

THE OUTCASTS

The original dwarves of Melana were monarchist outcasts from the democratic Free Cantons of the Ironcraggs. Their descendants still cling to the older traditions of lost Nordheim and believe a dwarven king should rule the Ironcraggs. This philosophy does not sit well with their free cousins, who view the Melana dwarves as a collection of lucid lunatics, at best. A few tradition-minded dwarves still find their way here from the Ironcraggs every generation. Melana's warmest relations are with the cantons of Bareicks, Gunnacks, and Nordmansch.

The Undercity

Underneath the paved streets of human Melana lie the tunnels and halls of the dwarves. Great mine shafts deep into the earth provide the city with iron, copper, coal, and more precious ores. In the years since the dwarves first arrived in Melana, they have expanded the Undercity into a maze of



workshops, forges, living quarters, and mines that extends for miles.

Estranged from their Ironcrag cousins, the dwarves of Melana value the contributions of every dwarf, both male and female, in any task

where they showed skill. Thus, unlike some of the Free Cantons, the dwarves of Melana do not cloister their women.

Female dwarves can take on any role they choose.

The Kobold Warrens

The kobolds live in a series of warrens and natural caves discovered by dwarven miners during one of the initial expansions of the Undercity. The kobolds were quickly put to work digging in dangerous areas, mucking out privies, and hauling ore for the dwarves. Although not slaves, the kobolds are treated poorly by the dwarves, who see them as little more than animals.

The selection of Censor Vinzlo came as a complete surprise to the kobolds, since they had no idea a kobold could be censor. Indeed most did not even know an election was underway. Nevertheless, they are ecstatic to have a voice in the government, and their many petty kings and clan leaders are quickly moving to demand better things for their people.

The Silver Crown Tavern

Deep in the bowels of the Undercity sits a tavern where no lamp has ever burned. Here dwarves refuse to strike a light, to create a place only for themselves where few humans dare visit. The Silver Crown Tavern is currently a place of grumbling discontent over the recent election and a center of active support for Seppo, the Master of Smiths, the "true censor." Some say he is more than that, but Seppo ignores the loose talk of his supposed royal lineage.

The Dwarven King's Tomb

Hidden in the hills of central Melana is a tomb the dwarven monarchists claim holds the remains of Ruggeson the Golden, the dwarf who should have ruled all the Ironcraggs. This tomb serves as a secret meeting place for the dwarven monarchists and is strewn with offerings of ale, ore, tin crowns, and even semi-precious stones.

The monarchists meet at each turn of the seasons to consult the spirits and plan for the revival of the dwarven monarchy. They claim Seppo is the rightful heir and support him as ruler of Melana, and hopefully someday all of the Ironcraggs.

Tolmezo and the Floating Roads

The decaying town of Tolmezo sits on the edge of the marshes south of Melana. Tolmezo is the first stop on the Floating Roads, a series of wooden causeways attached by steel rings to stone pillars sunk into the swamps. The causeways float and are passable from Tolmezo into Trombei and along Triolo's border in any season or weather. Or at least they used to be. The roads are rotting, in poor repair, and sometimes sink under heavy loads. Ropes and rings and planking that once lasted decades with little maintenance now decay within a year. The marshes have also become more dangerous. Lizardmen and even hydras live here and lately have become bolder in attacking even well-armed travelers.

A few Friulan scholar mages have recently arrived in Tolmezo at the request of the town's leader and Marsh Warden, Sabine Felderol. She wants to see the roads restored. If they decline further, she fears that Tolmezo will soon be abandoned.

Other Sites

Brescia, the Iron Redoubt: At the base of the Ironcraggs, the fortress city of Brescia sits astride the road to Melana like a high-walled tower. So it should: the dwarves built Brescia as a rearguard against raids from the Ironcraggs. Its defenses include 2,000 dwarven infantry and crossbowmen ever alert for aggression from the Free Cantons. Brescia also controls Melana's richest iron veins and significant deposits of silver and semi-precious stones. These mines have attracted dwarven miners, and Brescia is growing quickly.

Ferriero: Primarily a trade town with a border castle to the south, Ferriero was once independent. Trade and customs provide much of its money, especially now that patrolling the road falls to (and is paid for by) Melana.

Keep of Atranto: The largest and richest mines of Melana lie within a day's march of this huge and heavily garrisoned keep.

The Scarlet Citadel: The castle of Gellert the Gruesome, a notorious warlock who retains a private army. He scrupulously swears fealty to the censors each year and defends the border against the creatures of the White Forest and the war wagons of the Magdar—though sometimes he fights for the Magdar King Stefanos as well, and his loyalty is suspect at best.

Schio, Gate to the North: At the confluence of the Revolo and Tempine rivers, Schio directs a small but active waterborne trade. Smaller settlements and farms line these rivers, and ship food and simple crafts via barge through Schio out to Triolo and the Middle Sea. Just as important is the wagon trade north to the Magdar Kingdom and Zobec.

Spindletop: Commanding the approaches to Verrayne, this castle also keeps a wary eye on the Ironcraggs.

Adventures in the Canton of Melana

Adventures in Melana involve the shifting social dynamic, the vital trade routes, and conflicts that change brings.

- Lizardmen contact representatives of Tolmezo, claiming to have found a fix for the Floating Roads in a strange fortress in the marshes. To avoid paying their price, Sabine hires the PCs to investigate.
- The PCs look for miners that vanished from some of the smaller mines under Brescia. They quickly find one of the dwarves in the wilderness, half starved and muttering over and over, "the whispers, stop the whispers."
- A Trombei merchant hires the PCs to make a discreet delivery to the kobold warrens. He repeatedly emphasizes that they should never open the iron chest under any circumstances.

FRIULA, CITY OF SECRETS



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Symbol: Golden basilisk on a black field

Rulers: The Bibliotori

Important Personages: Bibliotor Uthan Bianco (CN male human wizard 3/expert 5); (LN female human rogue 13); Ulsavus Mentes, the Golden Voice (CG male human bard 12); Ferrywoman Sarda Leynar (N female human cleric 14 [Charun])

Population: 133,350 (130,000 humans, 3,000 dwarves, 300 gnomes, 50 elfmarked and elves)

Capital: Friula, population 15,000 (12,000 humans, 3,000 dwarves, 200 gnomes, 50 elfmarked and elves)

Major Cities: Feymott, population 13,000

Great Gods: Charun (patron), Hecate, Mavros, Sarastra, Thoth-Hermes

Trade Goods: Vellum, ink, smoked meat, gemstones, poison, scarlet dye

The stone spires of Friula thrust skyward along the shore and cast their shadows over a massive barrier reef. In Old Verrayne, the wealthy and powerful luxuriated in private keeps along the golden coast, stretching from Friula to Capleon in the south. The great mystic orders built their monasteries on these quiet waters, undisturbed by imperial roads.

When the cataclysm destroyed Caelmarath and seven other magocracies, it also shattered the shores of the golden coast, and only Friula survived. Exiles and refugees poured into the damaged city and took up residence in ancient towers abandoned by the elves. Soon after, a few adventurous souls dared to explore the ruined coast, haunted keeps, and empty monasteries and bring their treasures back to Friula. Within a decade, Friula housed more books, scrolls, and records than anywhere outside of distant Allain and the Nurian temples of Thoth-Hermes.

Friula's wealth of knowledge has attracted scholars, arcanists, and secret-seekers from all corners, and with this success has come great suspicion from its neighbors. A city of exiles and refugees that invites Mharoti arcanists to trade tomes—and allows ships of the Magocracy of Allain safe harbor—cannot help but unnerve Verrayne and Trombei.

The city's small enclave of elfmarked scholars and even occasional Arbonesse elves is further "proof" of Friula's suspect reputation to other Septimes. These elves departed with the others but returned when the library was built. That they say nothing about the Retreat only deepens the distrust.

Fortunately for the city, an assault by land would require a march through difficult terrain and the surrounding basilisk-infested hills. Friula's allies and her enemies send spies more often than armies.

Today, Friula is a center of art and knowledge isolated from its neighbors. To maintain its independence, the small city must constantly balance the shifting political tides. Aside from lore, the

city has built a strong trade in vellum, rare inks, and other tools of the scholar's trade. Its reef provides an abundance of fish and the makings of valuable Friulan scarlet dye. Melana's mercenaries frequently take Friulan coin.

Government: the Bibliotori

A closed cabal of collectors called the bibliotori rules Friula. They guard the city's repositories of books and scrolls, at the same time competing tirelessly to expand their own private collections. Entry into the cabal is by invitation and extended only to those who can add substantially to the members' collections.

No one knows the exact number of bibliotori, but currently 12 members openly administer Friula's government and act as diplomats. In addition to the powers of government, they work closely with rogues and various guilds to expand their collections and to spy on their enemies.