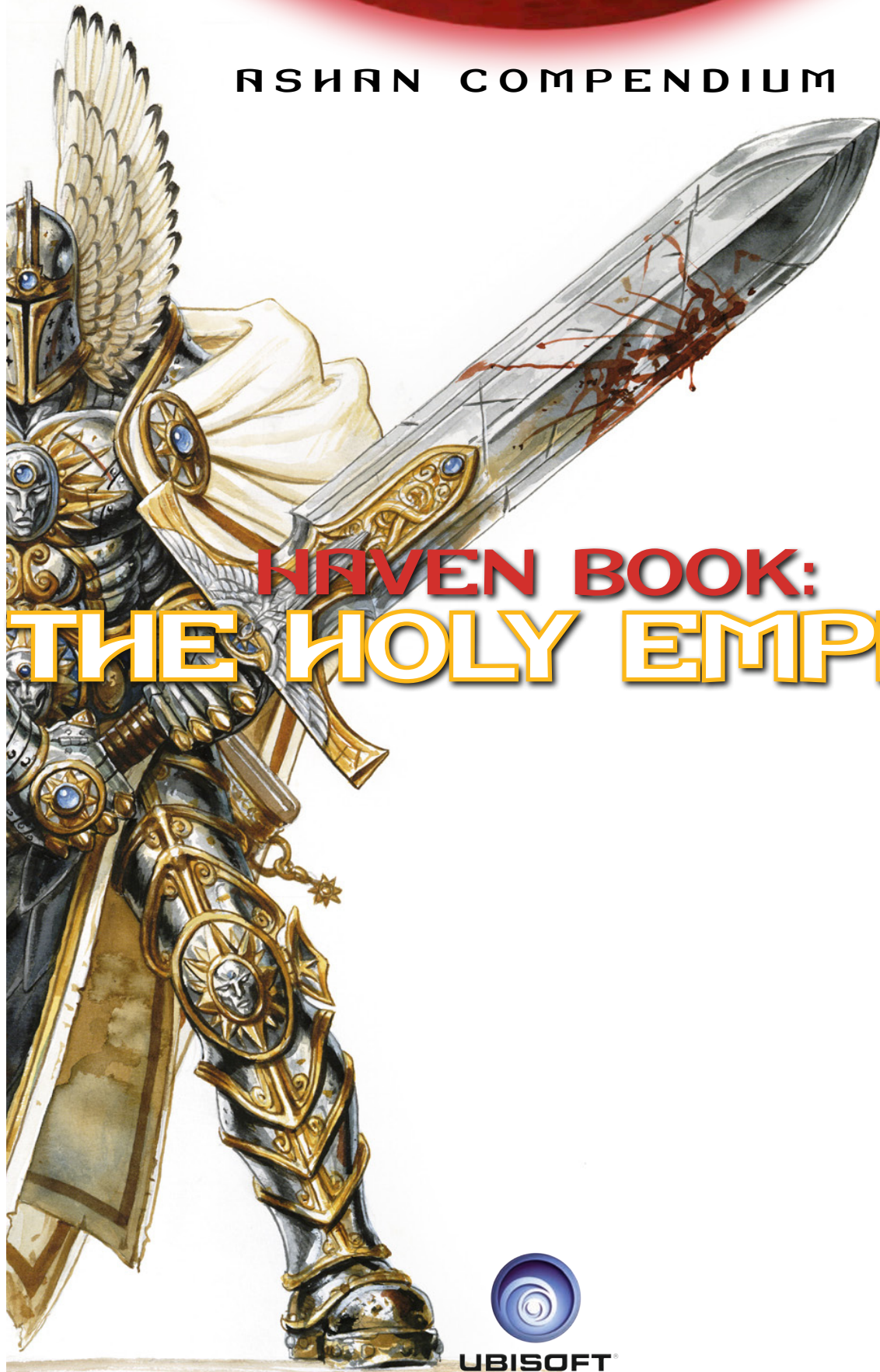


MIGHT & MAGIC

ASHAN COMPENDIUM



HAVEN BOOK:
THE HOLY EMPIRE



UBISOFT®

PART I

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION



IN A NUTSHELL

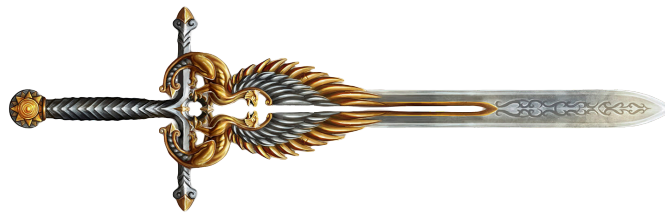
The Holy Empire is a theocracy protected by medieval knights and monks. They worship Elrath, the Dragon God of Light, who grants them magical powers based on his elemental dominion. Their objective is to lead a life worthy of Elrath's ideals of Truth and Purity, to shape the world in his image, and to spread his sacred Light.

Aka: The Knights of the Light

Associated Colours: Azure blue, white and gold

Country / Kingdom: The Holy Empire

Capital City: Falcon's Reach, then Talonguard



THE ANGEL SWORDS OF VIRTUE

At the end of the Ancient Age, the Angels had declined in numbers due to centuries of courageous battles in wars with both the Demons and the Faceless. In order to ensure that Elrath, the Dragon God of Light, would continue to have followers, the Angels came up with a plan to convert the newborn Human Empire from its worship of Ylath, the Dragon God of Air. The Angels first major action was to persuade the young Emperor Brian Falcon.

They forged seven enchanted swords, each named after a virtue of Elrath, giving the most powerful to Brian, and the six others to his most powerful vassals, the dukes of the Realm.

The Duke of Griffin, Ishtvan, was wary of the Angels and their religious meddling. He placed the gift sword over his mantle and never touched it again. But to honour his word of fealty to Brian, he had another sword, Iron Feather, forged.

Ishtvan never wielded the sword in battle as he was murdered shortly after it was completed.

Since his heirs were more respectful of imperial authority and preferred to use the Angel-made sword, Iron Feather was given instead to the cadet children of the Griffin family.

Even if the blade has served the Empire without fault throughout the centuries, it remains a symbol of defiance.

HISTORY

Haven was originally a series of squabbling clans. Ronan the Great, High King of the Falcon, united them through a combination of dazzling generalship, brilliant negotiation, and the occasional political marriage. Once the country was under his thumb, he declared the foundation of the Falcon Empire, and settled in to make his position as Emperor hereditary. This job was made easier by a prophecy that stated that Falcon's line would endure as long as the world did.

At about the same time, the Angels were in a dire predicament: their numbers had been declining for centuries because of their courageous but often deadly exploits during the wars with the Demons and their low rate of reproduction.

They were facing the end of their race, and consequently, an end to the worship of their patron Dragon-God, Elrath.

So they searched for nations to convert and they set their eyes on the Humans of the young Falcon Empire, lost in the religious upheaval that had followed the Wars of Fire and Sar-Elam's ascension to Dragonhood.

The Angels approached the young boy Brian, great-grandson to the Emperor Ronan Falcon, and helped him convert his fragile Empire into a strong nation dedicated to Elrath.

During the First Eclipse, Demons returned to the world of Ashan. The Wizards created the Orcs to stop them. At the end of the invasion, demonic concerns were set aside.

The long-restive Orc population, settled in sparsely populated regions and used as indentured troops, rebelled in concert with their brethren in the Seven Cities. They declared themselves free of the Dragons, unwilling to worship any gods at all. This blasphemy could not be born, and the Empire's retaliation was swift. So began the so-called Orcish Crusades. Imperial armies smashed Orc encampments, and relentlessly drove the Orcs back. The broken survivors fled to the most inhospitable reaches of the world. A great armada was prepared to follow the Orcs to the islands and there, wipe them out, but a tremendous storm arose and wrecked the fleet. This, the Emperor decided, was a sign from the Dragons. Enough had been done. The Crusades were over.

Peace, more or less, settled in for two and a half centuries, until the Falcon line was murdered by Demon assassins. Only two survivors escaped, Lady Deirdre and her infant son. Bloody civil war surged across the land, as the various remaining houses sought to take the Falcons' place. Eventually, House Griffin emerged victorious, though at no little cost. Emperor Pavel I took the throne by acclamation. The land was renamed the Holy Griffin Empire, peace was imposed, and a careful watch put on the Falcons.

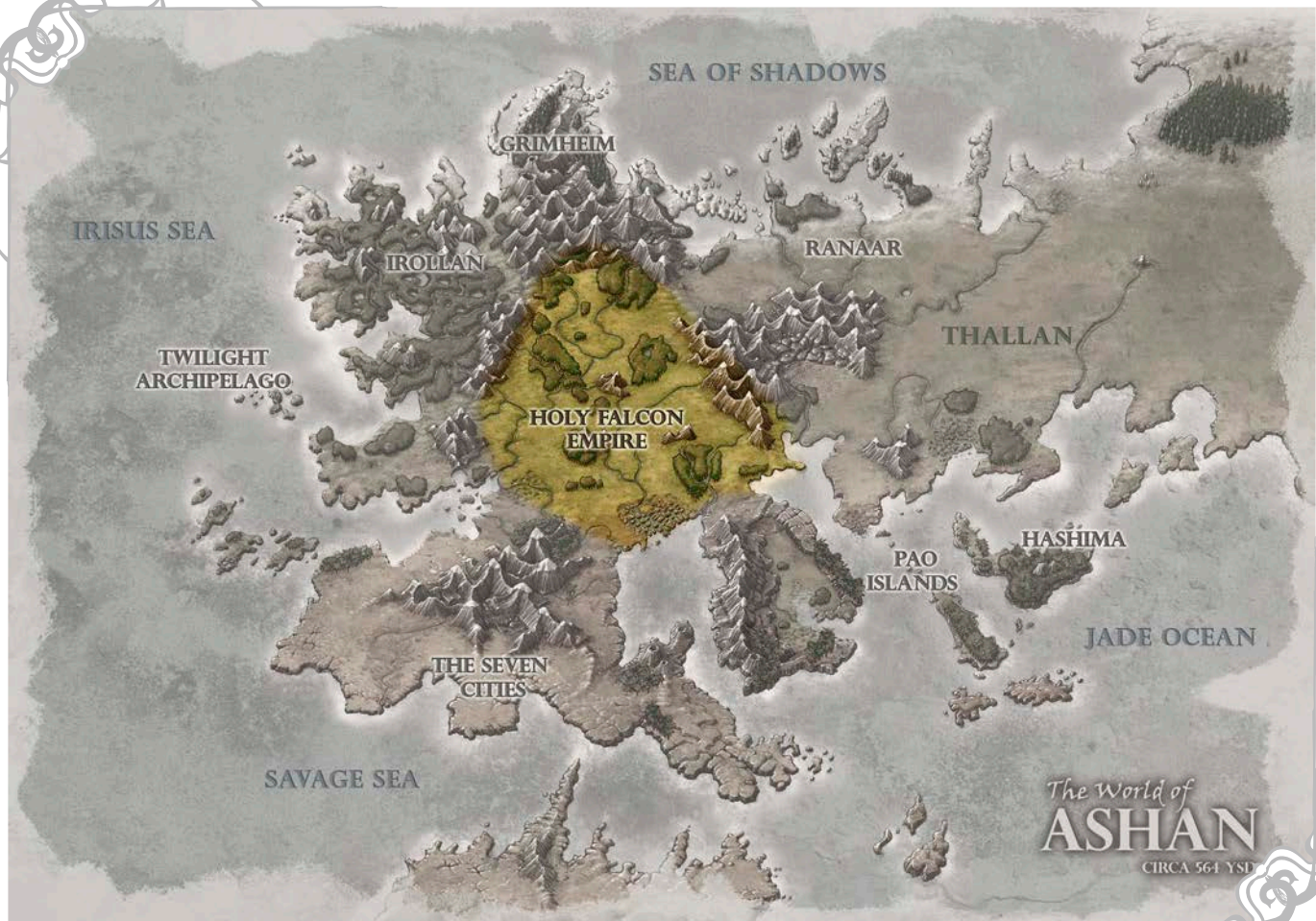
The Griffin dynasty ruled unchallenged for two centuries until the Fifth Eclipse and Queen Isabel's war. The death of the last Griffin heir left the throne vacant and the young Duchess Freyda of the Unicorn was crowned Empress.

ANECDOTES

Haven meals are very plain. For the peasants, it involves bread, cheese, potatoes and onions in various quantities, occasionally supplemented with pork or venison. They drink cider or beer, generally brewed locally.

Nobles tend to dine on meat, and plenty of it. No dinner party is complete without the roasting of at least one exotic animal as a main course. They drink wine, usually imported. No one in Haven drinks water if they can help it, except the priests.





GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Since its creation, the Empire has been broken up into seven regions. The imperial capital is in the centre, surrounded by six Duchies, each with their own distinct character.

Most of the Empire is made up of rich farmland and rolling hills. The countryside is well watered, with several large rivers snaking across the landscape. To the north, the land rises up to a range of mountains. Older, lower mountains are prominent in the southwest.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The Holy Empire is a theocracy with a feudal structure. In theory the Holy Emperor has absolute rule, but in reality the land is chopped up into six Duchies and countless baronies, so that much of the Emperor's time is spent juggling his various nobles. Frequently at least one of these regions is in some sort of revolt, though these are rarely serious or bloody.

The Church of Elrath wields considerable political force, and even the smallest villages have a church near their centre. Priests are allowed to marry, though not actively encouraged to do so.

Angels don't have official roles within the Empire, except in times of crisis when they can get temporary assignments. Most of the time, they act as advisors and counsellors with lofty, but honorary ranks.

Knights come from the ranks of nobles and socially ambitious merchants. The rise of the middle class has taken place mostly in the cities, and many of the newly rich traders are seeking to ally their families with noble houses, generally through marriage.

Most peasants don't care who's in charge. They just want to go about their lives, which makes things easier for everyone.





GRAPHIC DESCRIPTION

HUMANS

Humans of the Holy Empire cover the gamut, depending on which region of the Empire they hail from. Northern humans are tall, thin and pale, with light hair. Further south, both skin and hair gets darker. Both men and women wear their hair long. Imperial fashion is very modest, nobles and commoners alike wear clothing that covers as much of their skin as possible. Standard clothing includes tunics and leather jerkins, leggings, and boots. Women often wear dresses with long sleeves and high necklines.

ANGELS

Physically imposing and striking in their perfection, the Angels are taller than normal Humans, far more beautiful, and project an aura of power and confidence.

They sport one or several pairs of large, strong feathered wings on their back.

Their skin can be of any tone, but always radiates a soft golden halo. Their eyes are gold and as bright as the Light of their patron god, Elrath.

In size, they are generally between six and eight feet tall, with weapons and armour sized to match.



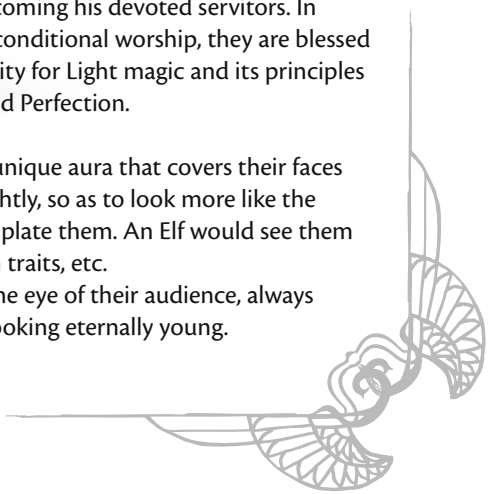
RACIAL ABILITIES

Upon the creation of the Elemental Dragons, the Angels naturally clove to the image and ideals of Elrath, the Dragon of Light, becoming his devoted servitors. In return for their unconditional worship, they are blessed with a natural affinity for Light magic and its principles of Truth, Justice, and Perfection.

Angels also have a unique aura that covers their faces and alters them slightly, so as to look more like the people who contemplate them. An Elf would see them

as slightly elven, an Orc would give them orcish traits, etc.

In any case, Angels are uniformly beautiful to the eye of their audience, always matching their highest aesthetic canons, and looking eternally young.



PART II DIPLOMACY



EXTERNAL RELATIONS WITH OTHER FACTIONS

Historical allies: Academy (Wizards), Sylvan (Elves), Fortress (Dwarves) - all have allied with the Empire in the past against the Demon invasions.

Historical enemies: Inferno (Demons - Haven's nemesis since the first days of the Empire), Necropolis (the Undead - their cult

was purged by the Church of the Light), Stronghold (Orcs- they were once slaves of the Empire and they rebelled), Dungeon (Dark Elves -not really enemies but branded as such by the Church of Light because they worship Malassa, the Dragon of Darkness).



ACADEMY

The Wizards are courteous allies and noble trading partners, even if their observance is a bit... lacking. They will no doubt come to see the error of their ways.



NECROPOLIS

If half the things I hear of their ways are true, then there's no place for their kind in this world. The consecrated dead should remain dead.



DUNGEON

Disgusting. Who knows what foul rites they perpetrate down in their dark warrens, or what vile things they worship?



STRONGHOLD

Stronghold? A place of weakness, if you ask me, lands to which cowards retreated in the face of righteousness. When the hour comes, we shall finish the work started so many centuries ago.



FORTRESS

At times, they have done their part against the Demons. At times, they have not. It is drawing near the time when they must make a stand.



SYLVAN

The Elves make strong allies, but there is a savage heart beating in the dark places of the forest.



INFERNO

Our mortal, sworn enemies. Cursed be he who has dealings with Demons, cursed be he who does not stand up to oppose them.



SANCTUARY

An unnatural way to live for an unnatural people. They hide in deep water because they fear the Light. They are polite and formal enough, but fine manners can hide foul thoughts.





INTERNAL DISSENSIONS

The Holy Falcon Empire has known numerous dissensions amongst its six major duchies and hundreds of baronies since the day it converted from Ylath, the Dragon God of Air, to Elrath, the Dragon God of Light.

Though religious disputes are by no means the most common reason for internecine conflict, they have been known to be the most bloody.

Political rivalries over land and the emperor's favour have set the stage for forced marriages and trade embargos.

The Holy Emperors have learned how to use this internal tension between the duchies to expand their dominion over the centuries.

It is easily arguable that without a common enemy, the Holy Empire would have dissolved and returned to a mass of scattered clans, in constant conflict with each other, rather than fighting for a common cause.

It is thus ironically fortunate that the Empire's history was bloodied by countless conflicts with the Demons, Elves, Orcs, Necromancers and various border skirmishes with the numerous Free Cities.

This semi-permanent state of martial law has allowed the Inquisition to keep the empire mobilized for war for several decades.

DIALOGUES

Anton: We need to find a way to open the gates.

Jezebeth: If we could slither.. We could dress up like Nagas?

Kilburn: Lady Jezebeth... As soldiers of Elrath we despise trickery.

Jezebeth: Actually, we're just not very good at it.

Laurielle: In my twenty-three centuries of loyal service to Elrath, I haven't seen anyone use a siege engine so well since the Demon Azkaal destroyed the sky city where I was born.

Jezebeth: How old did you say you were?

Valeska: Lady Jezebeth... it's never polite to remind a woman of her age.



PART III CULTURE

CORE PHILOSOPHY

“Law & Order” rather than “Good & Mercy”

Driven by the Angels, Elrath’s chosen, Haven believes in the flawed nature of the self, which must be cleansed in the light of Elrath. Their objective is to lead a life worthy of Elrath’s forgiveness, shape the world in his image and spread his sacred light.

RELIGION

Elrath, the Dragon of Light, and its first servants - the Angels. With the Angels mostly gone, the Holy Empire is the primary remaining base of worship for the Dragon of Light.

MAGIC

The Holy Empire is mostly composed of Humans who have switched their allegiance from Ylath to Elrath. Supported by the few Angels remaining, they pray to Elrath in exchange for blessings and miracles.

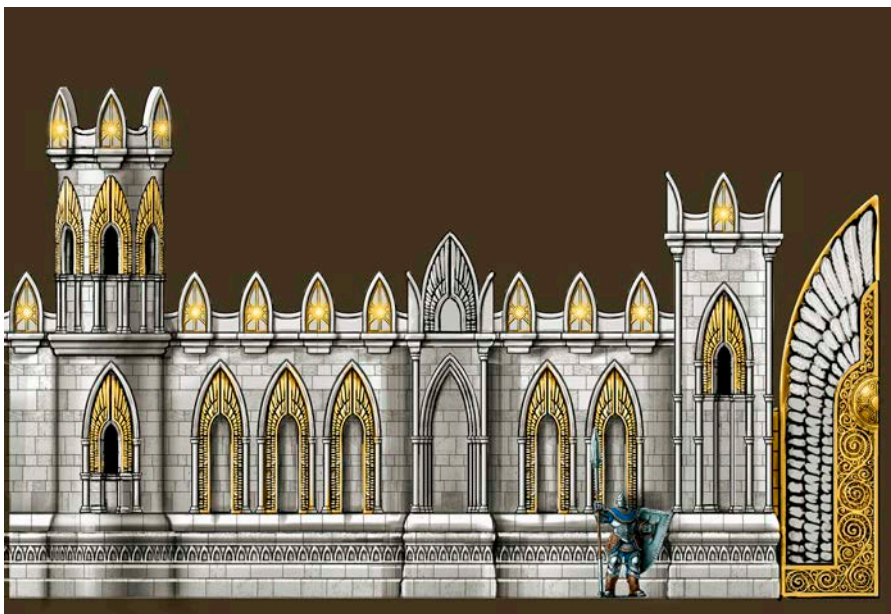
In this system of belief, magic power is proportional to faith.

Angels are a bit different. Being an elder race directly related to Elrath, they have an innate affinity with Light magic.



ARCHITECTURE

Imperial public architecture is heavy and ornate. Every inch is covered in sculpture, statues, and the like. Stone is the preferred building material, particularly for cities and noble houses. Most cities are built around a central castle and keep, and the homes of nobles generally have protective walls and at least one defensive tower. Decorative gardens are very orderly, laid out on regular lines with plants arranged in symmetrical locations or in geometrical designs. Smaller buildings, farmhouses and inns are generally made from wood, and most cottages have thatched roofs. The average farm has a central house and two outbuildings, one for livestock and one for storage and seed. The countryside is marked with stone and post fences, and there are standing stone sites scattered across the hilltops. The empire's vast expanses are criss-crossed by thousands of miles of paved road radiating from the imperial capital.



SYMBOLS



The Suncross

A powerful symbol of Elrathian faith, the suncross reminds its wearer that the Dragon God of Light sees in all directions and that there is nowhere anyone may go to hide from the truth.



The Angel Wings

The ultimate symbol of ascension and purification, the Angel Wings, or Elrath Wings, symbolize that the bearer seeks to attain the spiritual qualities of the Dragon of Light. This symbol refers to the Angels, who are considered the highest form of reincarnation by the Humans of the Holy Empire, but it has also been claimed by the Falcon and Griffin Emperorsto refer to their respective blazon animals.



The Face of Elrath

The Face of Elrath is worn to show enemies and allies that the bearer is not afraid to look truth in the eye. The Face is not actually that of Elrath, the Dragon God of Light, but of a symbolical devout, Human or Angel, who has braved the searing and soul-piercing aura of the deity and been transformed into a courageous and fearless child of the Light.

PART IV WARFARE



ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Mounted knights make up the Empire's heavy shock troops, supported by heavy infantry (the Sentinels, renowned for their discipline and military coordination) and missile weapons (the justly feared crossbowmen).

Each noble is responsible for training his local militia and men-at-arms, and each troop is under the command of the noble who raised and paid to outfit it. The entire army is under the command of whichever noble the Emperor has appointed to the post. In theory, anyone is eligible. In practice, very few are ever

given command of an army – the Emperor simply doesn't trust many of his vassals with that kind of power.

The Emperor personally leads the Imperial Host, a collection of battle-hardened troops made up of the best soldiers the Empire has to offer. These owe their allegiance to the Emperor himself and no one else, and there isn't a force in the Empire who can stand against them.



EMBLEMATIC HAVEN HERO PALADIN

Champions of the impossible quest with faith as their guiding star, Paladins have answered the calling of Elrath, the Dragon God of Light. They have sworn a solemn oath to uphold the principles of their god, and to defend the realm from all enemies. Their vow is magically binding and blesses them with tremendous powers. For this reason, Paladins become a guiding purpose, honoured by the people, respected by their allies and feared by their enemies.



EMBLEMATIC HAVEN ALLIES

GRIFFIN

Griffins were created in the Mythic Age from the spontaneous magical fusion of lions and eagles. At that time the surface of Ashan was irrigated by Dragon veins, remnants of the Dragon Gods' wars, and animals that drank of these untamed rivers of Dragon blood and magic were permanently altered by it. It is said that an act of compassion by an eagle who rescued a lion being carried away by the current of a dragon-vein gave rise to this formidable species.

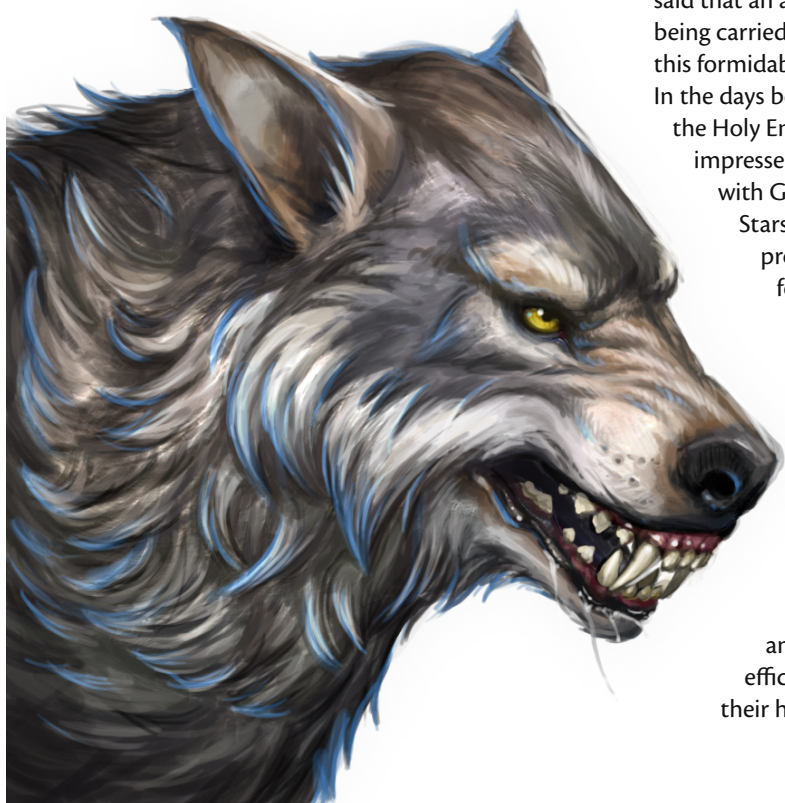
In the days before the wars between the Elves of Irollan and the Holy Empire, Elven smiths were said to have been so impressed by the harmonious bonds Humans had forged with Griffins, that they taught them the secrets of Starsilver. This metal is as strong as it is light, and when properly crafted makes extremely effective armour for the flying beasts.

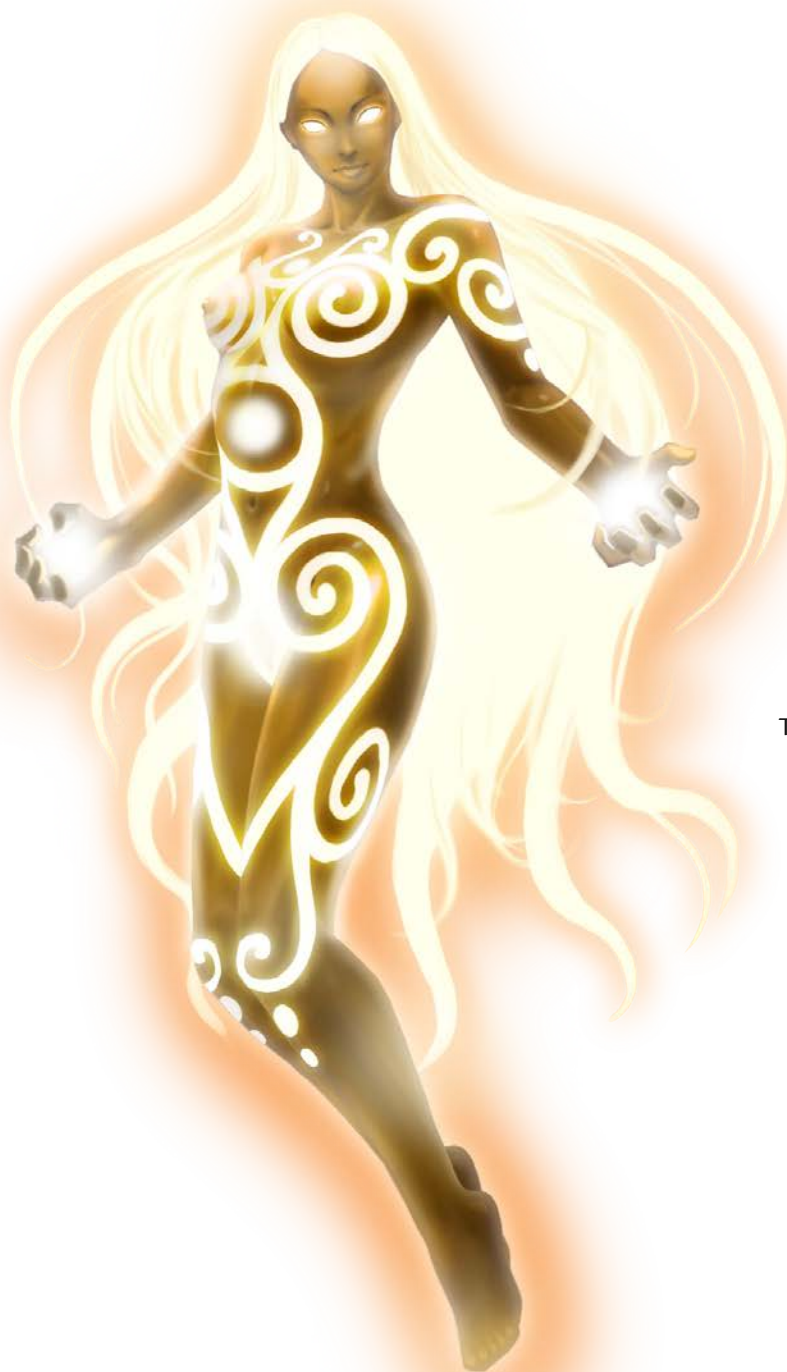
The mysterious Elven glyphs found on the bardings of the Imperial Griffins are remnants of that long forgotten friendship.

DIRE WOLF

In the Holy Empire, Dire Wolves are among the most feared predators of the wild.

The ruthless warriors of the Wolf Duchy have chosen this bloodthirsty beast as their blazon animal, and they have learned to train them into efficient, if somewhat unreliable companions for their hunting parties, and of course, for war.



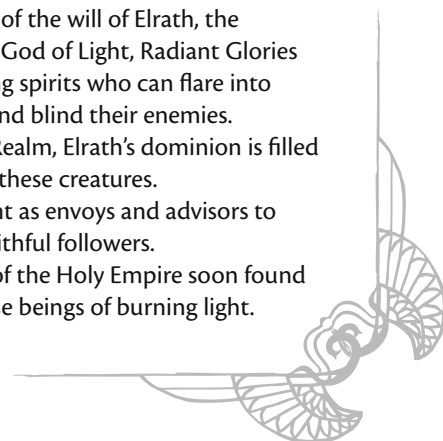


RADIANT GLORY

Vessels of the will of Elrath, the Dragon-God of Light, Radiant Glories are shining spirits who can flare into brilliance and blind their enemies.

In the Spirit Realm, Elrath's dominion is filled with myriads of these creatures. They are often sent as envoys and advisors to Elrath's most faithful followers.

The generals of the Holy Empire soon found a use for these beings of burning light.



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