

BLOOD & SHADOWS:

The Dark Elves of Tellene

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INTRODUCTION

Why the Kingdoms of Kalamar® Campaign Setting?

The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting describes the world of Tellene, a vibrant world alive with rich characters, imminent danger, complex intrigue and exciting adventure, all awaiting your shaping hand. This robust world consists of many detailed lands and cultures, both human and humanoid, that are rife with adventure possibilities. On Tellene, fantastic creatures roam the wilderness, evil clerics worship evil deities hell-bent on destruction and the dead rise again to spread terror throughout the world. Complex political alliances mix with marauding bands of humanoids and medieval technology and culture come face to face with magic and the fantastic. Tellene combines the best of a realistic medieval world with all the elements of fantasy you have come to enjoy. While nearly any campaign setting suffices for a single adventure, your characters will find the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting to be an engaging game world to explore long after the novelty of the "tourist bazaars" has worn thin.

The underlying strength of the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting comes from its geo-historical basis. The maps feel right because they are right, at least from a standpoint of verisimilitude. The continents, lakes, rivers, forests and other geographical features all follow examples from the real world. This attention to detail clearly shows a setting built from the ground up, from the direction of the prevailing winds to the plate tectonics. No glaciers lie in the middle of warm lakes nor huge jungles in temperate latitudes. The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting becomes the invisible backdrop for the real action: you.

The player character becomes the real hero of any D&D game. You rescue the princess and you recover the stolen Whatzit for Lord So-and-So. You shape the campaign world through your actions, not the other way around. Tellene, like few other campaign settings before it, offers you the opportunity to be a world-shaper. Life in Tellene grows from ordinary men and women with extraordinary courage and resolve. This setting gives you the information you need to allow your players to become one of those people. But fear not, for all the detail and background history that this setting provides add depth to your adventures without confining them. The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting allows you to be the author of your own destiny by providing the scenery but not the story.

Of course, player characters cannot be everywhere at once. The world continues moving even when they spend weeks exploring long forgotten ruins or dark forests somewhere. Evil cults spread their influence throughout a small town. A village succumbs to a mysterious disease. A band of humanoids halts merchant routes between two cities. Villains even kidnap princesses when heroes are not around to do anything about it. What happens then? Well, sometimes the princess escapes, but more often the Vicelord has his way with her. For the NPCs of Tellene are not inept, else they would not be worthy (or successful) villains. A world full of morons is no place to live. The good, the bad and even the so-so

must transpire in the campaign in order to make the party's heroic deeds exceptional. After all, if every person on the block is a superhero, nobody stands out.

The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting is designed to enhance your D&D experience by providing a realistic backdrop for your character. Every type of person you could imagine lives somewhere on Tellene. In fact, that's one of the reasons the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting is such an enjoyable world to play in: it is tremendously versatile. No matter what type of character you choose to play, you should feel confident that he or she will have an important place in the world of Tellene.

The Kingdoms of Kalamar setting also provides a realistic, dynamic world for your character. Every sort of adventure can be found on the continent of Tellene. Whether you dream of finding great riches in the bellies of mountains or ridding the desert of undead abominations, the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting provides the where and the how, all the while maintaining a commitment to realism that lets you experience your character's adventures in the most satisfying ways.

In the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting, your character has a chance to stand out. In fact, you have a chance to be the greatest character in the campaign world. But greatness is different for every individual. While you may dream of conquering the continent and bringing peace and prosperity to its people, others may wish for the ultimate in scholarly or magical achievement. What sets the Kingdoms of Kalamar setting apart is its ability to give you the opportunity to do all this and more without sacrificing continuity or common sense. Here you are presented with the opportunity to become great. Realizing that opportunity, however, requires skill, effort and a little bit of luck.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Welcome to Blood & Shadows: the Dark Elves of Tellene. This Kingdoms of Kalamar supplement details the lives, ways and threats of the dark elves (also known as shadow elves, or "drow" in Low Elven), providing both players and Dungeon Masters with information regarding this unusual race. The first few chapters are for both player and Dungeon Master, but only the DM should read the final chapter.

Inside are rules for both running a campaign with the dark elves as the protagonists and for players to run dark elf player characters. Also included is the history and status of the elves that betrayed their kin and fled from the sun, as well as those relatives who chose not to betray the light.

This book is organized as follows:

Chapter One details the history of the dark elves. Here, Mithelizek Kexithemios, wizard and defector of the dark elf empire, explains the history of his people from the dawn of time to the current day.

Chapter Two discusses the culture of the dark elves, and the roles that those within it play.

Chapter Three presents the twilight elves and the remaining descendents of the elves who turned away from the Shadow elves' corruption.

Chapter Four details the rules and guidelines to playing a dark elf character, and includes information on character classes. It also includes several new prestige classes.

Chapter Five includes new equipment, feats, spells and special items.

Chapter Six should be avoided by players, and only read by the Dungeon Master. It contains information both censored by Mithelizek, and things that even he is not privy to knowing.

The **Appendices** cover specifics about religion, new magic items, new monsters, a glossary and vital character statistics.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

This campaign resource assumes that you have access to the three core rulebooks of the Dungeons & Dragons game: the Player's Handbook (PHB), the Dungeon Master's Guide (DMG) and the Monster Manual (MM). This product uses updated material from the v.3.5 revision of the D&D rules. As this book is compatible with the Kingdoms of Kalamar fantasy campaign setting, it is also useful (but not required) to have the Kingdoms of Kalamar campaign setting sourcebook and the Kingdoms of Kalamar Player's Guide and any of the other fine Kingdoms of Kalamar adventures and sourcebooks available.



CHAPTER I:

HISTORY AND LEGEND

HISTORY AND LEGEND

From "*Histories Unknown*" by Branlel the Younger
Historian to the Mendarn Courts
Graduate of the Eighth State

The following information comes from a series of interviews with Mithelizek of the shadow elves (also known as dark elves, or "drow" in Low Elven), and is intended only for those of the appropriate authority. For purposes of both personal safety, and the welfare of those who aided me in the past few months, I assure you that the knowledge laid out within this tome makes you a target of many dangerous forces.

I met the wizard Mithelizek only weeks after arriving in Vrandol, our Svimozhish colony. While performing my nightly ritual of compiling and checking my notes over a rather watered-down tankard of ale, a large man of native stock approached my table. Having heard stories of Svimozh accosting lone Brandobians out of greed and anger, I was more than a little nervous. The stranger said nothing at first, but then asked my name.

"Branlel...the Younger" I stuttered out from fear-stricken lips. The man merely nodded, laying a sealed scroll upon the table as he turned to leave. Still nervous, I sat motionless for several minutes after he departed, afraid something terrible would happen the moment I dropped my guard. Eventually, apprehension gave way to curiosity, and I began to examine the scroll.

The first detail to catch my eye was the seal. The symbol was unfamiliar, and even its design seemed alien. Whirling bars, lithely flowing about a feathery center, were somewhat similar to patterns present in elven handicraft but espoused a chillingly dark resonance. With a sneaking suspicion, I opened the letter, hoping for confirmation. The message, written in painstakingly scribed Draconic, was nothing more than a time and location within the city. Despite the potential dangers before me, I knew I must keep that appointment.

It was nearly midnight when a horse-driven cart arrived, its driver concealed from head to toe in black robes. The being, the

only word I could safely use to describe it, gestured for me to climb aboard only after scanning the area for observers. Whispering a quick prayer of protection to Brovadol, I quickly complied.

The fog was unusually thick that night, so I cannot accurately report on our journey. The constant right turns gave me the impression that we were driving about in a circle, and the vibrations from the road gave me the impression we were destined for a location within the city. However, when the carriage finally stopped, we were nowhere near the city, but rather miles into the country. I quickly surmised that the entity I dealt with was no doubt a student of the arcane, a suspicion that first arose by the writer's choice of Draconic script. Of course, this theory cemented itself as I gazed upon the cyclopean tower standing at the opposite end of the meadow. The black structure stood defiantly in the moonlight, like an oppressive sentinel in the otherwise serene wilderness. As if impatient with my surveillance, the enigmatic driver pointed to the tower. Again, I complied with its wishes and made the walk towards the dark building.

In the lighted door, the person I would soon learn to be my host stood before me. He was rather tall for a dark elf (or so I learned later), standing at half a head over five feet, although in the light of the moon he seemed almost soaring in stature. His ebony skin and jet black robes appeared to consume the silvery luminance around us, as a rift of darkness in the middle of the light. He politely beckoned me to come in and made his formal introductions.

I should say here that Mithelizek Kexithemios is an unusual example of his race. He values both solitude and the fresh open air, which his brethren find anathema. Nevertheless, what mostly separates him is a willingness to associate and do business with those not of his race. He is an outcast, and subject to severe punishments, should his fellow dark elves ever discover his whereabouts - hence the covert means in which he brought me to his tower.

After a brief exchange of formalities, the mage made clear his business with me. Through his network of contact, he had come to know of my interest in his race. Since little such knowledge exists in modern civilization, Mithelizek explained that he would be glad to help me – for a price. He claimed that the information he possessed was most valuable, and he would require payment of an extremely costly nature. What he demanded in return is not something I am at liberty to discuss at this time, nor do I think I ever shall be. In hindsight, I wonder if I chose the correct course of action, but my excitement was too overwhelming to do so effectively.

Upon the elf's request, the first subject he lectured upon was his peoples' history. He stressed the importance in understanding this history in order to "appreciate" (his own words) all other aspects of his culture. As my focus of study is historical fact, I saw the wisdom in such logic. The following are the wizard's words exactly as I wrote them from his spoken discourse. I shall warn you that Mithelizek's bias towards his people is, at best, mixed. Sometimes he grinned with pride upon their accomplishments, and other times scowl in bitterness. So take heed - a grain of salt may be necessary, but the truth remains.

MITHELIZEK'S TALE

You cannot have peace or harmony any longer, my children. No emotion will ever again be pure for us, because everything is here and anger now that the sun hides behind the storm.
- the Book of Scorn

"Long ago, millennia before you humans gained even the remotest intelligence, the elven civilizations of Tellene existed in a peaceful harmony with both nature, and each other. The commoners worked side by side with the nobility, crime and treachery were virtually nonexistent, and all elves walked fearlessly with the beasts of the wild. It may be difficult for your human mind to contemplate such a paradise, but life at the dawn of the world was much purer than it is now.

Much like today, there were different bloodlines of elf. The high elves built beautiful cities in the light wooded areas and meadows. The wild elves lived more primitively within the heart of the fey forests. The gray elves lived in the most remote places, doing Gods-know-what ever it is they do. However, our people...we lived upon the Elenon mountains. What? You look quite surprised. Your reaction is not entirely a shock, however. You would never be able to wrench out that little nugget of lore from those frail, callow elves in Lendelwood. Painful memories and mistakes of the past are things best forgotten to them, no matter the consequences of ignoring history. They sweep their unpleasantness cleanly under the forest floor.

We were not always as you see me now. Back in that far off time, we were the twilight elves. Our skin was pale, and our flesh was statuesque, not unlike alabaster or marble. Our hair burned radiant gold and copper like the metal ores in our mountains. We towered over our lowland cousins, standing even taller than you Brandobians do today. We were the most

beautiful of the beautiful, with the pride to match. Moreover, why should we not be so? Our castles rested upon the tops of the mountains themselves; we lived in the very firmament of heaven. We taught our lesser cousins the art of working metal for tools and jewelry, and we were the greatest wielders of magic and science of the Dawn. We looked down from our thrones in the sky at our cousins, bewildered by their need to live amongst beasts and dirt. Of course, of all the sins absent at the Dawn, envy was not one of them. Our cousins' jealousy of our lofty home in the clouds was subtle at first, but soon became more apparent. Naturally, this only served to increase our pride, and so only worsened their hostility. The idea of resentfulness between elves was a very frightening prospect at the time, and many of those in power on both sides of the tree line became worried, fearing this might be the greatest crisis of history.

You know, my friend: I just realized how ridiculous that last statement must have sounded to your human ears. Hostility, open or veiled, is something your race deals with every day of your short lives. It must seem so commonplace - a nuisance often ignored. Vrandol is an excellent example: the Svimohtate the snobbish, oppressive Brandobians, who in turn look down upon their hosts as exploitable labor. Given half a reason and the right opportunity, the civility of the colony would erupt into blood-drenched chaos. However, no one seems to think twice about it. Yes, your people would have my full sympathy, were I were capable of having emotions for such simple beasts.

You see, the crisis lay within the fact that my people did not wish such a sad and horrible condition placed upon their civilization. Such things not only did not occur at the Dawn of the World, but were inconceivable to most folk - an innocent ignorance that our leaders meant to keep. However, perhaps they were trying to stave off the inevitable; their attempts only worsened an unavoidable catastrophe. Only the gods involved know.

AN ARRANGEMENT FOR PEACE

The sages and leader of both the lowland and twilight elves discussed the matter at length, finally agreeing upon a diplomatic solution that your people are often fond of employing - an arranged marriage between the most beautiful and respected of both races, to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. From the lowland elves, Soletius, prince of Lathlanian town, would be the groom. From the twilight elves, a bride from the Halibeth family was thought best. The House of Halibeth, and the city that bore its name, was the most revered of all the twilight elves. The city that they founded towered high in the Legasa peaks, its white, lofty spires almost reaching to the radiant sun itself. Yes, their family was the archetype of all virtues possessed by the twilight elves - beautiful beyond comparison, wiser than centuries, elegant to an apex. It was legend at the time that the blood of Lady Love flowed within that family, a tale that proved quite ironic later. Ironically, they were also the proudest, haughtiest, and most resistant to the