified wood lay adrift in the solid ground. I could even see the hull beneath the obsidian "water". I will never forget this sight, nor the pack of ravenous skeletons that accompanied it.*

Chalat: The Chalat Ocean is not a ocean any longer, not to the living at least. The ground here is as stable, smooth and flat as any land in the Dead Lands. The only difference is that to all undead, the area retains the properties of the sea. Ghost ships float by adventurers walking on the sea as if it were ground, animated bones of fish swimming through the water, occasionally jumping out to bite an unsuspecting traveler. A few miles out into the sea lies the island of Thatsburr. It is a place of rest from the creatures from the Sea of Chalat, but it does have it's own horrors.

*After my encounter with the skeletons I ran to a nearby island for shelter. The isle was quite unremarkable, no living or unliving creatures were present. There was one object of interest, however. That object was a large, ornately carved fountain that had somehow survived the flood of obsidian that had coated every other thing on this island. This fact alone made me quite wary of the fountain, and I therefore did not drink from it. I have learned to trust my instincts on these matters, but maybe some brave adventurer will try it and find out there was nothing to fear after all. Or maybe prove me right.....*

Thattsburr Island: Thattsburr is a small island four miles off the coast of the Sea of Chalat. Like most other areas of the Dead Lands, Thattsburr is covered by a thick layer of obsidian. Unlike most areas of the Dead Lands, this island has a large, unobsidianized, fountain constructed of fine marble in it's center. The water that flows from it is fresh, pure and sweet. However, those who drink from it will attract the attention of it's owner, who does not take kindly to strangers who would steal his water. The owner is Poinan, a powerful human Kaisharga who uses the fountain as the hidden entrance to his abode. Poinan consumes the life force of any who drink from his fountain, or enter his lands if he finds out about it.

*I came across a very interesting site. Closing in on the Windfire Sea, I noticed an abrupt increase in temperature, making the already unbearable Dead Lands even worse. It appeared (at first) that I was coming up on a lava caldera. I saw a small hill of obsidian and (incorrectly) assumed that I was coming up on the fissure. What I saw next I could not believe. There before me was a heaving sea of inky black liquid. It stretched for miles beyond me, undulating in the hot breeze and boiling from the heat. It appeared I had come across an ocean of the obsidian that had once covered the land and destroyed it's people. That day I saw an island a few miles from shore, I set out that day for it (see the next entry).*

Windfire Sea: The Windfire Sea is the only area on the Obsidian Plains where the obsidian that covered the Dead Lands still exists in a liquid state. Here adventurers can get a first hand feel for the liquid

ooze. The sea is only made detectable due to the small waves on it's surface, caused by an incessant wind from the east. The sea has remained fluid due to a fissure in the earth that allows heat to escape from deep within the bowels of Athas. The sea occupies a space where a small ocean once lay. Small hills of jagged obsidian have formed from sheets of obsidian crawling over the ground and then cooling and hardening. After thousands of years the thin layers amassed into small hills, standing just over twelve feet high in some areas. The area surrounding the Windfire Sea is extremely hot, and the sea itself boils. The temperature here can reach over two hundred °F, temperatures unbearable for even the toughest elf. Any person who comes too close to the undulating mass will be in for trouble. The liquid obsidian crawls over all matter it comes in contact with. Those unfortunate enough to suffer this fate will first be badly burnt and then suffocated to death. Undeath will soon follow.

*The Dragon's Back Mountains is the only mountain range I have found in the Dead Lands. In height, they rival the mighty Ringing Mountains of the North, and it is possible they match them in length, but I wasn't able to explore South enough to find out. They also function like the Ringing mountains do, creating much humidity to the west of them and desert to the east. They are truly an ugly sight, completely covered in obsidian, their peaks obscured by a huge cloud of ash.*

Dragon's Back: These mountains stretch far southward, ranging much farther than the Ringing Mountains. Another difference between the two mountain ranges is that the Dragon's Back Mountains are impossible to climb by normal methods. Firstly, the obsidian mountain side is smooth, offering no hand holds. Secondly, rope frays and then snaps if used against the sharp mountain slope, which has a multitude of rivulets so sharp they could slice the strongest giant hair rope. Finally, the brittle obsidian will not support pittons and the like. If any adventurer wishes to pass the mountain range they should either have strong magic to get them across, or just bite the bullet and walk around it.

*Reevt Canyon was the first place I came upon to break the monotony of the incredibly flat surface of the Dead Lands. It is truly a breathtaking sight--not so much for it's beauty, more for it's immense size. The rift stretches for as far as the eye can see, and it's depths are so dark that I would have to guess that it's bottom reaches farther into the ground than I could imagine. I saw no being along those quite canyon walls, but I could occasionally catch a glimmer of some faint light down below, signifying that there was something more to the gaping gorge.*

Reevt Canyon: Reevt Canyon was once normal, flat, ground. Underneath this ground laid the many homes of the underdark gnomes. Their enormous underground complex weakened the structural integrity of the above ground. When the Obsidian Tide came, the ground caved in, forming what is now Reevt Canyon. Reevt Canyon is now home to the multitude of undead who died when the ground fell from under them, the underdark gnomes who died there in the Cleansing Wars, and the human soldiers that died then with them. It is an enormous area, made particularly unstable ever since the Great Earthquake struck. The canyon is twelve miles wide in parts, and up to three miles deep. More undead spend their lives here than any other place on all of Athas, which makes it a very dangerous place indeed. Legend has it that a powerful artifact was lost when the ground caved in, an artifact whose power could possibly rid Athas of all it's undead.

*The Razor Spine Forest is a great eye-sore. What were once lush trees are now thin, obsidianized splinters, so weak a strong wind could blow them over. The Razor Spine Forest is a dangerous path to*

*travel. Not only do undead abound, but if the trees are even slightly tapped, they will fall over. While this is not necessarily dangerous, there is a good chance that the tree will hit another tree, or that the crash will force another tree over. After a while, the falling trees are thundering around you, and though they're not heavy enough to crush a man, their edges are sharp, and they cleave through the air like axes.*

Razor Spine Forest: The Razor Spine Forest is a very dangerous place. Chaotic, undead, pixies roam these woods, searching out and destroying anyone who would disturb them or their forest. The pixies are small and light enough not to inadvertently destroy any of the woods. When they must engage in combat, they will use powerful silence spells so that mages can't destroy their forest with magic, and swarms of pixies come out from their hiding places among the trees to quickly dispatch trespassers. The falling trees are very dangerous, and each hit inflicts 2d6 points of slashing damage. The falling trees start a chain reaction that would destroy all trees in the forest if it wasn't for the pixies who fight their hardest to keep the forest standing.

*The only other "wood lands" I found were the "Tari Woods". The Tari Woods are located to the south of Gretch's Ebon Spire. They marked the farthest southern location I visited before turning back. What I saw there was enough to convince me that I no longer had the stomach for the Dead Lands. Here, for miles around me stood pole after pole, each with the wailing body of an undead Tari upon it. These poor creatures were stuck on these frail pieces of timber during the Cleansing Wars. There was no purpose to their torture. The gruesome act was done by Kalid-Ma himself. Each Tari is now stuck there forever, wailing, moaning and unresting.*

Tari Woods: Kalid-Ma's greatest (and most heinous) display of magic was eliminating an entire legion of Taris and a whole forest full of trees in one fell swoop. In an instant over one thousand Tari found themselves impaled upon the tips of the trees they were marching through. Unfortunately, impaling the Taris did not kill them outright, and they were left there to bleed to death, starve, or be picked apart by hungry Kes' trekels. Of course, every single Tari was embraced into undeath, and for two thousand years have been swaying atop obsidianized trees, their lust for vengeance sustaining them.

*Where the Crimson Savannah end and the Talelands begin lies a beautiful cascade of obsidian, frozen in time as a brilliant, jet black waterfall. The obsidian waterfall (known as the "Sable Falls") start near the northern most part of the Dead Lands and travel all the way down, farther than I travelled. Occasionally the black curtain will have a break in it, and in one place, the fall takes on gigantic proportions, jutting out a full thirty feet from the Jagged Cliffs on the thick part of it's curve. This area I have named E'Maie's Fall, as it was the last place I saw my dear friend alive.*

Sable Falls: Sable Falls were formed by the Obsidian Tide washing off the Talelands and onto the Crimson Savannah below (luckily, the flood was stopped before it consumed any sizable portion of the Savannah). Climbing up or down the Crimson Falls is impossible, for the same reasons climbing the Dragon's Back Mountains is impossible, and because the mists that occur along the Jagged Cliff region also occur here. The obsidian gets so slick here that if you get within two hundred feet of the edge, your chances for sliding over the falls are excellent. Though they are beautiful, the Sable Falls are still dangerous.

*Far to the south-east of Kyron is an area of extreme negativity. This area, as I have gathered, is in part responsible for the creation of the Dead Lands, though I'm not exactly sure why. In any case I do know that the area is laden with all types of undead, it seems to be a magnet for the them. The entire area is shrouded in dense fog, making it easier for creatures to surprise you and thus making it all the more dangerous. Once a member of my party and I, were travelling into the heart of the fog, having volunteered to go first,. He was walking not two feet ahead of myself. Suddenly I heard him scream and watched in horror as his body quickly became incorporeal. The man disappeared right before my eyes. I have never seen him again, nor do I know what it was that made him disappear. I only know that I won't be travelling to the "Eert Lod Myrtay" ever again.*

Eert Lod Myrtay (the Land of the Dead): The Eert Lod Myrtay (Green Age for "the Land of the Dead") was once the area where the evil sorcerer/scientist Gretch vented the excess Negative energy he pulled from the Grey during the late Green Age. The area quickly became entrenched with the evil of the energy, and soon new, grotesque creatures were emerging. After a few more years of the venting, a small gate to the Negative Energy Plane emerged, pulling in anything that got too close, and spewing forth large amounts of negative energy. Eventually, this gate was used to power an incredible spell, and the gate's size increased one thousand fold. So much energy was leaking out that it would soon consume all of Athas, twisting it, making it a veritable living (or un-living) hell. Thankfully, the gate was closed before the energy did too much harm, but the cost for the termination of the gate was having the Obsidian Tide unleashed over what is now the Dead Lands. Right now the gate is but a small tear, but its size *has* increased over the last year or so. Some being is accessing its power. Who knows what will happen if the gate is torn open any more.

## Dead Zones- Areas with strong connections to the negative energy plane.

-Italicized text is in the words of the Wanderer

*The Six Dead Trees-What foul magic created these trees? What force could possibly pervert nature in such an obscene way? I couldn't come within one hundred yards of each tree as the stench of their corroded husks sapped the strength from my bones.*

The Six Dead Trees can be found where six druids were destroyed attempting to stop the flow of the Obsidian Tide. The guilt the Druids felt for failing their mission and the negative energy of the Dead Lands delivered these six druids into undeath, twisting them into degenerated and decaying trees. Beholding the Rehy'a Biga Fey (ancient Orcish for "Trees of Death") is perceiving death at it's lowest. These massive trees tower over 200 feet, blocking all sunlight from entering it's domain. While living trees have a protective covering of bark, the trunks of these trees are covered with stringy flesh; discolored, rotten and foul smelling. Blood constantly oozes from the trunk and courses through the black veins on the surface. Undead swarm around the trees like Kes'Trekels swarm around a dying desert wanderer.

They do their best, thinking and unthinking Undead alike, to protect the trees, as that is their curse. These undead were the followers of the failed druids and so are charged with protecting the trees.

*The Bayery- Travelling southward towards Gretch's stronghold my encounters with the Undead increased ten-fold. Weary from my exhausting journey I sought refuge in a cluster of buildings I noticed on the horizon. I made a terrible mistake, as these buildings seemed to act as a beacon for the walking dead, beckoning them from miles around to seek shelter in their obsidianized walls. I barely escaped with my life that night--I suggest you make your way around this accursed location.*

The Bayery is a huge complex located twenty miles north-west of Gretch's tower. It is comprised of three large obsidian coated buildings, each holding two spheres of obsidian. These spheres measure 10' in diameter and emit an eerie red-brown light. The glow comes from the incredible amount of energy stored inside each of them, the energy of the Grey. Gretch used these enormous obsidian orbs to store the Negative energy he had collected from the Grey when conducting his early experiments for Rajaat.

*The Obsidian Dome- About three hundred yards from Gretch's keep stands a twenty foot tall, beautifully polished obsidian dome. This amazing piece of architecture radiates extraordinary cold, blue-colored energy. It is my belief that this dome is the tool Gretch used to control the multitude of Undead at his command. Anyone foolish enough to wish to use the device must fight their way through a field of Grey Zombies, a task that will most likely end in death.*

Gretch used the Obsidian Dome to amplify his Undead control, granting him power over thousands of the unliving. Before he disappeared, Gretch enchanted over two hundred skeletons and other weak Undead with the power to draw energy from the Grey. When the Undead are destroyed, their ability comes into use, regenerating their bodies to unlife again. It takes 1d6 rounds for the Undead to fully

regenerate. For more information, see the Grey Skeletons Monstrous Compendium entry.

Using the Dome is simple: aim any Necromantic spell at it and the effects will be improved ten fold. Spells from any other school are sent back at the caster, with no amplification.

*Minn' on- On my third day of exploring the Dragon's Back Mountains, I found the source of all the ash that clung to the mountainside. Thirty feet above my head was a glimmering, yellow portal, spewing forth an amazing amount of grey, white and black ash. No heat emanated from the portal, in fact, their seemed to be a slight chill in the air. How this got here, I will never know. perhaps the ancients had some arcane use for it.*

Minn' on is an area located just one-fourth mile east of the Dragon's Back Mountains. It is what's known as a "Míny Gate", and is a connecting point between the Plane of Ash and the Prime Material plane. It was formed during the time that the Obsidian Tide swept across this region, and was responsible for destroying many of the flying creatures that would have been otherwise unaffected by the great disaster.



## Life Sites - Places of Rest

Italicized text written by the Wanderer.

*Deep in the Dead Lands lies a most unusual site. A pool of water surrounded by lush trees of every size and variety. This site saved my life, as I hadn't a drop to drink for days before reaching the oasis. It was in this oasis I met a friendly spirit named Blathe, and though it was nigh invisible, I was able to discern remarkably beautiful features, the likes of which I have never seen before. After proving myself benevolent to her patron spirit (water), I was allowed into her pond and granted all the water I could drink. If any traveller is lucky enough to find this treasure, I suggest visiting--unless you're a defiler, in which case it would be prudent to stay a few miles distant.*

Trog's Pond: In the Green Age, Trog's Pond was the worshipping grounds of ancient creatures called Nymphs. When the Obsidian Tide came the strong connection to the Prime Material Plane repelled the negatively-linked obsidian and thus a "clear spot" was created. The Nymph's pond was spared, as well as a small expanse of land surrounding it. The nymphs still guard their untainted terrain to this day as undead wraiths, protecting it from those who would wish to defile or in any way damage their land.

*The first thing I found in the Dead Lands that affirmed my belief that the entire area could not be all terrible was the biggest, most beautiful tree I have ever laid eyes upon, surrounded by a lush and thriving oasis and pond. The area is relatively large, and not a centimeter is covered by obsidian. I didn't encounter a single creature, good nor evil, the only thing that made a sound was the tree creaking as it swayed in the fresh air that surrounds the oasis. I rested here for weeks and they were some of the more enjoyable weeks of my lifetime.*

The Seventh Tree: The Seventh Tree is the largest and most important area of life in the Dead Lands. This tree marks the location of where the Druid "Nomam" sacrificed his life to prevent the Obsidian Tide from further enveloping Athas. Seven druids had each made a strong link between Athas and the positively charged Prime Material Plane so they could protect their guarded lands (Nomam was the seventh and youngest of the Druid's, and his land happened to be what is now the northern border of the Dead Lands). The first six died in the process of making the link, but the Seventh Druid managed to survive and repelled the great wave of obsidian. The location where the Druid made his final stand is now a lush oasis, 3 miles by 3 miles in area. In it's center stands the Seventh Tree. These lands are a bane to all undead. They can't come within 5 miles of the Tree, as the positive connection of the area causes them immense pain. The Seventh Tree and it's surrounding oasis will not give up energy to wizards for any reason.

*Although I have never visited it, I know much about the oasis I call "Small Waters". It is the location that my hosts of Small Home used to bring me food and drink. It's located a bit to the south of Small Home, in an area between two large hills.. Legend has it that Amion's sister died here, and sometimes, at just the right time of the year, she returns as a Dhaot to see Amion. I have a feeling that she won't rest until Amion does.*

Small Waters: Small Waters is an oasis located just 5 miles south of Small Home. This is the area where the noble preserver "Kith" died in a battle against Gallard's vile army. Where the female Gnome lay dead,

a lush oasis now stands. The gnomes of Small Home use the oasis whenever they have living guests who require food and water. No one knows why the area is now one of the few sites of life in the Dead Lands. It could be due to the powerful magical item Kith used to help her vanquish her enemies and heal her allies, which is now buried somewhere in the oasis.

*Scaling the side of the Dragon's Back mountain, after passing the ash cloud, I noticed a large, bright red cylinder rising from the tallest peak of the mountains. It glowed with a powerful fierceness that was both unsettling and beautiful. Unfortunately, no matter how hard I tried I just couldn't reach it, the trek was just too difficult. Maybe I will return one day to explore it, one day when I am better prepared.*

The Temple of the Sun: Located atop the Dragon's Back mountain range, the Temple of the Sun is virtually inaccessible. The temple stands at the very pinnacle of the ancient mountains, the very highest elevation in all the Dead Lands. Here the air is clean of the ash that plagues the rest of the Obsidian Plain, and the high elevation makes the air cool. The temple was constructed in the early Blue Age, a totem to the false gods of the sun.

It is made of the same porous plant that all other buildings were made out of in the Blue Age, but this building is special: at the break of day, the temple grows 100' straight up into the sky. When night comes, and the sun sets, the large spire quickly returns to its normal size of forty feet. The entire construct is a perfect cylinder, standing perpendicular to the mountain peak. The top of the cylinder is open, and when the sun passes over head its light is sent to the temple's floor. Only at this time does the construct's interior get exposed to the sun's light.

The temple is guarded by a halfling Raiig, allowing the temple's mystic powers to be used only for and by good beings. Those who are bathed in the sun's light while inside the temple are healed of all wounds, diseases and curses. Limbs regenerate, the dead are given new life. Undead are reincarnated into beautiful, living, creatures. The powers of the sun are great, but exact their price in pain: those who are granted favor will never forget the unbearable, excruciating pain that is necessary for the boon.

*On my first night of exploring the Dragon's Back mountains, I was fortunate enough to find a place of rest. It was a room carved right into the side of the mountain. The undead who had been following me wouldn't come within two miles of the spot, signaling to me that the area was only welcome to the non-evil, like some areas I have seen before.*

*The room was filled with riches the likes of which I have never seen before. The shine of the treasure was so great that the chamber actually glowed. Of course, I touched none of the riches, the feeling that I was being watched warned me not to.*

The Temple of the Mountains: Carved into the base of the immense Dragon's Back mountains, the Temple of the Mountain is one of the few life sites of the Dragon's Back region. The temple is a simple, perfectly square room, filled to brimming with riches of gold, silver, and a horde of other precious metals and gems. Any thief foolish enough to try taking any of the treasure is in for a big surprise. Six dwarven Raiigs lie in wait, melded into the walls of the room as to remain undetectable. They will allow any living being to use their area to rest for as long as they like, but will not permit even the smallest stone to leave their temple. Those who dare steal will die at the hands of the six dwarves.

## The Cities and City-States of the Dead Lands

**Kyron:** Kyron (also known as the "City of 1,000 Dead") is one of the largest cities of the Undead in the Dead Lands. It is located miles south of Celik, making it the city closest to any civilization in the Dead Lands. The city is run by Evar'li--an Undead necromancer/ psionist who revels in the power he now wields. Evar'li rules the city through the small percentage of free-willed undead that make their home there. These thinking Undead can quickly organize the cities mindless zombies into an elite fighting squad. One free-willed undead does not follow the commands of E'varli however, and this would be the noble gnome: Amion. Amion has made it clear to Evar'li that he doesn't agree with the evil ruler's practices, and in doing so has started a minor civil war. Amion and Evar'li are locked in an enormous power struggle, with Amion trying to free the zombies from the Necromancers rule and E'varli attempting to keep the undead enslaved to fight in his army.

At this point the battle has reached a leveling out point, as it seems the two have a common enemy. Any traveller coming to Kyron looking for rest will be sorely disappointed.

**Smeekyx:** Smeekyx is home to a special breed of gnome. These gnome travelled below the surface of Athas to escape the Champions encroaching armies. The gnomes of Smeekyx died in one terrible instant, when Gallard caused a tide of scalding magma to flow through their tiny tunnels and burnt them all to death. The undead gnomes eternally reenact the last hour of their lives, a time spent celebrating their strength, unity and perseverance, inevitably ending with their horrific deaths as imaginary magma ends their imaginary lives.

**Small Home:** Small Home is located miles from Kyron. It is a city of gnomes and a small number of pixies. These demi-humans have retained their civility, even the normally psychopathic pixies are pleasant and composed. However, all this changes as soon as day turns into night. At this point the nice, little, demi-humans become ravenous beasts, capable of the most extreme and vulgar acts. They lose all their freewill and are then controlled by Evar'li. The gnomes and pixies realize this happens, and when night approaches they lock up all visitors in a strong prison constructed of granite. This prison can only be opened from the inside, and those inside will know it's safe to come out due to a small hole that was drilled into the top of the prison. When light shines through, it is daytime and safe to come out, otherwise, the guests are told not to open the door for any reason, even if they beg them to.

**Tik:** The city of Tik is located just north-west of the Razor Spine Forest. The city spans just over six hundred feet from end to end, it's small size is due to its inhabitants: tiny pixies and sprites. These sprites are locked in eternal battle with a legion of Sielba's Pixie Plunderers. It's a futile battle that the pixies will never win, just as they couldn't win in life. Anyone who ventures into the fray will be attacked--to these undead, all are their enemy.

**Bigaf'tye:** This city is also relatively large and serves as the home for a large majority of the orcs of the Obsidian Planes. This inhabitants of this city are relatively harmless, regarding visitors (even the living) with indifference. Many of the orcs retained their free-will in undeath--those who lost theirs are controlled by those who's will remains intact.

The mindless orcs serve as slaves, working constantly on the trading project their leader has ordered them to do. Occasionally, a general will lead a legion of Undead to raid the various forests and the Sea of Chalat for wood (or in the case of Chalat, for intact ghost ships). These trips usually yield poor results, but after thousands of years, the wood has stacked up.

Bigafet'ye remains relatively unchanged from how it looked and functioned in the Green Age. Orc slaves were first put to work chiselling off the thick layer of obsidian from the buildings and roads, and now the city is practically obsidian free. There is one building solely devoted to storing obsidian. Apparently it will later be used in trade.

Coryxth--Pixie city. In its heart is palace. The city of Coryxth resides deep in the the Razor Spine Forest. It is a large city, inhabited by a large number of undead faeries. These faeries dwell in the obsidian covered trees that served as their homes when they were living. At the center of this city is an enormous tree, decorated with the skeletal heads of many fallen warriors of Wyan's (the Champion dedicated to slaughtering all of Athas' Pixies) armies. This large tree serves as palace to Alpin, Emperor of the faeries. The task of the faeries living here is simple: destroy any intruder who enter the city.

# Rules for Conquering the Dead Lands

## Using Magic in the Dead Lands

Of all the classes, preservers and defilers will have the hardest time of all surviving in the Dead Lands. Defiling and preserving utilizes the life energy of living plants and animals. The problem with drawing this energy when in the Dead Lands is that there is no "life" energy to draw from. This makes casting exceedingly difficult. Drawing energy doesn't happen instantaneously here, rather, it takes four rounds per level of the spell cast to gather enough energy from the far off Silt Sea and surrounding areas. For Defilers (who have no regard for endangering the plants life force) the time it takes to draw the energy is slightly shorter--only taking two rounds to gather it. Thus, it will take twelve minutes for a preserver to gather enough energy to cast a *Fireball*.

One way to circumvent this delay is to carry plants into the Dead Lands, but this can be quite cumbersome. Not all mages are taxed within the Dead Lands. Shadow Mages suffer no penalties, nor do Ceruleans. Necromancers (wizards who pull their energy from the Grey) gain bonuses while casting magic in the Dead Lands. For these lucky mages, their casting times are halved and all spells are cast at a level two higher than normal. Therefore, when a 15th level Necromancer casts his or her *Fireball*, the spell is cast as if the mage was 17th level. This is a result of the extremely high levels of negative energy emanating from the Dead Lands and the gate to the Grey, as detailed in the "Geographical Regions and other Points of Interest of the Dead lands" section.

Clerics have a number of problems also. The undead of the Dead Lands are extraordinarily powerful due to, again, the negative energy of the area and the gate to the Grey. Therefore, turning the Undead is a challenging task. When turning Undead, the Cleric functions at half his level, rounded up. Thus, a 20th level cleric will only be able to turn at 10th level of ability. Another drawback is that all damage healed by a Healing spell is halved. The rapid onset of rot and infection is the cause of this.

Clerics are not without benefits, as their spells do increase in strength while in the Dead Lands. One aspect of the spell cast can be augmented by one hundred percent. So a cleric can chose for the duration, damage, or an other effect to be doubled in potency. The gate connecting the Grey to the Prime Material Plane was once a linking point between the Elemental Planes and the Prime. There are still some residual effects of this, thus the strengthening of power.

## Psionics in the Dead Lands

On the whole, psionics remains relatively unaffected by the Dead Lands. There are some drawbacks, however. The main problem lies in using Teleportation sciences and disciplines. The tremendous amount of obsidian has an odd effect on Teleport and related powers, causing the occasional problem for Psionicists. Any failed result of using a Teleportation discipline or devotion means that the Psionicist (or recipient of the power in some cases) is now trapped in the Grey. For rules concerning being stuck in the Grey, consult Preservers and Defilers of Athas©.

## Rot, Disease, and Infection

The Dead Lands are an area of death. The very air is so contaminated with vile impurities that infection and disease run rampant. These normally harmful viruses have mutated from the negative energy of the area, becoming stronger than any toxins found in the Table Lands. The second the skin is broken on

victim the infestation sets in. There are many different kinds, each unique in it's own deadly way. Most common infections found in the Dead Lands operate in the same way. One round after any piercing or slashing attack, the victim (if not treated immediately) will begin losing hit points. The hit point loss happens once every hour, resulting in 24 points of damage after one full day of non-treatment. Treatment includes purifying the wound with fire, healing it through magical means, treating it with herbs (not to be found in the Dead Lands), or just hacking the limb off. One temporary point of Strength, Constitution and Dexterity are lost every day. If the wound is treated, they return at the rate of two points per day. If at any point any score falls below "0", the victim is dead. More exotic and rare forms of infection have more terrible results. One such affliction causes the victim to tear off his or her own flesh. When all the flesh is gone, the person's skeleton come to "unlife" and attacks the nearest thing in sight.

### Ash Clouds

The same accident that created the Dead Lands opened up gate to the Plane of Ash. This ash killed the few flying creatures of the Dead Lands who were unaffected by the Obsidian Tide. The Ash clouds cover a good portion of the Dead Lands, and their position changes on a daily basis. There are some advantages and some disadvantages to having an Ash cloud above you: Ash keeps out the sun, which lowers the temperature 10° per hour the clouds are over an area. Unfortunately, the Ash clouds attract undead, and any failed roll rolled on a Random Encounter table should be rerolled once. The ash clouds also pose problems to the character's ability to breathe. If a rag is not held over the nose and mouth, the ash will quickly find it's way into these orifices, choking the character to death. The ash of the area is thick and usually grey, black, or white.

To see if ash is overhead the PC's at any certain time, roll 1d100. If the result is a "60" or less, the area has an ash cloud over it. If the result is "61-100", the area is clear.

### Death in the Dead Lands

Let it be said that no death is final in the Dead Lands. Every being killed will rise again, sometimes mere seconds after death occurs. The negative energy of the Dead Lands forms a sort of "soul net", keeping all who die trapped there. After the likely event of character death, roll on the following table to determine when the body will rise again.

1d100	
01-10	instantaneous
11-20	one round
21-30	two rounds
31-40	five rounds
41-50	one turn
51-60	two turns
61-70	five turns
71-80	two hours
81-90	five hours
91-92	ten hours
93-94	one day
95-96	two days
97-98	one week
99	one month
00	one year

### **Using the Obsidian for Magical or Psionic Items**

The obsidian of the Dead Lands is among the purest and refined on all of Athas. It is ideal for making any magical or psionic item that requires obsidian. It is rumored that the Dark Lens was created by a process similar to what created all the obsidian of the Dead Lands. Thousands of years of eroding have created chunks of obsidian to form in all different kinds of shapes and sizes, so it only takes a little searching to find exactly the kind of piece you are looking for.

### **Travel in the Dead Lands**

Heat is not the only thing an adventurer needs to worry about while travelling through the Dead Lands. There are many other dangers, including wandering monsters, obsidian blindness, and the incessant knicking caused by the rough, volcanic glass.

During the daytime, the sun shines unrelentingly upon the obsidian ground. The obsidian is highly reflective and can become a problem for adventurer's eyes after a while. The shine is impossible to escape, except in regions where there is a structure large enough to cast some shade. The sun's reflection has been known to temporarily blind people (on days when the sun is particularly brutal), but will usually only result in a lessening of the character's ability to see. If the adventurer has no eye protection, the result is a -2 penalty to all attack rolls and a -1 penalty to the character's Armor Class. When the sun goes down, or when the PC's find a way out of the sun, they will suffer from blindness for 2d6 rounds. In that time, they suffer a -4 penalty to all ToHit rolls, and a -2 penalty to their AC. These penalties are not cumulative.

The Dead Lands are covered by a thick layer of obsidian. This obsidian is laden with tiny rivulets. These small, jagged pieces can tear through any natural armor with an AC less than 8. While not terrible enough to seriously injure someone after taking a few steps over the ground, the damage adds up after every mile or so. With nothing on one's feet, PC's suffer 1 point of damage for every mile travelled.

Sandals, boots and shoes suffer from the rivulets to, and must save vs. acid after every five miles travelled on foot.

Undead monsters are an integral part of the Dead Lands. Adventurers should encounter some Undead (whether friendly or not) at least twice in the day time and four times at night. The reason encounters are so common is that the PC's life force acts like a beacon, attracting flocks of Undead to their spark of life.

### **Random Encounter Table for the Dead Lands**

A random encounter table for the Dead Lands can be found in the Age of Heroes© rulebook.

### **Heat in the Dead Lands**

When travelling in the Dead Lands, heat is a large element to consider. During the daytime, the Obsidian Planes are a veritable furnace, with temperatures exceeding 190° F. This excessive heat can be attributed to many factors. One is the Dead Lands elevation, which is roughly one-fourth of a mile below "sea"-level. Another factor is the composition of the Dead Lands--highly heat-absorbing obsidian. This obsidian will also reflect a large amount of the sun's light, adding in more heat. Large ash

clouds blanket the region, and while these do keep light out some of the time, they also keep the heat from escaping into the atmosphere.

At night, when the sun is away, there is some lessening of heat. However, the ash clouds keep enough heat locked in for the temperature to maintain it's intensity. At night, the temperature is lowered to about 120°F, just about bearable for elves.

PC's are recommended to travel only at night (which, incidentally, is the time the undead are at their strongest), unless they have some sort of magic that can protect them from the sun's brutal rays. If the PC insist on travelling during the day, you may use the following,

**Optional rule table:**

Hours Walking	Con Check*
1	Con -4
2	Con -5
3	Con -6
4	Con -8
5	Con -10
6	Con -12
7	Con -14
8	Con -16
9	Con -18
10	Con -19

\*Failure means that the character cannot walk anymore in the terrible heat, and can do nothing but rest for a number of hours equal to that of which he walked.

Fighting and other strenuous activity are even harder to maintain than walking. For these actions, the DM should use the "Fighting while wearing armor" rule in the rules book.



## Getting There

Getting to the Dead Lands is almost as difficult as surviving them. The Silt Sea, the Salt Flats, the Crimson Savannah, the Endless Sand Dunes -- each path has it's own dangers, it is up to the individual traveller to determine which way suits him best.

(N) The Endless Sand Dunes: Travelling through the Endless Sand Dunes is one of the best ways to get to the Dead Lands. Oases can be found, food is ample, and, in their troughs, the dunes do create a bit of shade. The main problem is that the dunes are so large that they effectively triple the area a traveller must cross in order to reach the Dead Lands. An adventurer can plan on the trip to cover at least miles, and this route will lead them out to anywhere between and.

(N/NE) Great Salt Flats: The great Salt Flats are perhaps the best route to travel when trekking to the Dead Lands. Despite the fact that there is little plants, animals, food or water along the way to sustain a traveller, the Great Salt Flats are flat, which makes travel quick and easy. An adventurer can plan on the trip to cover at least miles, and this route will lead them out to anywhere between and.

(E) Silt Sea: If one can survive the rigors of the Silt Sea, one could reach the Dead Lands somewhat easily. While a 1000 foot drop must be overcome by adventurers travelling more orthodox routes, the Silt Sea flows gently into the Dead Lands, bypassing the drop altogether. An adventurer can plan on the trip to cover at least miles, and this route leads to Goran's city of Biga'fe'tye.

(S) The Tari Lands (The Southern Dead Lands): If your adventures bring the characters up from the South to reach the Dead Lands, they probably travelled through the Tari Lands. The Tari Lands are the southern most region of the Dead Lands that the Wanderer didn't explore, and they are marked by the Tari Woods. It is up to the individual DM to decide how long this will take, but the adventurers will most likely end up in the Tari Woods.

(W) The Crimson Savannah: The Crimson Savannah is perhaps the worst way to reach the Dead Lands. During the Green Age, some liquid obsidian had cascaded off the Jagged Cliffs. This obsidian cooled in mid air, and now "water" falls of solid obsidian can be found alongside the Jagged Cliffs. Adventurers will find scaling these monoliths extremely difficult, as they are vertical, slippery (as the Misty Border), and the obsidian is sharp enough to cut the thickest giant's hair rope. The cliffs behind them are a bit easier to scale; if the PC's wish to do so, consult Wind Riders of the Jagged Cliffs© for rules on doing so.

The Border: The Dead Lands are sunken into the ground, this makes it difficult to go from the Table Lands to the Obsidian Plane. The change in elevation is roughly 1000 feet, with the obsidianized part being about five hundred feet down the wall. Adventurers can find many ways to get down the cliff, common ways include: climbing down (which is extremely difficult, teleportation, feather falling, or, possibly the worst way to go, just jumping off the cliff (that's 10d10 damage!).

# The History of the Dead Lands

About fifty miles south-west of Kyron, I came across an ancient burial site. It was quite beautiful actually -- a large, white, marble structure jutting out of the pitch black obsidian ground, creating a brilliant contrast. Upon taking a closer look, I noticed a long brown sheet of paper resting against the doors of the tomb. Carefully, I unfolded the paper and began to read. The paper was old and crumbling, and some of the words were completely gone, but I made inferences and guessed at certain words along the way. After reading the story (which I believe to be a letter) I felt it would make an excellent addition to my entry on the Dead Lands, and so added it. The words and letters I had to guess at were put between brackets such as this: for[ever].

## The History Of The Dead Lands--167th King's Age

Rajaat, The War Bringer. Rajaat, The Destroy[er]. Everything points back to him. It was he who instigated the Cleansing Wars. It was he who destroyed my people. It was R[aajaat] who found the survivors, the Hidden O[n]es. He, IT, was the wind behind the [Obsid]ian Wave. The wave that slaughtered my brethren, my wife, my [other loved one, unknown]d. Let no one tell you otherwise, dear [reader (may have been refering to a specific person or to all readers in general, unknown)], let no one steer you from the truth. It was Rajaat who was at fault. Never forget this.

If I recall cor[rectly] (which is not such an easy task after [two hundred ye]ars), Kyron is where eve[rything] started. Founded to be the ca[unknown] city for a group of Preservers known as the [unknown-two words], Kyron was of the fe[w] cities that some members of the nearly exterminated [races co]uld come to seek refuge and [most likely] not be found by the Champions hunting them. This was due to the remn his Cleansing Wars. It all happened so fast, we had no time to prepa[re ou]r selves, no time to flee. Many gnomes w[ho could h]ave escaped stayed behind to help others, engaging in a futile effort to preserve my people. I could not, howe[ver, stay ]behind, as I had a wife [and ch]ild to take care of, and I couldn't bear to[ see] any harm come of arkable magical and psi[onic] w[a]rds placed around the city by Jel'se'ah (the city's founder), and the most re[cent (y]et st[ill] ancient) wards placed by [mys]elf (over 20[0] years ago). It was also the best place to go for o[n-t]he-run P[r]ese[rvers. Her[e, the] pe[ople liv]ed in pe[ac]e, if only [for a f]ew [br]ief years.

Kyron [thri]ved for a short while, it's location was the best kept secret in all of Athas. Unfortunately, the best kept sec[ret w]as n[o] match for Rajaat's twisted, piercing eyes. The seco[nd h]e visited south of Celik, he could tell something was wrong. That [hideous be]ast could sense the people living in peace, and the War-Bri[nger ju]st couldn't hav[e t]hat[.]

But I will tell the tale from the beginning.

I re[mem]ber like it [was yes]terday, but I will always try to [forge]t. I [was a ]bit over one thousand years old (powerful magics h[ad m]uch exte[nde]d my [na]tural li[feti]me) when Rajaat came. Nor[th to] Kyron we fled, Gallard (the Champion assigned to slay[ing] my kind) ceaselessly nipping at our heels.

Kyron was my birthplace, and it was where I first learned to cast magic. Before meeting my wife, I had a brief romance with a beautiful human woman named Jel'se'ah. She was a Preserver, as was I, and when we met during an attack we were both involved in, against Rajaat's evil Preserver Pillagers during the early years of Rajaat's jihad against them. Eventually, after she realized she could not save the world, she dedicated herself to saving the city of Kyron. With ample time (she was the one who co-created the Life Extension spell that had kept me alive for so many years), she eventually managed to make magical wards and barriers strong enough so that Rajaat's men could not even find the city. Soon, Preservers came to the city in droves.

When the Cleansing Wars started, those people of the hunted races who knew of the city came. By the time my family had arrived, the city was so full that they were turning people away at the gates. It was such a terrible sight: hundreds of poor, hungry, tired folk from all races standing idly outside the gates, not knowing what to do next. Of course they couldn't stay where they were, as their presence would give away the city's location. They all knew that, and they all knew they would die by the hand of Rajaat.

Luckily, Jel'se'ah was waiting for me, and had reserved space for my family and I. I can still feel the eyes of the people that couldn't get in, staring at me. If I could have, I would have let one of those poor souls take my place, but I had a wife and child to take care of, and I couldn't bare to see harm come of them.

At first, life took a bit of getting used to in Kyron (what with so many people outside the gates all day, everyday). But within a few months, word got out that Kyron was no longer accepting any more refugees, and the people stopped coming. For years, Kyron thrived. The city was brimming with every known, intelligent race on Athas, and Preservers and Druids made life very comfortable. It was wonderful, and I got to see my child grow into a man, a brilliant mage, and a Master of the Way. His name was Bariia, and he was a beautiful boy. His mother (of human lineage) granted him his handsome looks, wisdom, and great charm and eloquence. I (of gnomish lineage, as you know) gave him his great intellect, if I do say so myself. He helped me teach his mother the arts of magic (as I always had so little patience to teach those who weren't gifted in that sense). Eventually, I taught them the spell that would keep them young for as long as they lived. It was a joyous time in my life.

But let it be said that Rajaat can smell peace and prosperity miles away, and he couldn't allow us, the Unpure Ones, to have that. I often wonder why all this happened, why Rajaat had to destroy my, and countless others', life. I asked my wife this once, and she replied "Life isn't fair," and I can see how this is true.

Roughly nine years after I first entered Kyron, Jel'se'ah's first ward faltered. It was in the middle of the night, and I remember awakening to hear my boy and his mother screaming in unison, in panic and fright. Seconds later, an enormous ball of gas flame streamed down from the heavens, igniting a small portion of the city and its inhabitants. I ran outside as quickly as I could, where I met the entire group of magic-wielding folk of the community. I never before realized just how many of us there were, but my first glance of the scene told me that far more than a quarter of the city's people could cast spells! It was glorious: teams of Psionicists, Preservers and Druids

joining forces to obliterate their foes from [the] sky. And o[bliterate] they did, for n[ot] two hours a[fter] the first volley of fir[e]balls was launched, our town had won the day. T[hat] wa[s] a day marked with excitement and joy (for destroy[ing our foe]), but at the sam[e] time, an] overwhe[lming] feeling of doom permeate[d t]he air, for now t[h]at our citi[es] location was known, we were as good [as] dead.

Early th[e] next day, Jel's[e'a]h call[ed] a meeting of all t[he] town's mages and Druids. Hundreds of us crammed into a large, underground m[e]eting hall, awaiting patientl[y] for our] leader to speak. She addressed the group calmly, but [si]gns of stress and [a]nxiety wore through her peaceful visage, betrayi[ng h]er real emotions. Jel'se'[a]h had made a decision: she informed the group [that] she, I, and a group of four clerics kno[w]n as the "Four Forces" were to combine our efforts and de[vis]e a pl[an to] save Kyron from the wrath of Rajaa[t's e]vil armies. Time w[as] on o[ur] side, as Jel'se'a[h] esti[mated] it would take a [bit o]ver nine years for the armies to [f]ind us. The rest of [the] people at the meeti[ng] wou]ld help w[rit]e and cast the s[pe]ll.

The [enti]re dweomer wou]d b]e orchestrated b[y] all of us by employing the powers of an artifact called Hax. Hax b[roug]ht minds together, bl[endin]g them so that all thoughts, experiences, and feelings were known and felt as on[e]. Fu]sing our min[d]s t]ogether would be th[e] most eff[ic]ient way of sharing ideas, and would m[inim]ize the ti[m]e needed to create such a powerful spell.

The F[our Fo]rces started off the n[ext] day, combin[ing t]he strength of their elements (Earth, Fire, Water, and Air), and used a [pow]erful [a]ugury to contact their lords. I watched in amaz[e]nt as a cloud of silvery ash sprung from the tightly formed circle of priests, forming into an image I will never forget. The picture of a beautiful [being d]raped in ro[bes of] brilliant white app[ea]red. The creature's head wa[s] shap]d like an oval, and it's mouth and nose were missing. It's tw[o, o]blong, fro[s]ty-white eyes were the only [thing]s that made me t[hin]k it was a [head] at all. W[is]dom, peace an[d love] radiated from it like rays from the crimson [sun], and I soon kn[ew t]hat we needed t[hi]s being to protect u[s]. Jel'se'ah used [h]er magics in conjunction with those of the Four Force[s to] divine that the creature we were looking at was hum[an.] "What happened to it?" I wondered aloud. "Co[u]ld that be the form in whic[h hu]mans [wi]ll evolve into? Is this the result of the Prist[in]e Tower?" I asked (you are aw[ar]e of the powers of the Pristine Towers, correct?). The visages [of the] four clerics appeared strange, and then t[h]ey a[ns]wered [my] ques[tions i]n unison. The being was the result of the blend of power magic and the W[is]dom. The creature transformed itself i[n]to what we saw before u[s] now. I w[as] imp[ress]ed.

With research d[one w]ith, the [n]ext m[on]th was spe[nt] prepa[ring] for the creation of the spell. Some debated that it would be wise to explore another line of defense, but I was blind to anything but the c[re]ation of that [wond]erful creature. I look back and see myself as foolish a[n]d impetuous, but at the time, I wasn't in my right mind. The be[n]g was [stu]ck in my brain every waking mom[en]t, [a]nd when I slept, my dreams were filled with its surreal beauty.

Wit[h] Jel'se'ah and the Four Forces backing the idea, al[mo]st everyone eventually a[greed] to go along with th[e] plan. N[o] one could hav[e k]nown it ould turn out to be a dis[aster], everyone believed [we] were doing [t]he right thing. As you kno[w], we [w]ere ter[ri]bly [w]rong.

Ov[er th]e next [nin]e years, materials wer[e] gather]ed, ideas w[er]e shared, and the spell

n[early co]mpleted. Meanwhile, Barria, my son, was [adv]ancing i[ncre]dibly qui[ck]ly in his st[ud]ies of both [ma]gic and the Way. With [my wi]fe and I tutoring him using H[a]x, he learned to mast[er his] skills, and soon surpassed both of us in skill. Barria [b]ecame a very [respe]cted member of Kyron, im[press]ing all with his wisdom, great int[ell]ect, and charming demeanor. At first, Jel'se'ah was going to make the [tra]nsformation, but when she became oddly ill, Barria was no[m]inated to go [th]rough *the change*. Again, I was [pr]o[u]d of my boy, but I was al[so] afraid of what wou[ld h]appen to him if the spell failed. He, of c[our]se, didn't share my worries, and was [rather ]excited about the whole [affa]ir. To [th]ink, I wo[ul]d still hav[e] m[y b]oy (in his right for[m]) to this[ d]ay if it weren't for Rajaat.

We learne[d that] Rajaat's armi[es were] nearing K[y]ron just days before we were to have the spell ready. To help delay the approaching [arm]y, Bhra'go (the informal leader of the Giants [w]ho were living in Kyron) offered [t]o send his people out to battle our en[em]y. Bhra[g]o felt it was his duty as none of t[h]e Giants were able to help [w]ith creating or casting the spell on Ba[rri]a. T[he] last thing I ever heard about th[e Gi]ants is that they disobey[ed B]hra'go's orders and ran for the mountains, at whic[h time t]hey we[r]e destroyed from the rear.

Days l[ater], the enemy had dispelled the last of the wards that protected Kyron with a[n] enormo[us] surge of spell energy. When I first la[id e]yes upon the human so[ld]iers, I was shocked. They all appeared as lepers -- si[ck]ly a[nd] decayed. I ha[d ]attributed it to the Gate to the Grey that had b[ee]n opened by [G]retch, and I was cor[re]ct. They attacked like blood-thirsty [d]rakes, tearing holes in the city walls with their hands, slaughtering babie[s, wo]men, children. It sicke[ne]d me, but I thought we wo[ul]d prevail. I qu[ic]kly set [u]p Hax and [soo]n, every Druid, Preserver and Master of the [W]ay in Kyron was casting the transfo[rmati]on spell. Barria sat in the middle of the room, cross-legge[d, face] tensed fr[om co]ncentration. We readily began the spell, but s[oo]n stopped in horror. There was n[o] plant-life to power the spell. The Champion's army had stolen it all when they destro[ye]d the city's wards. We had planned for them to take *some* plant life, but [n]ot *all* of it! Leave it to a defiler to take far more t[han wh]at they need.

My mind [was r]acing, *our* minds were racing. Then someone [rem]embered the soldiers. Which [made] us think about the Gate to the Grey, a[nd we] then wondered if the Grey could be f[ashi]oned in[to e]nergy. Hu[n]dr[eds] of us began calculating, figuring out ho[w ex]actly we c[ould po]wer the spell with [negative energy]. 'Thump-th[um]p' soldiers were racing down the s[ta]irs to our subterranean meeting p[la]ce. We had no time to mull o[ve]r our choices. We ch[ose], and we chose for th[e g]ood of ou[r city. We cast the spell.

O[ur ey]e's opened at once, all w[ere fixe]d on Barria. Hi[s] face was so strained, so [an]guished. His lanky body was shivering, yet sweating at the same time. He [l]et out a [c]ry, and a g[rea]t crunching so[und c]ame from his torso. You'll excuse me if I [w]on't finish the de[scrip]tion of t[he] tran[sfor]mation. I [t]pa[is] me to write of it.

He w[as suppos]ed to be a being of pure b[eau]ty and peace, of glowing, white wings and a frail body. He didn't turn out that way. The negati[ve en]ergy twisted him. It warped his bo[n]es, mind and soul, and turned [his sk]in a dark grey.

But he w[as sti]ll beautiful to me.

W[ith a fl]ap of his m[alfor]m[ed] wings, he burst through the ceiling of the meeting hall. He turned his anguish towa[rds not [jus]t Rajaat's army, bu[t t]o the people of Kyrion, too. He had to[ be s]topped, so the last remai[ning townsp]eople who were m[agic]ally incl[ine]d, linked back up to one ano[the]r using Hax. We us[e]d our last stre[ng]th to pa[cify m]y child. And t[h]en the Obsidian Wa[v]e hit.

Whe[n I ]eme[rg]ed, undead a[n]d half-skeletal, from the murky, liquid obsidian, I surveyed the damage. Not a so[ul] survived the ordeal -- my wife, [m]y child, and Jel'se'ah w[er]e all dead. As I was the first to becom[e r]eanima[ted], I se[al]ed each of my t[hree lov]ed ones in a crypt of hardened obsidia[n], sealed shut with my magic. I couldn't b[e]ar to have them b[ec]ome as I had, one of [th]e Wal[king D]ead. I[t] was a good decision.

No[w I ]p[r]o[tec]t that to[mb f]rom [th]e likes of Gretch, as he would do anythi[ng to h]ave my son added to his legion of Undead. I sit above his tomb each day and[ each ni]ght, think[ing of wha]t I [co]uld have done different, how I could have better prote[cted my fam]ily, my friends, and my city. I start by blaming myself for all that [happen]ed, but I alwa[ys com]e to the inevitable co[ncl]usion: It was Rajaat who was at fault. Never forget this.