

NET PROJECT: THE DEAD LAND OF ATHAS

Many days south of Balic, a great plain of broken, black obsidian interrupts the monotony of the Endless Sand Dunes. The obsidian differs throughout the plain—it can be smooth and glassy, low and razor-edged, or shattered into jagged chunks 20 or 30 feet tall. Here and there, bare hillocks rise above the obsidian waves, crowned by a clump of hardy bushes or a small tree, or half buried remnants of city walls jut out of the glistening glass like the bones of a creature that died in a tar pit. During the Cleansing Wars, a terrible battle was fought on this plain, and a defiler of awesome power broke the world's skin, flooding the area with molten black glass to destroy whole armies with one dreadful ritual.

-4E Dark Sun Campaign Setting pg.183

The Dead Land was first mentioned in the Expanded and Revised 2E Dark Sun Campaign setting, then again in the 4E setting. Little detail was given on the Dead Land and its inhabitants in either version of the setting; however in 1997 a Dark Sun Net Project was put forth by Gerald Arthur Lewis which described this mysterious part

of Athas in greater detail. The Net Project laid out the following information that was important to understanding the Dead Land:

The Dead Land is referred to as "the Dead Land" or "the Obsidian Plain".

The Dead Land is covered by a thick layer of obsidian.

The event that caused the formation of the Dead Land is referred to as "the Obsidian Tide."

The undead of the Dead Land cannot leave the confines of the Obsidian Plain. This is due to a phenomenon known as the Gray Veil. The Gray Veil can be found along all sides of the Obsidian Plain.

The Dead Lands could very well be the harshest land in all of Athas. It is because of this that characters should be at least paragon tier before venturing in, unless you want them to die of course.

The following is a 4E rendition of the content provided in the net project with some changes to better fit with the 4E feel.

The Tablelands are by no means completely explored, and there are still wonders to be found there for those willing to find them. However, hearing too often the conflicting tales of the mysterious lands to the south, I decided to strike

out from the Tyr Region to see what awaited me beyond the maps of mortal men.

- The Wanderer

GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS AND OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST

REEVT CANYON

Reevt Canyon was the first place I came upon to break the monotony of the incredibly flat surface of the Dead Land. It is truly a breathtaking sight - not so much for its beauty but more for its immense size. The rift stretches for as far as the eye can see, and its depths are so dark that I would have to guess that its bottom reaches farther into the ground than I could imagine. I saw no being along those quiet 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 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 ground above. When the Obsidian Tide came, the ground caved in forming what is now Reevt Canyon. Reevt Canyon is home to the multitude of undead who died when the ground fell from

under them, the underdark gnomes who died there before the Obsidian Tide during the Cleansing Wars and the human soldiers that died during that same period. The canyon is twelve miles wide in parts, and up to 3,000 feet deep. More undead dwell here than any other place 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 its undead.

EERT LOD MYRTAY (THE LAND OF THE DEAD)

To the south-west of Kyron is an area of extreme negative energy. This area, as I have gathered, is in part responsible for the creation of the Dead Land, 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 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 traveling into the heart of the fog, having volunteered to go first. He was walking not two feet ahead of me when I suddenly 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 traveling to the "Eert Lod Myrtay" ever again.

Eert Lod Myrtay (Green Age for "the Land of the Dead") was once the area where the evil sorcerer Gretch vented the excess Negative Energy he pulled from the Gray during the late Red 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 Gray 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 a thousand fold. So much energy was leaking out that it would soon consume all of Athas, twisting it, making it a veritable living (or unliving) 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 Land. Right now the gate is but a small tear, but its size has increased over the last year or so. Who knows what will happen if the gate is torn open any more.

SEA OF CHALAT

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 traveled, 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, or the pack of ravenous skeletons that accompanied it.

The Sea of Chalats is not a sea any longer, not to the living at least. The ground here is as stable, smooth, and flat as any area in the Dead Land. The only difference is that to all undead, the area retains the properties of the sea. Ghost ships float by adventurers walking on ground that once was seas, animated bones of fish swimming through the "water" occasionally jumping out to bite an unsuspecting traveler. The surface of the sea is riddled with patches of Desert Glass

(Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 141), and are far more numerous than on those found on “land”, which makes combat in the area, let alone traveling over it, difficult indeed. A few miles out into the sea lays the island of Thatsburr. It is a place of rest from the creatures of the Sea of Chalath, but it does have its own horrors.

THATTSBURR ISLAND

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...

Thatsburr is a small island four miles off the coast of the Sea of Chalath. Like most other areas of the Dead Land, Thatsburr is covered by a thick layer of obsidian. Unlike most areas of the Dead Land, this island has a large, unobsidianized, fountain constructed of fine marble in its center. The

water that flows from it is fresh, pure and sweet. Those who drink from it however will attract the attention of its owner, who does not take kindly to strangers who would steal his water. The owner is Poinan (see *Personalities of the Dead Land* below), 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 they become known to him.

WINDFIRE SEA

Closing in on the Windfire Sea, I noticed an abrupt increase in temperature, making the already unbearable Dead Land 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.

The Windfire Sea is the only area on the Obsidian Plains where the obsidian that covered the Dead Land 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 its 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.

DRAGON'S BACK MOUNTAINS

The Dragon's Back Mountains are the only mountain range I have found in the Dead Land. In height, they rival the mighty Ringing Mountains of the North, and it is possible they match them in length, but I was not able to explore south far 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.

These mountains stretch far southward, ranging much farther than the Ringing Mountains. The Dragon's Back Mountains are impossible to climb by normal methods since large areas of the obsidian mountain side are smooth, offering no hand holds. Other areas of the mountains are filled with broken, razor-sharp, obsidian edges where rope frays and snaps if used against the sharp mountain slope. Finally, the brittle obsidian will not support pitons and the like. If any adventurer wishes to pass the mountain range they should either have strong magic to get them across, or walk around it.

RAZOR SPINE FOREST

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.

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 are equivalent to the Obsidian Facade obstacle (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 139) for those in squares adjacent to falling trees. Falling trees could start a chain reaction that would destroy all trees in the forest if it wasn't for the pixies that fight their hardest to keep the forest standing.

TARI WOODS

The only other "woodlands" I found were the "Tari Woods". The Tari Woods are located to the south of the Obsidian Citadel. 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 Land. 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.

Kalid-Ma's greatest (and most heinous) display of magic was eliminating an entire legion of Tari 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 Tari 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.

SABLE FALLS

Where the Crimson Savannah, the Tablelands, and the Dead Land meet lays 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 Land and travel all the way down, farther than I traveled. 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 its curve. This area I have named E'Maie's Fall, as it was the last place I saw my dear friend alive.

Sable Falls was formed by the Obsidian Tide washing over the Tablelands 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.

DEAD ZONES

The Dead Zones found throughout the Dead Land are areas with an unusually strong tie to the Gray, from which the Obsidian Tide first flowed.

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 surrounding Eert Lod Myrtay and mark 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 Land 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 its lowdest. These massive trees tower over 200 feet, blocking all sunlight from entering its domain and act as Blood Trees (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 138). 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.

BAYERY

Traveling 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 had seen on the horizon. I made a terrible mistake. 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 an incredible amount of energy from the Gray stored inside each. Gretch used these enormous obsidian orbs to store the negative energy he collected from the Gray when conducting his early experiments for Rajaat.

THE OBSIDIAN CITADEL

I was told that the Obsidian Citadel was one of the few structures constructed after the Obsidian Tide. When I inquired as to how the answer was obvious: obsidian and undead. Though I saw the citadel from a great distance I could not get closer for not only were the undead pervasive, but the entire area was scarred with a befouled terrain too dangerous to traverse.

The Obsidian Citadel is where Gretch (see *Personalities of the Dead Land* below) has made his seat as a powerful undead ruler. Undead are continually drawn there at his beckoning which makes approaching this fortress a risky venture. If the undead do not dissuade a traveler, the plain has been ruined from Gretch's activities having several areas that are Defiled Plains (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 142). If the citadel is reached and entrance is gained, no one living has entered, so for what purpose the citadel is for and what Gretch is planning within has yet to be discovered.

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 undead, a task that will most likely end in death.

Gretch used the Obsidian Dome to amplify his control over the undead, 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 Gray. When the undead are destroyed, their ability is soon realized, regenerating their bodies to unlife again. The area within site of the dome is considered defiled ground (Dungeon Masters (Essentials) Book pg. 210).

BLACK SILT RIVER

I was reminded that the Dead Land is not just a single sheet of obsidian when I came upon an enormous river bed that stretched as far as I could see. Expecting silt, I was surprised to find it filled with coarse black sand. I removed myself from the area when it was time to make camp as I could find little rest near it.

The Black Silt River was a victim of the Obsidian Tide, but over time the river has either churned the obsidian into the black

sand or the sand has encroached from elsewhere. Whatever the cause, the sand is treacherous to draw near to or enter as it is considered Black Sand (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 134).

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 gray, white, and black ash. No heat emanates from the portal, in fact, there 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 "Minn'on Gate", and is a connecting point between the world and the Elemental Chaos. It was formed as the Obsidian Tide swept across this region and ejected powerful ash clouds into the sky. This phenomenon was responsible for destroying many of the flying creatures that would have been otherwise unaffected by the great disaster. The miles of land surrounding this have areas where the ash has collect forming Ash Fields (Dark Sun

Creature Catalog pg. 134), making travel slow going so as not to disturb the ash.

LIFE SITES

THE SEVENTH TREE

The first thing I found in the Dead Land 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 no obsidian can be found. I didn't encounter a single creature, good or 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 days and they were some of the more enjoyable days of my life.

The Seventh Tree is a Tree of Life (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 137) and is surrounded by the largest and most important area of life in the Dead Land. 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 Elemental Chaos 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 Land). 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 its 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 primal forces of the area causes them immense pain. The Seventh Tree and its surrounding oasis will not give up energy to wizards for any reason.

SMALL WATERS

Although I have never visited it, I know much about the oasis I call "Small Waters". It is the location from which hosts of Small Home brought me food and drink. It's located 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 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 Land. 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. (Suggested dhaot stats: re-skinned Lingerer Specter, Level 12 Lurker)

TROG'S POND

Deep in the Dead Land lays 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 traveler 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.

In the Green Age, Trog's Pond was the worshiping grounds of ancient creatures called Nymphs. When the Obsidian Tide came, the strong primal presence repelled the 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 TEMPLE OF THE MOUNTAINS

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 that had been following me wouldn't come within two miles of the spot, signaling to me that the area was a safe refuge from their pursuit.

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 nothing since the ever-present feeling that I was being watched warned me not to.

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, 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 surprise visit from the six dwarven raiigs that lay in wait, melded into the walls of the room to remain undetected. 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 TEMPLE OF THE SUN

Scaling the side of the Dragon's Back Mountains, 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.

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 Land. Here the air is clear 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 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 the top of which is open. 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 temples mystic powers to be used only by good beings. Those who are bathed in the sun's light while inside the temple are healed of all wounds and diseases (*cure disease* ritual) as well as curses (*remove affliction* ritual). Limbs regenerate, the dead are given new life (*raise dead* ritual). 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 gift of the sun.

THE CITIES OF THE DEAD LAND

KYRON

Kyron (also known as the "City of 1,000 Dead") is one of the largest cities of the undead in the Dead Land. It is located miles south of Celik, making it the city closest to any civilization in the Dead Land. The city is run by Evar'li - an undead necromancer and psionicist who revels in the power he now wields (see *Personalities of the Dead Land* below). Evar'li rules the city through the small percentage of free-willed undead that makes their home there. These thinking undead can quickly organize the cities mindless zombies into an elite fighting company. One free-willed undead does not follow the commands of E'varli however, and this would be the noble gnome Amion (see *Personalities of the Dead Land* below). 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 between the two has ceased, as it seems the two have a common enemy in Gretch. Any traveler coming to Kyron looking for rest will be sorely disappointed.

SMEEKYX

Smeekyx is home to undead creatures who call themselves gnomes. These gnomes traveled 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. 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 town of undead gnomes and a small number of pixies. These demi-humans have retained their civility; even the normally psychopathic pixies are pleasant and composed. This town is also the home of Amion (see *Personalities of the Dead Land* below) who is a useful contact for assistance and news of the Dead Land.

Despite being pleasant by day, the town's citizenry changes 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.

AVEG

The Giant city of Aveg is engulfed by a translucent green flame in which the Giant inhabitants are forced to burn. What actions the citizens could have done to deserve such a fate is unknown, and will likely never be known from its citizens, as any attempt to communicate with the inhabitants is too difficult since, in their minds, they are being burned alive. The only sane and approachable creature here is Bhra'go (see *Personalities of the Dead Land* below), who claims to be the cities leader.

BIGA'FE'TYE

This city is relatively large and serves as the home for a large majority of the undead orcs of the Obsidian Plain. The city is in a region close to the Sea of Silt which is evident by the silt found throughout this region. The inhabitants of this city are relatively harmless, regarding visitors (even the living) with indifference. Many of the orcs retained their free-will in undeath and those who lost theirs are controlled by those whose will remains intact. The mindless orcs serve as slaves, working constantly on the trading project their leader has ordered them to do and continually clearing the area of silt.

Occasionally, an undead merchant prince of the city named Goran (see *Personalities of the Dead Land* below) will order 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.

Bigafe'tye remains relatively unchanged from how it looked and functioned in the Green Age with the exception of the silt. Orc slaves were first put to work chiseling 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 for use as a trade commodity in the Tablelands. Traveling to the city is treacherous as the area surrounding it is prone to Silt Pools (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 136) and Silt Sinks (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 140).

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, its small size is due to its inhabitants: tiny pixies and sprites. These sprites are locked in eternal battle with a now-undead legion of the Champion Sielba's (Sprite Claw) Sprite Scorchers. 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.

CORYXTH

The city of Coryxth resides deep in the Razor Spine Forest. It is a large city, inhabited by a large number of undead pixies. These pixies 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 the

Champion Wyan's (Pixie Plight) armies. This large tree serves as palace to Alpin, Emperor of the faeries. The task of the pixies living here is simple: destroy any intruder who enters the city.

PERSONALITIES OF THE DEAD LAND

True, the beasts of the Dead Land 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.

- The Wanderer

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 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 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 stable of humans that he keeps in his underground domain. Where his domain lies is also unknown (see the Thattsburrr 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 Gray Veil surrounding the Dead Land, 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 Land 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, Rajaat 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 citadel for the past ten years, causing many to believe that the destruction 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 Land, he could wreak serious havoc to the Tablelands.

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 more rare to the Dead Land than gold. Amion is quite unique, as he is what was once known as a gnome: a race of short, bearded (males only) demi-humans. 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.

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 agent of Hamanu. Hamanu knew that Evar'li was growing too powerful, so he gave him an ultimatum: find the sorcerer "Gretch" of the Dead Land and attempt to form an alliance between the mage's land (the Dead Land) and Urik, or die. Evar'li chose the Dead Land. He traveled 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 an 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 Necromantic 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 Land using the Way as well as the magic Gretch 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 with the undead giant 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 millennia. He is a natural leader - charismatic, determined, optimistic and, most importantly, has a great understanding of the inner-workings 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 traveled 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 Land, his character isn't grim or mysterious like his peers, but he resides on the Obsidian Plain 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, rivaling even the best Elven merchant. On my three-day visit to his domain (Biga'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 Land) 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 Land, 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 of how he was to transport all this obsidian so far and through the Gray Veil, 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 lay Goran's biggest rival: Grekko. Grekko is a fael - a type of undead

with a supernatural appetite (suggested fael stats: re-skinned Viscera Devourer, Level 12 Controller). 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).

ALPIN

A short while after entering the Razor Spine Forest, I was accosted by a group of undead pixies. After showing proof that I was no enemy of theirs, I eventually persuaded the band to take me to their leader in the city of Coryxth. There I was lead 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, Alpin's, palace. Because I could not fit inside the structure, Alpin 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. Alpin 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 Alpin would usually answer my queries with his own question, all this giving an impression of how much more wisdom this creature possessed than I. It is difficult to know if this truly was the case or that Alpin is simply mad.

QWITH

I have heard both good and bad things about Qwith. I am unable to verify any of it 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 Gray under Rajaat's supervision. It is also said that Qwith betrayed Rajaat 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 Gray. 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 that live in the surrounding area. Qwith decides not to go through with the rest of the experiments. She openly defies Rajaat, and for this she is punished with death. But let it be known that Rajaat would never just kill someone, he would make them suffer. So Rajaat trapped part of her essence to the world, just as she was dying. With one part of herself in the Gray, and another in the world, 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. As Rajaat's champions began marching into the area and the opposing demi-human armies where massing to face them, Gretch opened

the Gate to destroy the enemies of Rajaat. 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, and a huge battle ensued. For all Qwith's power, she could not stop Gretch, as Rajaat had bestowed on him greater power than hers. Gretch easily outfought his foe, sending Qwith into retreat.

Qwith then searched for aid to battle Gretch and found 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 told them her plan to stop Gretch and use the energy from the gate.

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

With each of the Druids in place, they began calling forth the primal spirits of Athas. If they could do this, it would be possible to send a wave of elemental power through the gate that connected the world to the Gray.

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 and each became a magnet for the elements, drawing power from the Spirits of the Land, but the plan then went awry. They weren't strong enough to focus the amount of energy that was necessary to plug the Gate. When the raw primal energy mixed with the Negative Energy of the Gray, the result was hideous: liquid obsidian.

The black solution took on a life of its own and within minutes, obsidian spread across enormous distances. Everything in its path was consumed, including Rajaan's own armies.

Horrified with what was now happening, Qwith put all her strength into finding more primal power to help the remaining druid, Nomam (as the other six had already been consumed by the Tide. Minutes later, as the obsidian had covered every druid but Nomam, a Guardian of the Land heard Qwith's plea and helped the last Druid strengthen the connection. With their

combined efforts, the Obsidian Tide was halted.

Unfortunately, Qwith still cannot rest, and the feelings of guilt she has for causing so much destruction may keep her from ever finding rest.

RULES FOR CONQUERING THE DEAD LAND

MAGIC IN THE DEAD LAND

Of all the classes, arcane casters will have the hardest time of all surviving in the Dead Land. Defiling and preserving utilizes the life energy of living plants and animals. The problem with drawing this energy when in the Dead Land is that there is little "life" energy to draw from; fortunately some life energy still remains trapped from the Obsidian Tide. With few exceptions, the Dead Land is considered to be affected by the Obsidian Plain terrain:

OBSIDIAN PLAIN

The Obsidian Tide has forever changed the Dead Land and how magic is drawn from the world. Though few plants exist, magic can still be collected from the remnant life

energy caught in the Dead Land following the Obsidian Tide.

Effect: A creature within the Obsidian Plain cannot use *Arcane Defiling*.

ROT, DISEASE, AND INFECTION

The Dead Land is 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. When a character becomes bloodied, infection sets in, contracting soul Soul Rot (Manual of the Planes pg.52). More exotic and rare forms of infection can occur and often have more terrible results.

DEATH IN THE DEAD LAND

Let it be said that no death is final in the Dead Land. Every being killed will rise again, sometimes mere seconds after death occurs. The negative energy of the Dead Land forms the Gray Veil, keeping all who die trapped there. After the likely event of a character death, the character will arise 24 hours later as a Revenant (Players Option: Heroes of Shadow) of the character's previous race. Characters will find that

though they have been reborn as undead, they are trapped within the Soul Net and are unable to leave the Dead Land. However, characters may have heard in their travels of Goran's plans to trade with the Table Lands and wish to seek him out to find a way to escape the Soul Net.

ASH CLOUDS

When the Minn'on gate was first opened to the Elemental Chaos at a particular violent area of ash, the initial expulsion of ash killed the few flying creatures of the Dead Land who were unaffected by the Obsidian Tide. The ash clouds still cover a good portion of the Dead Land, and their position changes on a daily basis. There are some advantages and some disadvantages to having an Ash cloud above you. When the ash clouds are overhead and block out the sun, a traveler cannot become Sun Sick (Dark Sun Campaign Setting pg. 199). However, with ash clouds one should expect an increase in the presence of Ash Fields (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 134) and the area under ash clouds seem to attract undead.

TRAVEL IN THE DEAD LAND

The presence of undead is not the only thing an adventurer needs to worry about while traveling through the Dead Land. There are

many other dangers, including blindness from ash clouds, the incessant nicking caused by the rough, volcanic glass, and of course the heat.

During the daytime, the sun shines unrelentingly upon the obsidian ground and the temperature often rises beyond what is normal in the Tablelands. Because of these conditions, travelers upon the Obsidian Plain are attacked by Sun Sickness (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 199) even if they are considered well-supplied.

The obsidian is highly reflective causing Glimmering Mirages (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 135).

The obsidian of the plain is also laden with tiny gulches. These small, jagged pieces result in certain areas becoming similar to the Obsidian Facade obstacle (Dark Sun Creature Catalog pg. 139).

Undead monsters are an integral part of the Dead Land. Adventurers should encounter some undead (whether friendly or not) more often than normal, and especially at night, when the Dead Land truly comes "alive". The reason encounters with undead are so common is that the PC's life force acts like a

beacon, attracting flocks of undead to their spark of life.

GETTING THERE

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

FROM THE NORTH

Coming from the north one must traverse the Endless Sand Dunes. Traveling through the Endless Sand Dunes is one of the best ways to get to the Dead Land. Oases can be found, 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 traveler must cross in order to reach the Dead Land.

Approaching from the northeast, one must cross the Great Salt Flats. The great Salt Flats are perhaps the best route to travel when trekking to the Dead Land. Despite the fact that there is little vegetation, animals, food, or water along the way to sustain a traveler, the Great Salt Flats are flat, which makes travel quick and easy.

FROM THE EAST

If one can survive the rigors of the Silt Sea, one could reach the Dead Land somewhat easily from the east. While a 1,000 foot drop must be overcome by adventurers traveling more orthodox routes, the Silt Sea flows gently into the Dead Land, 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.

FROM THE SOUTH

If adventures come from up from the South to reach the Dead Land, they probably traveled through the Tari Lands. The Tari Lands are the southernmost region of the Dead Land that the Wanderer didn't explore, and they are marked by the Tari Woods.

FROM THE WEST

Traveling westward over the Crimson Savannah is perhaps the worst way to reach the Dead Land. During the Obsidian Tide, some liquid obsidian had cascaded off the cliffs which boarded the Crimson Savannah. This obsidian cooled in midair, and now "waterfalls" of solid obsidian can be found alongside the cliffs. Adventurers will find scaling these formations extremely difficult,

as they are vertical and the obsidian is sharp enough to cut the thickest giant's hair rope.

ARRIVING

Once adventurers arrive, they will find the Dead Land sunken into the ground. This makes it difficult to go from the Table Lands to the Obsidian Plain. The change in elevation is roughly 1,000 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) or teleportation. Some desert dwelling tribes have also been known to employ cliff gliders to fly over the Obsidian Plain as a rite of passage, and adventurers may find the means to obtain some to glide to the bottom.

About this supplement:

Initial content by Gerald Arthur Lewis: *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 Land 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!

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The Dead Land



To Celik

To the Silt Sea

To Sable Falls

Small Home

Small Waters

The Seventh Tree

Reevt Canyon

Smeekyx

City of 1,000 Dead

Temple of the Mountains

Eert Lod Myrtay

Trog's Pond

Obsidian Citadel

Minn'on

Thattsburr Island

Sea of Chalata

Biga'fe'tye

Aveg

Windfire Sea

Temple of the Sun

Tarii Wood

Black Silt River

0 50



Scale in Miles

