

# Dark Sun Net Project: The City of Bodach

## The History of Bodach

### The Founding of the City

The founding stones of the city of Bodach were laid down in the 8th World's Age, in the Year of King's Reverence by dissatisfied subjects of the second king of Giustenal. Lord Reynald Bodach, a minor noble of the King of Giustenal's court led the rag-tag column of from the shores of the sparkling sea south towards the unknown.

The former citizens of Giustenal faced numerous hazards on their perilous trek through the grassy plain that numerous kobold and orcish bands had claimed as their own. By the time their leader found the land that would become their home, a rocky bluff that overlooked magnificent forests below, they were down to half their number.

Dissatisfied with the monarchical system of Giustenal, the citizens created a new system of government that would eventually become widespread in the Green Age. Their new system of government was heavily religious in origin, as many of the subjects who migrated from Giustenal worshipped Ireya, the mistress of Law.

### The Great Plaza and the Towers of Tzaht

As the Green Age progressed, the new power called psionics dominated the era. Many cities of the Green Age founded psionic academies and institutions to teach and refine the Way. Bodach was no different, and the first students were admitted into the Academy of the Way during the 9th King's Age, Year of Friend's Contemplation.

The City of Bodach grew from a township of some two thousand souls to a bustling city of some eight thousand during the latter days of the 10th King's Age. Important events involving the religion of Bodach were to begin not in Bodach, but north in the city of Giustenal. The great priests of the day met daily in the city of Giustenal where the Great Pantheon was formed, under the direction of the scholar and priest, Renathal.

The Great Pantheon soon became adopted in all of the cities of the South. Eventually, the religion spread as far north as the city of Saragar, and as far south as Celik.

A great man by the name of Terrance Veneteer became the 10th Lawmaker of Bodach during the 11th King's Age, Year of Priest's Contemplation. A religious man, he commissioned many works of art, one of them being the architectural miracles of the towers of Tzaht, the god of duty and vigilance, who ruled over the Great Pantheon of the Gods.

Terrance Veneteer also commissioned the Crypts of Bodach, where all the Lawmakers, Lawkeepers, and Lawtenders were to be buried. Many other architectural wonders were commissioned during these years. This period of time was known as the Golden Age by the chroniclers of Bodach.

### The Order of Meorties

Bodach distinguished itself militarily during the 11th King's Age, Year of Enemy's Contemplation when the neighboring city of Traxla that would later rename itself Balic attempted to annex the city into its borders. The city successfully repulsed the armies of the Traxlans, although the ranks of the lawkeepers took many casualties. This war was known as the First Border War.

The 10th Lawmaker, Terrance Veneteer, instituted a new order to help replenish the diminished ranks of the Lawkeepers. The new order, designated the Order of Meorties, became the undead guardians of the Lawmaker's law. Terrance Veneteer, upon his death, became the first lawmaker to be inducted into the order.

### Lawmaker Eren Dessal's Reforms

The early Bodachites were obsessed with the goddess Ireya and interpretations of her law. The first five centuries of Bodach's history can be characterized as a time with cruel witch-hunts and an almost complete lack of individual freedoms.

The city had grown to a fair size of twenty thousand souls in the five centuries since its founding, but many left as the persecution had grown intolerable. The 22nd Lawmaker, Eren Dessal, was concerned with Bodach's deterioration and instituted reforms that divorced the worship of Ireya from the government.

Although Eren Dessal was assassinated by a disgruntled priest of Ireya, his reforms started a movement called the Reformation in Bodach. The Reformation was a period of cultural upheaval as many citizens of Bodach reexamined their thinking and their culture. The Reformation was a period of great philosophical debate. However, the Reformation was also a period of great violence as he priests of Ireya clashed with the Lawkeepers of the city.

### **Lawmaker Dominus Feras' Code of Law**

The Reformation lasted three centuries and ended when the 46th Lawmaker, Dominus Feras instituted his Great Codes of Law. Dominus' codes resolved the differences between the priests of Ireya and the Lawmakers of the city by observing important holy days but also decreed that no priest could become the Lawmaker of Bodach. Satisfied with Dominus' fair decree, the priests end their reign of terror.

His code also established the first punishment to be instituted other than death in the city of Bodach. The punishment of disembodiment was made possible by remarkable breakthroughs in the Psionic Academies of Waverly, Guistenal, and Bodach. In other cities, psionic slaves housed in obsidian orbs were used in the place of physical slavery. Bodach was the first city to change punishments from death to eternal confinement.

Thousands of years passed and Bodach soon became one of the finest cities of the Green Age. Historians, scholars, and masters of the Way flocked to the city, and Bodach became the center of culture in the south. Yet during this time, Bodach was jealously coveted by other nations and kingdoms in the south, such as the rising power of the East, the Kingdom of Waverly, and the Nation of Traxla in the south.

### **The Second Border War**

Bodach was largely becoming the center of human influence in the south. Bodachite Art and Culture were sought after throughout the known world. The Traxlans were a fierce, spartan people who prided themselves at their skill in warfare. The King of Traxla lusted for the wealth of Bodach.

The Second Border War began during the 57th King's Age, the Year of King's Fury when the armies of the Traxlan King overran the farming communities in the Tiraard Valley. In panic, the armies of Bodach, under the leadership of the 130th Lawmaker of Bodach, Lauren Sethocrat, met the Traxlan armies.

During a pitched battle that lasted a total of four days, the Lawmaker was killed and half of the army she brought with her were either missing or dead. The lawkeepers, under direction of General Thanthos retreated back to the city.

The Traxlan armies pillaged many of the farming communities, and finally laid siege to the city. After two long months, it seemed that the city would fall to the invaders. Thanthos, ever the canny diplomat, called for a meeting with the King of Traxla, an arrogant man named Erdan.

Thanthos agreed to pay an annual tribute to the city of Traxla in return for the city's continuing survival. The King agreed and withdrew his armies. The city would be held under the influence of Traxla for the next five centuries.

### **The Third Border War**

The Kingdom of Traxla was on the decline. Although their kings were richened greatly by Bodach's tribute, the oppressed people received none of it. Finally, during the 60th King's Age, Year of Friend's Vengeance, the people of the city of Traxla had enough. They overthrew their King, and installed a new system of government, modeled loosely after Ireya's theocracy, with a Dictator and a Senate of elected Patricians.

The Traxlans renamed the city, with its current name, Balic. However, the Balicans continued to collect an annual tribute from the city of Bodach until the 64th King's Age, Year of Mountain's Fury, when the 149th Lawmaker of Bodach, Serina Hallis, decided that enough was enough.

The Bodachite armies, under the direction of the Lawmaker, invaded Balican lands, sacking many of the ancient city's holdings before finally approaching the city itself. The Dictator of Balic, a clever man named Lasitur, met with the Lawmaker in her tent.

The Lawmaker's terms were simple. The city of Bodach would cease hostilities if Balic would pay the city of Bodach an annual tribute for seven king's ages, the same amount of time Bodach had been under the influence of Balic and Traxla. Lasitur saw that he didn't have much choice in the matter, and agreed to the terms.

### **The Time of Magic**

During the 125th King's Age, a brilliant pyreen named Rajaat came to the gates of Bodach, and requested an audience with the 293rd Lawmaker, a master of the Way named Rotheran. Rajaat revealed to the lawmaker the existence of a new power he called magic. The Lawmaker, intrigued by the possibilities that the new power could provide, authorized the building of the world's first academy of Magic, with Rajaat at its head.

Thousands flocked to Bodach during the new age, called the Time of Magic by historians. Bodach swelled to twice its size as hundreds came to the city to learn of the new power that Rajaat would teach. Bodach had firmly established itself as the center of the academic world.

The Bodachites took the new change in stride, and adopted magic in all of its three orders. Magic was combined with psionics, making Bodach one of the most powerful cities in the Known World.

One of the many students that came to Bodach in search of the new found power during Bodach's height was a man named Myron. Myron hailed from the township of Yoram, on the eastern border between Bodach and the Kingdom of Waverly.

From his youth, Myron possessed a great amount of the Will, and his parents sent him to the Psionics Academy in Bodach. The Masters of the Way at the academy found that Myron had great talent and mastered the basic concepts of the mind at an astonishing pace.

Myron graduated from the academy in Bodach in an amazing two years and returned to the town of Yoram, where he would have lived out his life in peace. When Rajaat came to Bodach and announced the existence of magic, the news spread throughout the heartlands like wildfire.

The young man left the peaceful town of Yoram for the sprawling city of Bodach, with the intent of learning this new power. Rajaat quickly took him in, selecting him out of the thousands that came to the great academy of Magic in the great city. Myron effortlessly grasped the concepts of magic, and he soon found himself by Rajaat's side as his personal assistant.

The First Sorcerer had far reaching plans for Myron, and soon the pyreen took him to the Pristine Tower. Using the power of the Dark Lens, Rajaat imbued him with immortality. Myron would soon become Rajaat's closest confidant.

During the last days of the 132nd King's Age, Rajaat left the city of Bodach with his assistant Myron for the city of Waverly, for the Kingdom of Waverly best suited Rajaat's purpose. For the next hundred years, Rajaat slowly guided politics in the Kingdom, which spread as far north as Guistenal and as far east as Ebe, on the shores of the great sea.

### **The Fourth Border War**

What began as a minor dispute between where Bodach ended and where the Kingdom of Waverly began erupted into a full-scale war during the spring of the Year of King's Agitation in the 134th King's Age. The current king of Waverly, Grethas of the house of Timor, was easily manipulated by his court minister and advisor, Rajaat, the First Sorcerer.

Rajaat needed an excuse to ignite the beginning of his plan to destroy Athas of the Rebirth races. The border dispute that Bodach and Waverly had fought over for centuries gave him the spark he needed. The only force that could oppose the First Sorcerer in the upcoming wars were the preservers, and their capital and center of learning was Bodach.

The Waverlian armies were easily repulsed by Bodach's well-trained and highly motivated armies. Led by General Irikos, an ambitious man who had risen through the lawkeeper's ranks with ease, the armies of Bodach utterly crushed the Waverlian army. Although the city of Bodach could have forced the war into the Kingdom's home territory, peace negotiations ended the border dispute in Bodach's favor.

Rajaat, although furious with the King of Waverly's failure to sack Bodach, was impressed with General Irikos' ability. Seeing need of such a warlord in the future, Rajaat approached Irikos, offering him immortality and power beyond compare. For Irikos, an ambitious man who might even become the coveted Lawmaker of Bodach, it was an offer he could not refuse. Irikos did not possess a natural aptitude for the Way, but he was easily persuaded by Rajaat's offer of dark sorcery.

The Kingdom of Waverly was shattered by the defeat of its once proud and powerful army, and soon many of its cities rebelled against the King's rule. Waverly was finished as a political power for the rest of the Green Age. Rajaat left the city of Waverly and retreated to the Pristine Tower with his two assistants, Myron of Yoram and Irikos of Tredish for the next century.

### **Lawmaker Dela Escarian's Policy of Neutrality**

Bodach entered an era of isolationism, as it had been nearly ruined economically during the border war with the Kingdom of Waverly. The 347th Lawmaker of Bodach, a woman named Dela Escarian declared Bodach a neutral state and free from the petty wars of the other nations.

As the other human nations soon became embroiled in war over the power of magic, following Rajaat's plan to weaken humanity's base of power, Bodach was largely unaffected. Dela Escarian's policy would allow Bodach to survive through the chaos of the next two millennia. However, the policy of neutrality would also be Bodach's downfall.

### **The Cleansing Wars and the Fall of Bodach**

The Cleansing Wars waged on the surface of Athas for nearly two millennia. The 368th Lawmaker, Tellas of Yoram, decreed the policy of Banishment, where all non-human races were expelled from Bodach's borders, in order to preserve the city from Rajaat's wrath. Such a decree was largely unnecessary as many left the city to fight with their kind.

A few of the great human nations protested Rajaat's insane march, but they were easily crushed. Rajaat had learned from his mistakes during the Border Wars with Bodach, and would not repeat them. The last of the lawmakers of Bodach were too weak to stand against Rajaat's march. They clung to Dela Escarian's decree of neutrality with foolhardy zeal.

The heartland suffered under the abuse of Rajaat's champions, and soon many miles of once fertile plains and mighty forests were reduced to ash. The great sea upon which the Kingdom of Waverly once reigned supreme shrank and soon turned to dust through centuries of irresponsible defiling magic.

Soon the dust expanded beyond the borders of the once proud sea and enveloped the majority of the Kingdom of Waverly. The last Lawmaker of Bodach, a foolish man named Fendis Tralath refused to supply Rajaat's armies with war materials, incurring the wrath of the Warbringer. Rajaat assigned the warlord Irikos, known as the left hand of Rajaat, with the task of sacking the city of Bodach for its arrogance.

Irikos took an army of ten thousand veterans with him to the borders of Bodach. Irikos demanded a heavy levy of the city, but was refused by the proud Lawmaker. A spirited defense was raised, but it was too little, too late.

Bodach was sacked, but before the warlord Irikos could enjoy his victory, the surviving preservers and defilers of the Order of Lawkeepers cast a powerful spell in concert that reduced the arrogant warlord into ash, but in so doing sacrificed themselves.

Irikos screamed a curse even as the great pillar of fire consumed him utterly. Irikos' powerful curse remains in effect to the present. Every man and woman that died during and since that fateful day rise from their graves at night to wander the streets, denied final rest.

### **Bodach Today**

Today, Bodach is a city of ruins. Much of the city was destroyed during the final battle. The citizens, backed to the edge of the silt that swept into the once fertile farmland in the valleys, fought to the end for their city.

Much of the final battle took place in the streets as the citizens fought desperate house-to-house battles against the defiler warlord Irikos' armies. The powerful defiler cast devastating spells that leveled whole blocks of the city before he was destroyed by a combined effort of the surviving magisters of the Lawkeepers.

Every man, woman, and child in the city were either killed or enslaved by the victorious army. However, the warlord's armies weren't allowed the chance to properly loot the city. As the sun fell below the horizon, Irikos' Curse took effect. The victorious army fled in panic as hundreds of the recently killed rose from their battlefield graves.

Many of the veterans did not escape. Those who fell joined the undead assault against their former comrades. Those that escaped told the tale of Bodach's riches and of Bodach's undead curse. For millennia, the ruined city has kept its secrets safe from would be explorers and adventurers.

## Fiction

### Chapter I

Dadja, the First Magister of the city of Bodach – and thus the first lawkeeper – slammed the door behind him, the finely gold embroidered black robes of his office whirling furiously behind him. The law keepers who guarded the hallways of the Lawmaker's palace whispered among themselves as the enraged Magister stormed by.

The great city of Bodach had survived throughout the centuries through a strict policy of neutrality. During the Great War between the preservers and defilers, when the land first suffered under the onslaught of defiling magic, Bodach had remained neutral – neither showing outward support to the preservers or towards the defiler warlords led by the W Warbringer.

Even now, Bodach was steadfastly neutral. Throughout the genocidal wars that waged across the face of Athas for over a thousand years now, the Lawmakers of Bodach had remained decidedly passive about the atrocities that were taking place. It was easy enough to ignore when it wasn't happening to you.

The rebirth races had fought hard against the armies of Rajaat, but the outcome was inevitable. Although they fought for a better cause – self-preservation – the rebirth races mistrusted one another and their disunity would prove to be their downfall. The armies of Rajaat were better equipped and united. It didn't take much for Rajaat's massive propaganda machine to convince the gullible and somewhat xenophobic human race that the war was justified.

To return to the wonder of the blue age, they were told, was only possible on a sea of blood. All other races are inferior and have polluted the world of Athas. They, along with the rest of the green age, are an abomination and must be destroyed. Blind to Rajaat's true schemes, they signed up in the thousands. The armies of Rajaat were well-trained, well-motivated, and highly disciplined, and led by seemingly immortal defiler warlords of immense power. They were unstoppable. The power of their magic seemed limitless. Already, a great sea of dust, a disastrous side effect of their defiling magic, had swallowed the great cities of Arala, Waverly, and Ebe. The dust had surrounded Bodach as well, but the great masters of the Unseen Way had managed to keep the city safe from the expanding silt.

Through the chaos of the last millennium, Bodach had survived. Early in the Cleansing Wars, the then Lawmaker of Bodach had passed an edict evicting the Rebirth Races from the city. In a time of racial hate, many of them left willingly to fight with their brothers, but those who hadn't left had gone underground, surviving through the aid of several underground resistance groups.

Now, the great city of Bodach was about to feel the price of neutrality. The dreaded left hand of Rajaat had come to Bodach no more than three months ago, demanding that Bodach contribute to the war effort. The rulers of Bodach remained steadfastly neutral, maintaining the isolationist policy that had worked so well in the past.

The left hand of Rajaat, a feared warlord named Irikos, had warned the Lawmaker that Bodach must stand with the armies of Rajaat or it would be destroyed. Over the objection of the First Magister, the Lawmaker had ignored Irikos' demand and laughed him out of the Lawmaker's palace. It was a minor miracle that the defiler warlord hadn't blasted the Lawmaker into oblivion that day – the great warlord simply smiled and went on his way.

General Irikos was infamous for his cruelty and his victories. He had never lost a battle. His brutal Machiavellian style of warfare was well known throughout Athas. During the height of the green age, he had been one of Bodach's finest generals.

The warlord had always been ambitious. He had studied under the various masters of the Way, but his lack of Will and patience had always frustrated his efforts. He was unsuited to the mental discipline necessary to control the powers of the mind. When Rajaat announced the discovery of magic, he resigned his commission to study under the First Sorcerer, to seek a new method of power that was easier to master.

During the cataclysmic war against the preservers, Irikos and Myron of Yorum served as Rajaat's generals, earning them the titles “the left and right hands of Rajaat”. Whereas Myron sometimes showed constraint and mercy towards his vanquished foe, Irikos was the flip side of the coin – cruel and merciless. His unspeakable acts made his name feared in every city of Athas.

The First Magister had argued with the Lawmaker to submit to the warlord's demands. He had steadfastly refused, claiming that the defiler warlord wouldn't dare violate the unspoken code of war. The First Magister wasn't so sure. The cunning warlord violated the conventions of war seemingly on whim.

Now that Irikos' massive army was encamped from the city thirty miles to the east, Dadja was sure that the Lawmaker would relent. Again, he argued with the Lawmaker, and he refused, out of stubborn pride. Bodach's armies were undefeatable, he had said. An enemy had never breached Bodach's mighty walls, he said. Arrogance and decadence had clouded the minds of the Lawmakers of Bodach for centuries.

The First Magister seethed as he stormed out of the Lawmaker's palace and entered the Grand Plaza. It was nearly midday and the crimson sun already bummed high in the Athasian sky. A fountain shaped in the graceful form of a leaping dolphin sprayed fresh water high into the air, and the spray offered some relief from the harsh rays of the crimson sun to those who gathered in the Grand Plaza.

The many marble towers of mighty Bodach rose hundreds of feet into the velvet sky, but they were pale when compared to the beauty of the Grand Plaza. Commissioned during the days of ancient Bodach, towering trees of all variety once flourished in the Grand Plaza, but they were no more – gone with the days of a much gentler and peaceful Athas.

The four great spires of Tzaht, erected on all four corners of the plaza, watched over the Grand Plaza, their finely crafted golden domes gleaming in the crimson sun. The great priests of Tzaht who once tended over the towers had left to join their praying brethren in the province of Niome, where the prayers of the priests of the Great Pantheon fell on deaf ears.

The First Magister paused in mid-stride, smiling at the irony. The Lawmaker of Bodach was an arrogant man who likened himself to the gods. In at least one respect, the Magister mused, the blasphemous Lawmaker was correct. The Lawmaker, like the gods of Athas, ignored the pleading calls of his subordinates. The price of the Lawmaker's arrogance would be the destruction of mighty Bodach, a price the First Magister wasn't willing to pay.

The First Magister found one of the marble benches that lined the Grand Plaza, and rested for a moment. His eyes swept over the great city of Bodach, a breathtaking sight that never grew old. The white gleaming marble buildings sparkled in the light of the crimson sun. Bodach was truly a jewel of the Green Age, and this reminded the First Magister of all that Athas stood to lose if great Bodach fell.

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“The spy has returned, milord,” reported Melthos of Balic to a seated figure who rose as he entered through the tent flaps.

The Left Hand of Rajaat, Irikos, exuded an aura of palpable power. Irikos was a giant of a man, and at seven feet in height he seemed to tower over the diminutive Melthos. The defiler warlord was now beginning to show signs of age, his dull brown hair streaked through with streaks of gray.

The great warlord was dressed in the usual raiment of a soldier. Practical steel chain mail glittered dully beneath an elegant golden tabard enchanted by Rajaat himself. The warlord wore gloves of the deepest black, and he removed these as he approached the messenger. The great sword of Rajaat, the Silencer, remained in a sheath that was strapped to Irikos' back. This was a good sign, thought the messenger.

“What news of Bodach's army?” demanded the warlord, his voice resonating with obvious power.

The messenger, Patrician Melthos Brianus of Balic, was no stranger to the ways of the defiler warlords, and replied with some nervousness, “Milord, Bodach sleeps unaware. Bodach will fall easily, and all of Athas will soon capitulate.”

A smile slowly creased on the great warlord's face, a cold smile that seemed oddly out of place. The messenger foolishly returned the grin as the defiler warlord turned away from him.

Suddenly, the great general whipped around, and one of the black gloves cracked resoundingly across the messenger's face. The messenger fell backwards from the sheer force of the blow, his ears ringing loudly.

“Fool. You have failed me, and you have failed Rajaat,” thundered the great warlord, his gray eyes smoldering with anger.

The messenger had mere seconds to formulate a reply that would save his miserable life.

“M-milord, the armies of Bodach lie still, and our spy reports that they will remain immobilized under orders of the Lawmaker. T-the troublesome lawkeeper – D-dadja – tried to reason with him, but the Lawmaker refused to...”

The messenger was rewarded with another resounding slap. The messenger fell to the ground, cowering beneath the cruel warlord's rage. He waited for the chanting that would signal the end of his life – the pain that would accompany the flash of lightning and the emptiness afterwards. Several long moments passed before he dared to look. The great warlord had returned to his folding chair, and he chuckled at the messenger's expense.

“Perhaps you are correct, my lieutenant. However, I must see this Lawmaker's foolishness for myself before I am assured of this report. You are dismissed.”

Melthos Brianus of Balic hastily regained his composure before leaving the warlord's tent. The former patrician of Balic always dreaded personally dealing with the warlord, but the last time he sent a messenger in his stead, the messenger's head – minus the body – was returned to him with a warning from the master defiler:

“This is the army – patrician – not the Senate. You are no more than a soldier when you are a member of my army, and as such, when I call for your presence, you do not send another in your stead. I pity the loss of a valuable soldier – but be warned the punishment for the next transgression will be your head.”

Melthos was beginning to wonder if his commissioning had been a mistake. Many considered it suicide – both politically and physically – but for an undistinguished junior Patrician, he had a chance to make a name for himself, and becoming a war hero was the easiest way to do so – as long as he didn't get killed in the process.

He began to wonder if his death would even be at the hands of his enemy.

"I've been expecting you, Dadja," spoke a voice across the dark void.

Light suddenly flared into the room, and the First Magister blinked. The lawkeeper closed the oak door behind him. Bookshelves lined this round room at the top of one of Bodach's many towers. In the exact center of the room, a thin man wrapped in dark red robes was seated in a plush armchair. Dadja could not make out the man's facial features, wrapped as he was in his robes.

"Please, have a seat."

Another armchair materialized out of nothingness, directly across from the seated figure. Although the First Magister was no stranger to the powers of magic, for he was a wielder himself, he briefly hesitated – and then took his seat.

"Keldann, you know why I have come," said the First Magister.

"It was only a question of when you would come forth, Dadja. Your arrival was inevitable. We have much to discuss," replied the man known as Keldann.

Keldann removed the hood that covered his face. Shortly cut gray hair framed an otherwise unimpressive and ageless face. An unsettling aura of subtle power emanated throughout the room, detectable only as a slight chill in the air and a twinge of nausea in the gut. The equally bland eyes that were colored a dull brown appraised his ideological adversary, the First Magister.

Keldann made no secrets of the power he wielded. Keldann was a defiler of the highest order, at a level equal to the power wielded by Rajaat's champions. Most of the citizens of Bodach avoided Keldann, but he didn't seem to mind the anonymity.

Although Dadja inherently mistrusted the defiler, as did all preservers, he didn't despise him for the power that he wielded. Keldann's kind had largely been responsible for the decline of Athas, but he was not directly responsible, although many of Dadja's kind would have argued differently.

Dadja didn't fight moral wars; he only obeyed and enforced the law. There was nothing in the codes of great Bodach that justified such prejudice against the defilers of Athas, and so Dadja treated Keldann with just as much respect as a citizen would warrant.

The ancient war between the defilers and preservers of Athas had ended millennia ago. All users of magic that lived within the borders of Bodach were required to register with the lawtenders. As long as you obeyed the law, the law keepers had no quarrel with you – defiler and preserver alike.

Keldann almost smiled at the thoughts that must have been running through the First Magister's head. A preserver coming to the door of a mortal "enemy", begging for his help. Keldann had no use for preservers and their ilk.

Their pretense of using the barest of energy to power their spells was noble, but in the end, a futile effort to distance themselves from their dark brethren. There were no differences in the magic he wielded and the sort that Dadja wielded. They were one and the same – different only in the way the magic was gathered.

While the preservers drew only as much energy as necessary to utilize their spells, and thus only weakened the surrounding plants temporarily, the defilers drew their energy without regard to the plant life nearby. As a result, the plants closest to the defiler would wither and die, leaving only a charred circle of ash.

Dadja would never know the sheer pleasure of destruction, or the feeling of power that ran through a defiler's veins when he shaped the energy into a spell. It was a very thin line that separated the two, Keldann thought. It would take tremendous will for a preserver to avoid using the dark side of the magic when his life was threatened.

Personally, Keldann thought, it made absolutely no difference to him.

"Bodach requires your services again, Keldann. We face an enemy that our Lawmaker seems determined to fight. If we fail in our duty, Bodach is lost," began the First Magister, before the defiler interrupted him.

"I am well aware of the events at hand, First Magister. I know what Bodach faces against, and I know the foolishness of our Lawmaker."

Keldann fell silent once again, and he carefully studied the lawkeeper who sat mere feet from him. The defiler was well aware of the power that the First Magister could wield, and he silently prepared for a defense, if necessary – but he was more curious to see how the lawkeeper would react.

"The decision is yours to make, Keldann," declared the lawkeeper.

Keldann waited several long moments before responding to the First Magister.

"If I refuse?"

"Bodach is doomed," answered a tired First Magister.

Keldann smiled – an unfamiliar expression that didn't suit his bland face, and the First Magister was worried that the defiler would refuse his offer. For the first time in all of his years as the head of the lawkeepers, Dadja was desperate. If Keldann refused, it would spell the end of Bodach.

"Rest easy, my friend. Bodach as always treated me well, and I have no intention of surrendering her riches to a usurper," replied the defiler, as he rose from the plush armchair.

The First Magister was relieved and stunned at the same time. He slowly rose from his chair as well, and he reached over impulsively, his hand extended in a gesture of friendship. The master defiler, too shocked to reply or even protest, took the First Magister's hand in his own, and held it fiercely.

Bodach would not fall without a fight.

## Chapter II

Lawtender Serya was not in the mood for this newest of troubles. With an army only two days' march away, it once more fell to the lawtenders to administrate the hasty building of defenses. With a new harangue of curses directed at the Lawmaker's bloodline, she set about supervising the construction on the east wall.

Serya wasn't the statuesque beauty one would find carved in marble and on display in one of the many chambers of the Lawmaker's palace, but she wasn't homely by any account either. She had a rough charm that men liked, and she had the sense to know when to use it.

Bodach was built on a natural plateau that overlooked various valleys that were once filled with farmland and homesteads. The sight of the gleaming marble towers of Bodach in a sunrise or sunset in the once pristine world of Athas had been a beautiful sight.

A vile sea of dust - a dust so fine that it was constantly swept into the air by even the slightest breeze, had swallowed the various farmlands in the lower valleys. The haze would stay in the air for days, turning day into night. A fine layer of dust would settle over every building, and once again, it fell to the lawtenders to sweep the streets clean.

One could even die a horrible choking death by breathing in the dust during one of those turbulent days. The wise citizen of Bodach stayed indoors during those times, and waited for the dust storm to end. The unwise perished, and their bodies were found in the middle of the street the next morning. It always fell to the lawtenders to clean up the mess afterwards.

If the lawkeepers of Bodach kept the city in relative order, it was the lawtenders who truly ran the city. All the various jobs of maintaining a city that was deemed too inconsequential for the Lawmaker to handle personally were given to the lawtenders.

The lawtenders griped and complained of course, but that was to be expected. Once you got past their rough manner, they were proud men and women who loved their city. They had kept the numerous gears of Bodach running for countless centuries, and hopefully, they would continue to do so for countless more.

The newest set of edicts from the Lawmaker had frustrated the lawtenders even more. There were only so many of them available, and many had to be pulled from the other tasks just to supervise the construction of defenses.

The east wall had been neglected for many years it seemed, and it had fallen into decay and rendered weak at many points. Serya and a small host of other lawtenders had to supervise the construction at these points.

The laborers, used to working hard in the fields that were necessary for Bodach to survive as a city, had to be pulled from their duties to construct the defenses. If Bodach survived the attack - and there were serious doubts at that - there was another set of problems to overcome. Due to neglect, and the harsh fighting that was sure to come, many of the fields would be destroyed. The city would be hard-pressed to keep its citizens fed come the harvesting season.

After the attack, and if Bodach survived, it would be weak and open to attack. The neighboring city of Balic, only sixty miles to the southwest, would surely launch an attack to plunder the riches of Bodach, if the dreaded left hand of Rajaat failed to sack the city.

Serya tried to turn her mind to happier thoughts, and found in a haze of frustration, there weren't any.

\* \* \* \*

The Lawmaker had called the masters at the Academy of the Unseen Way to duty. Only twice before in the entire known history of ancient Bodach had the Lawmaker executed this privilege.

The first time was during the border uprising during the 57th King's Age, over seven thousand years ago and well beyond living memory. The second time was during the War of Magic, two thousand years before when Rajaat, the First Sorcerer, launched his jihad against the preservers of Athas. It had been thought that the dreaded warlords of Rajaat would sack the city, but the city had been spared through its policy of non-involvement.

Now, the city was under direct threat, and doom seemed imminent. The masters of the Way knew what they were up against. They were against an elite army composed of fanatical followers of Rajaat. There were probably more than a few mindbenders trained by dreaded Rajaat himself among that band.

However, the masters of the Way at the Academy of the Unseen Way were composed of some of the best in all of Athas. Such scholars as Harguel and the telepath Wyerres were well known and sought after as mentors of the Way. The telepath Fenna had studied at the Academy, and was well known for her pioneering achievements in the power of belief.

The finest minds in the south had gathered at Bodach, a reputation that was matched only by ancient Saragar in the north, long lost to unknown causes.

The mindbenders worked frantically to devise a widespread and effective defense against the Way, but they were given so little time. It would remain to be seen if the great minds gathered in Bodach could deflect an enemy of such power the world had never seen before.

Belief is a powerful force, just as Fenna had demonstrated only several years before.

\* \* \* \*

A formation of tightly packed and highly disciplined lawkeepers marched with cold precision across the Grand Plaza. Various citizens of Bodach had gathered to cheer the procession onwards. An old man dressed in the white frock of an Enforcer led the proud column of Proctors, his hair a shocking white and his clear blue eyes revealing a wisdom that could only be gained through a lifetime of experience.

He seemed frail, a man who had long since passed the prime of his life, but that was far from the truth. He was forged of the same steel as his soldiers, and he had seen much of life's traumas. General and Lawkeeper – two lives for one tired old man. After fifty years of faithful service, he had retired to live on the outlying fields as a simple farmer.

He enjoyed the solitude it afforded him. As Bodach's finest General, the terrible responsibility of waging war fell solely on his shoulders. As a Lawkeeper, it was his duty to administer Justice in the Lawmaker's name. Yet as a Farmer, he worked with the land and its treasures – he grew things.

It was considerably different from his role as a General and his role as a Lawkeeper. As a General, he drove terror and sowed destruction among Bodach's enemies. As a Lawkeeper, he brought down the fiery wrath of Justice on those who dared to break Bodach's holy codes. The small joy of watching his crops flourish was worth more than all the coffers of gold in the Lawmaker's Palace.

However, his reputation as Bodach's finest general prevented the old man from effective retirement. After five years as a farmer, the city of Bodach once again required his services. He was a war hero – his exploits sung in every home and every tavern. He could have had anything he wanted – he could even have been elected to the much-coveted position of Lawmaker.

He returned to the present task at hand. The First Magister, Dadja, had reinstated him and called the old man to duty. Now, with this small force of Proctors, he was to scout the enemy position and report on the enemy's position.

As General of Bodach's professional army, he could have placed a lesser man in charge of the mission. General Osophias, Enforcer of the First Rank of the Order of Lawkeepers, preferred to scout his enemies personally. If they were discovered, they would be attacked and almost assuredly destroyed.

The Proctors marched behind him in somber unity, their shining coats of mail and their glittering gold tabards disguising the grim purpose of the mission. They all carried the standard three implements of the Lawkeepers – the short bow, the Gladius, and the mace.

They were well equipped, but the aged Osophias wished he had a company of Magisters with him.

Dadja, their leader, had refused the request, but he didn't tell Osophias exactly why.

"Bodach has need for every sorcerer and master of the Way she can get her hands on in the next few days," the First Magister had said during their meeting. "It is absolutely vital that the Magisters remain to administer to the defenses of Bodach."

The Magisters were composed of the lawkeepers who were trained in the Way and the darker workings of sorcery. Individually, they were preservers and defilers who committed themselves to a greater cause – the glory of Bodach. The Lawmaker cared not for intrigue within the ranks, and so the friction that normally existed between the two orders of magic did not exist – at least when they were on duty.

Victory is measured by the mass of an army multiplied by its velocity. A maxim handed down from an unknown general of ages past; it proved to be true even now. The standard tactics of Bodach called for an attack of sorcery and the Way, followed by a several volleys of arrows, and then a melee charge to destroy any resistance that remained.

Without the Magisters, conventional tactics had to be used, if they were ever pulled into combat. The General solemnly hoped it would be enough.

### Chapter III

A lone man walked across a grassy plain devoid of all landmarks. A warm breeze came down from the north, and the great fields of grass rustled in response. The crimson sun was low in the sky, as the fiery dusk approached, making it tolerable for those who lived under it to walk. The man seemed to be unarmed, but the few predators that dwelled on the plain knew to avoid him.

He possessed the classical aristocratic features of the nobility, and a cold arrogant bearing that hinted of the darkness within. He was a being of phenomenal power, sustained by the dark power of sorcery. He was Lord Wyan of Bodach, the Pixie Blight, and the twelfth Champion of Rajaat.

As the Champion of Rajaat walked, he felt a familiar tingle at the back of his mind – a tugging at the edge of his psyche. With a bemused sneer, he regarded – or rather, felt the unmistakable presence of the Left Hand of Rajaat, before deciding to ignore the warlord's call.

The call came again – this time in the form a more insistent and painful buzz. Irritated, the formidable Champion decided to amuse the defiler warlord by answering his call. He turned the palm of his left hand downward, and spat out a brief incantation.

Sickly and poisonous green light churned upwards from the ground, whirling around the Champion's right hand in a vortex of power before he shaped it into the spell he desired. The grass beneath the Champion of Rajaat shuddered before disintegrating into a fine ash.

A vague image of light materialized before the Pixie Blight. With a sharp mental command, the image focused, revealing the graying but fierce features of Irikos.

"Took you long enough," uttered the image with a voice dripping with a mixture of disgust and irritation. "I request magical support for the siege against Bodach."

Wyan chuckled in derisive amusement.

"You were always rash, Irikos, but never stupid. Our Master has given you all the tools that you need to destroy that vile city."

Irikos knew there was no love lost between the former lord of Bodach and the city that betrayed him. Once, long ago, Wyan had been a nobleman of that city. He had made a play for power, but he was utterly crushed and banished from the realm by the Lawmaker after being stripped of his titles. He decided to play on that.

"I offer you a chance for revenge."

Wyan's chuckling ceased, and his haughty features grew dark with anger. Irikos gloated inwardly. He had struck a chord.

"We already determined that Bodach was to be destroyed. That is revenge enough."

Irikos paused a moment, before carefully outlining his plan. Occasionally, the Champion of Rajaat would interrupt to ask a question. The defiler warlord answered each of the Pixie Blight's questions with ease, and then he would continue. After he was finished, he let it sink into the Champion of Rajaat for a bit longer.

"It could work," said Wyan thoughtfully, as he scratched his chin.

A bland smile flickered across the Left Hand of Rajaat's features before disappearing into his habitual scowl.

"It will work."

\* \* \* \*

Dadja had exchanged his customary black robes for the extravagant palatial dress uniform that was only worn during state occasions. Mithral chain mail forged by the dwarves of Kemalok glittered beneath a black tabard with the silver book and sword design of the Order of Magisters. He wore a white silk shirt complete with ruffles over a soft leather undercoat and a black sash lined with golden thread around his waist. He wore black breeches and silk stockings. A flowing black cloak held together by a golden clasp shimmered in the torchlight. He wore a small silver coronet engraved with the heraldry of Bodach – the scales of law with the many towers of Bodach in the foreground. A magnificently worked broadsword crafted of gold hung at his waist, sheathed in a bejeweled scabbard.

Had his purpose been not so grim, Dadja would have been the very picture of stately elegance. He carried himself with the necessary regal bearing required of the First Magister. As he descended into the myriad passageways beneath the Lawmaker's palace, he observed the necessary rituals before each shrine of the Great Pantheon.

He passed by the shrine of Saint Reynard Bodach, the founder of the great city. He left the traditional offerings of gold and wine before pressing onward towards the shrine of Law. The shrine of Law was a small structure constructed with an eye towards symmetric beauty and the laws of geometry. As he passed beneath the graceful arches, he noted scenes from Bodach's ancient past. A mural depicted St. Reynard leading the nomad people in banishing the unspeakable evils of the Tiraard Valley. A fresco depicted the saint as the first Lawmaker of the city named after him. A tapestry recalled the mourning that lasted for weeks after the founder's death.

Dadja had always felt drawn towards the statue in the center of the shrine. Her sculptor depicted the goddess Ireya as a woman with a blindfold tied about her head. She carried the scales of law that determined guilt or innocence in her left hand, but in the right hand was a broadsword that she used to strike those that defied the law. As he approached the statue of the goddess of law, he genuflected before her representation and uttered a praise of greeting in the language of ancient Bodach. After observing the ritual and spending a moment in prayer, he walked down a passageway that was never engulfed in darkness and reached the iron wrought gates of the Lower Cemetery.

Dadja paused before the great gates, reaffirming his resolve. The Lower Cemetery was the resting-place of all the countless Lawmakers, Lawkeepers, and Lawtenders that had faithfully served the city. Bodach needed all of the help it could get – even if that meant summoning help from Bodach’s ancient past. Dadja knew that the Order of Meorties had always been a valuable branch of the Lawkeepers, but he never liked coming to their source of power – their sanctuary.

Tradition maintained that three branches of the Lawkeepers protected Bodach. The Order of Magisters were the judges, dealing punishments to those who defied the law. The Order of Proctors were the soldiers and enforcers of the law. Only the finest of both orders were permitted to join the ranks of the Meorties after their deaths.

The Master of Meorties technically outranked the First Magister, but he (or was it she?) never took direct play in the politics of Bodach. The Master of Meorties was only summoned in times of great need or importance. Dadja judged the coming of Irikos to be a grave threat, and he could only hope that the Master of Meorties thought so as well.

With but a thought, the gates silently swung open, and Dadja stepped through the threshold, immediately plunging into darkness. Stopping at the entrance, he brought forth the torch he carried for this purpose. After a moment of concentration, the tip burst into flame. The First Magister continued his journey into the utter silence of the depths.

As Dadja passed by the sarcophagi of the great Lawmakers of the past, he could not but reminisce in sadness. He recalled the vision of such legendary Lawmakers as Terrance Veneteer, Dominus Feras, and Serina Hallis that changed Bodach from a subservient city under the influence of Balic into the greatest city of the east.

Could all the efforts of these legendary Lawmakers be for naught? The thought troubled him more than he cared to admit. How would Lawmaker Dominus Feras, the founder of the Codes of Law, react if he were in his shoes?

“Why don't you ask him yourself?” said a dry voice that shattered the quiet of the tombs.

Startled, Dadja whirled about and came face to face with the speaker. The speaker had been a Lawmaker in life – Dadja could see that from the rotting silver robes and the white sash that the man wore around his waist. The First Magister's eyes were drawn towards the speaker's face. Never before in his life had the lawkeeper seen such a sight.

Green sparks of flame smoldered where a man’s eyes should have been. His gray flesh was stretched taut over his bones and in some places was missing all together. His teeth hung exposed to the air, giving the speaker a permanent grin. Hair a slightly darker shade than the skin hung limply about his shoulders.

“Your eminence, am...”

“Magister Dadja Relwin of the First Rank,” said the man. “I am Terrance Veneteer, formerly the 10th Lawmaker of Bodach, and now I am the Master of Meorties. “

Dadja regarded the Master of Meorties with a mixture of awe and fear. Awed because the man who stood before him was the Lawmaker who commissioned the Grand Plaza and the Four Towers of Tzaht. Lawmaker Terrance Veneteer had a passion for art – much of the beauty of Bodach was credited to this man. Fear, because when the time came, Terrance decided to serve his city beyond his death as a Meorty, the undead guardians of the law.

“Your eminence, I...” began the First Magister.

“You may call me Terrance, if you prefer,” interjected the ancient Lawmaker.

“... Terrance, then... Bodach requires your services once again. We fight against an enemy that may very well destroy us. If the time of doom should come, Bodach needs its traditions and its way of life preserved. We may die, but our culture must survive!

“You must collect as many books as you can find. Keep them protected in these vaults for all of eternity. Bodach may fall but our heritage must not... protect these tombs for all time if we fail,” commanded the First Magister.

The Master of Meorties nodded.

“For the glory of immortal Bodach,” the ancient Lawmaker uttered.

“For Bodach,” Dadja repeated solemnly.