

# Introduction

This book contains a trilogy of adventures set in the world of Elissar, an ancient land of beauty and danger. These adventures take a party from level 3 all the way up to level 13 as they slay a dragon, stake a vampire, and finally smite a fiend! The heroes begin their quest in the homely village of Hengistbury, but through the course of the three epic tales they travel across the world of Elissar, visiting far-flung places such as fiery Skull Mountain, the haunted woods of Allesund, and damned caverns in the heart of the Laskian Mountains.

Level Up: Advanced Fifth Edition emphasizes three aspects of roleplaying—combat, exploration, and social interaction—and the book in your hands is positively filled with opportunities for them all. The story begins in a simple settlement with a straightforward crisis, yet as they quest across Elissar the scope of the dangers from the world's many forgotten ages grows until not only their homeland but realms afar could be torn asunder should they fail! Ancient entities, long-told prophecies, and carefully tended webs of fate guide or obstruct the party as they slay the deadly dragon Cirothe, stake the primordial vampire Nemirtvi, and upend terrible fiendish influences in an epic tale that takes them across the vastness of the world before finally returning home for a confrontation that will ring throughout history either as a death knell for the current age or as a story of such incredible heroism that they become legends in the mythologies of the peoples that they've saved from destruction.

# To Slay A Dragon

Trouble brews in the pastoral quietude of the realm of Holdenshire, drawing the adventurers into myriad quests to help the humble folk of Hengistbury and Thornbury. Monstrous threats abound from capricious fey and werewolves to a ghost, troll, lizardfolk, brigands, rivals, and more until a true crisis emerges—the local sheriff has been grievously wounded and his niece kidnapped

by kobolds! The party soon learns that these were mere minions of a far greater threat: the dreaded dragon Cirothe, ruler of Skull Mountain and ruiner of The Desolation. Tasked with saving the abducted girl the PCs set out across Endora, gathering up powerful artifacts (the Coward's Map, Hammer of Vengeance, Quiver of the Dragon's bane, and Cirothe's True Name) as they disentangle the madness of a disturbed fey queen, help the halflings of Halfpoint rout bandits overtaking Southmorland, dismantle a goblin army, and more heroics beside before finally reaching the Tybalt Mountains. Once there the adventurers undertake a perilous ascent up Skull Mountain, crash through the kobold servants and defenses of her draconic lair, and finally put an end to the terrors of Cirothe!

# To Stake A Vampire

After a particularly celebratory Autumn Festival in the wake of Cirothe's fall the realm of Holdenshire enters into a winter darker than any before it. Not only is the weather harsh and unforgiving but so too are the peoples of Hengistbury and Thornbury, as though the changing of seasons wrought a changing of character with it. Their distemperment is not natural however but the fruits of the Cult Primordial, a shadowy organization of fools bringing back to the world the primordial vampire Nemirtvi. The PCs uncover the doings of some of these cultists and their servants in the towns before discovering the first tomb belonging to the Order of Nights End, courageous heroes who slayed the undead lord in ages past. When Holdenshire is seemingly freed of its evil influences the party is drawn to the other resting places of these legends, acquiring in each a potent relic (the amulet of the spectral grove, silver quickbow, Noltsledge, Kylian Knives, and the Leilan Artifice) until they finally uncover Nemirtvi's lair beneath western end of the Great Bridge Nas Laed. There they best numerous horrors including corrupted rivals, a trapped fiend, the spirit of a deranged dwarf, motleyfolk abominations, and a betrayal most terrible before finally staking the primordial vampire once and for all!

# Continuing From Memories of Holdenshire

Parties continuing from the Memories of Holdenshire starter adventure (available separately) will recognize some of the setting and NPCs in To Save A Kingdom—Hengistbury is where the amnesiatic heroes escaped to in order to recover their memories after an entire ordeal of being kidnapped, mind-controlled, then framed for the murder of famous adventurer Annika Crestveil. Time frame-wise, as Memories of Holdenshire featured Hengistbury's Summer Festival, the Autumn Festival in To Slay A Dragon occurs in the following season, in the fall of the 997th year of the current Dark Age.

#### **MEMORABLE DOWNTIME**

Depending on the particulars of the campaign the Narrator may add some downtime in between *Memories of Holdenshire*, during which the PCs may undertake a variety of activities like retraining a feat or features, crafting or researching, or maybe even earn some money to buy a place in Hengistbury to make their stay more permanent. Refer to Downtime Activities on page 426 in the *Adventurer's Guide* for more details.

#### STARTING EARLY

Narrators that have yet to wrap up the story of *Memories of Holdenshire* may run or start a couple quests from *To Slay A Dragon Act I: Ills of Hengistbury* as part of the memory recovery process. Doing so has several benefits, providing incentive for the adventurers to visit various locations in Hengistbury and interact with NPCs to familiarize themselves with the multitude of people who will continue to be featured in *To Save A Kingdom*.

When using these encounters early make sure to pay attention to encounter difficulty and when necessary drop a monster to avoid overwhelming the party (unless they're already 3rd level). If following the starter adventure word by word, this is something that does not

take place until the heroes have solved the crisis in *Memories of Holdenshire*. It might help if the heroes start the quest while recovering their memories, take a detour to resolve the final act of the starter adventure, then confront the monsters behind the sidequest.

#### **RECURRING CHARACTERS**

Playing *Memories of Holdenshire* also brings up the possibility of introducing some prominent NPCs that are not vital to *To Save A Kindgom*, but may provide additional assistance during a quest or act as a source of rumors and hints.

The halfling smuggler **Belton Freedew** helped the party escape Northminster. The adventurers later on returned the favor by rescuing him from the cultist responsible for all the mess in *Memories of Holdenshire*! Immediately after these events Belton spends some time in Hengistbury to recuperate, repair his wagon, and relocate his horse **Rummynose**, a job which the PCs might be interested in.

After that Belton returns to Northminister and continues smuggling—much to the consternation of **Captain Tariq Crestveil**. Belton regularly returns to Hengistbury for business and is very open to dealing with the party, and can help them locate items they might need (especially rarified spell components).

If things go south in Northminister the halfling relocates to his cousin **Myco**'s business in Hengistbury (the Hen and Filly boarding house). Belton has a high chance of making an appearance when the party visits Halfpoint (in *To Save A Dragon Act II: Journey to Skull Mountain*) as it is a common stop for him. Whether encountered there or anywhere else, he can definitely inform the party of the situation at Halfpoint and can help put in a good word for them when they are seeking allies there.

## To Smite A Fiend

As spring changes to summer stars begin to disappear from the night sky, bringing deeper darkness with every sunset. The cause of this celestial anomaly lies once again in Holdenshire, this time within the hands of the conjuring archmage Kalle Sirkesalo. While he masters this new craft, errant fiends plague the countryside, luring the unwary to gruesome demise and once more bringing fear to the townsfolk. Just as the adventurers discover he is the culprit a summoning goes terribly awry and Kalle retreats into his tower, raising impervious defenses and leaving the realm to suffer its fate. A messenger from distant Silyona arrives to offer guidance and aid however, acting as a conduit for not only the knowledge held by the archmage's teacher Eisenpath but some of her magic as well. To break through the archmage's wards and end his cosmic meddling the adventurers must travel to the furthest reaches of Elissar-the Ironfall Islands, metropolis of Morrigan, Laskian Mountains, and fell forest of Spinnelund-to end fiendish influences let loose by Kalle's reckless ambition, taking the power of each to attain potent celestial blessings from their angel ally. Ultimately the PCs return to Holdenshire and overtake the wizard's tower, bringing his evil to an end and cutting short a malevolence the world has not yet seen before the last stars fall from the sky!

# Elissar

Elissar is an ancient place of medieval fantasy in the grips of a Dark Age, the last vestiges of a great elven empire only a ruined shadow upon the land. This campaign begins in the pastoral land of Endora along the southern coast of the Northern Ocean and west of the Tybalt Sea. It has almost been a millennium since the Imperial Age of the slender folk, and for a century Endorans have lived under the fear of the red dragon that rules over the scorched northeastern badlands east of the Tybalt Mountains. They are humble and modest peoples, living as best they can staying close to the settlements that offer them

collective protection from the monsters that walk freely throughout unafraid of the few patrols on the roads.

# Lands of Elissar

Though a vast elvish empire ruled over the known world in the previous age, their far-flung civilization has almost entirely fallen to ruin leaving the peoples they once lorded over to establish new rulerships in the Dark Age.

#### Albia

A land of hills, fog, lochs, and rugged, proud folk, Albia is haunting. Humans and dwarves occupy its hills and ancient castles in a patchwork of small lordships often warring with each other, using politics and force in equal measure to vie for dominance.

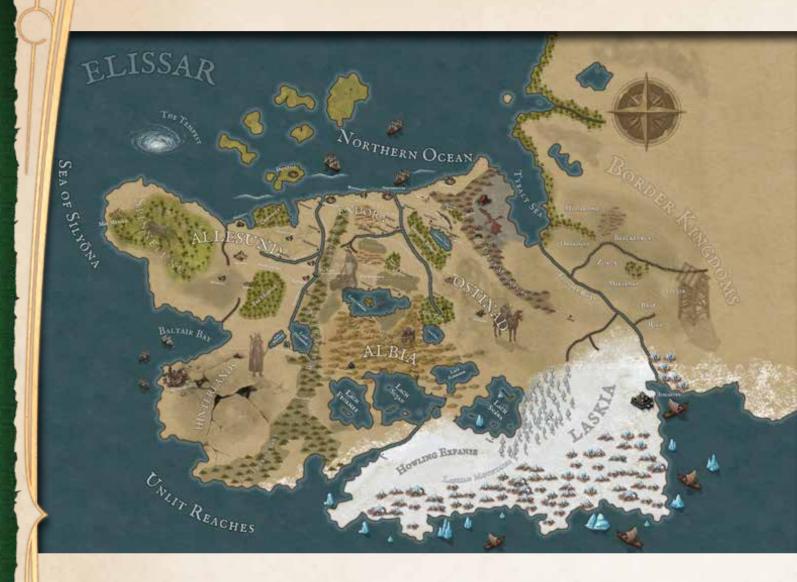
#### Allesund

West of Endora is the more built-up nation of Allesund. A bit more sophisticated, the natives look down on the pastoral lifestyles of their neighbors. More heavily populated than Endora, Allesund is governed from Falkenburg by Duke Kohlstedt with most of its towns found along the banks of the Polyne-Trom River.

In the far west of Allesund is a region called Spinnelund, which is hundreds of miles of overgrown ruins, dark forest, and swamps. Spinnelund is largely unexplored in recent times, and is full of monstrous critters like giant spiders. Far to the west is Mal Merikh, the ruins of a large ancient city (in Elvish the word Mal means "old").

# **Border Kingdoms**

The Thunder River is several miles wide at some points, and flows fast and loud (thus its name). Crossing the river is dangerous. Across the rapid waterway are a number of regions staked out by explorers. These authoritarian city-states tend to exhibit a lot of rivalry,



and border skirmishes are common as the settlements at their hearts and their populations are both rather small; they are really not much more than a bunch of warlords trying to carve out their territory. These include Brackenburg, Brae, Draak, Drakovia, Mirlenas, Moorhome, Riva, and Zuruk, though few consider any of them to be true kingdoms (whether there are larger, more formidable, proper countries further east is uncertain).

## **The Desolation**

Cirothe the dragon has laired to the east of Endora for about 100 years. She seems to have been content sleeping for decades, occasionally ravaging the area between the Tybalt Mountains and the Tybalt Sea (the Desolation), but hasn't generally turned her eye west—the bastions of Greendell Forest

and the Oldshade Woods are enough to give her pause. Folks are aware of her, but nobody has ever done anything about it and as long as she stays in the east they probably won't.

### **Endora**

Endora stretches from the Westwatch Peaks in the west to Greyfell Forest in the east, and from the Northern Ocean down as far as the Harroway. The region is pastoral and relatively peaceful, including Holdenshire, Lanickshire, Southmoreland, the North Riding, and more. Ostacre was once the primary town in Endora, and is still the biggest, but after Cirothe came 100 years ago it fell in status as people moved away, with Northminster emerging as the new eminent settlement. Endorans are looked down upon by the people of Allesund, who consider themselves more sophisticated.

## **Hinterlands**

The Hinterlands are filled with small tributaries and canyons making the area prone to flooding, difficult to cultivate, and hard to control so it does not have much by way of civilization. It is a place for outlaws or brave settlers. There is one city on its west coast, a metropolis full of ne'er-do-wells called Morrigan. Thieves and cutthroats walk the streets, and the rule of law is far away. Anything is available for a price (typically influenced or set by the thieves' guild that runs the city).

The city is generally reached by sea as crossing the Hinterlands is an arduous journey, and though it is a dangerous place it persists as the only bastion of civilization between Allesund and Laskia for those traveling across the Unlit Reaches by boat.

# **Laskia and the Howling Expanse**

The Howling Expanse is a large cold tundra to the South which includes Laskia. Laskia is home to the busy town Icegarten and dozens of smaller settlements. The economy is focused on fishing and ships. The folk are hardy and view 'northerners' as weaklings, although they have respect for the rugged people of the Albian highlands with whom they trade.

# Ironfall Islands

These archipelagos experience dry summers and mild, wet winters. Trade with the settlements on the north coast of Endora and Allesund have helped the city of Ironfall develop from a small outpost into a mercantile hub despite the pirates that plague the Northern Ocean.

#### **Ostinad**

Wide sweeping plains and grassland, Ostinad is home to horse lords. Ostinad is a region, not a nation; the many horse and plains people are loosely affiliated, but there is no central capital or king ruling over all others. Each horse lord has from dozens to hundreds of swords pledged

to them and disputes between those under their charge are often resolved with contests of cunning, strength, vitality, or combat. Some small towns scatter the plains ruled by local lords from their meadhalls.

#### Par Celundi

Par Celundi is a beautiful elven city, one of the last refuges of the empire that once existed. Par Celundi tends to discourage visitors, but is not actively hostile.

# Elissarian Calendar

Every year on Elissar is 336 days divided into a dozen 28-day months: Andro at the start of the year in midwinter, then Dynath, Fulgra, Hendar, Kylath, Mynro, Parra, Rynmath, Suldro, Thynar, Udaira, and finally Voidra. Each week in Elissar is 7 days long: Arday, Norday, Amaday, Aluday, Ereday, Klathaday, Sanday.

# **Cosmos of Elissar**

The world upon which Elissar sits is unlike many others, and the nature of its creation (as well as the divine beings wrought by that) marks it as notably different from other medieval realms. When Elissar was wrought by **Ulvatu**, the Flame of Creation, its essence was splintered into many facets. These eternal **valya** (angels and demons) walked the world shaping it. Sages say that some of these beings still live on Elissar, perhaps in the guise of mortals or—in the case of demons—in their true demonic form.

*Clerics.* Clerics worship individual valya, usually the most powerful ones. Real clerics are, however, actually quite rare and most priests have no supernatural powers.

### **Planes**

Sages talk of the three known realms—Silyōna, Nülda, and Elissar.

The Shining Lands of Silyōna, the Heavens, are said to be across the sea, while Nülda, the Pit, is deep in the bowels of the world. There are myths of heroes who traveled to Nülda and back; there are none who have returned from Silyōna. How true is this? Who knows! Valya moored in what once was and unwilling to let go of the past are trapped in Nülda, and those valya oriented to what will be and willing to embrace the future move on to far away Silyōna.

Planar travel is unheard of in Elissar, and magics that entail travel to other planes, extradimensional spaces, and so on, do not exist. Unlike other worlds this place has no Astral Plane—it is the very firmament upon which all others rely. The Dreaming (the Fey Mirror) and the Bleak Gate (the Wraith Mirror) exist however, accessed only via rare portals.

Elemental Planes are thus a part of the world—they are concentrated locations of natural energy such as a volcano (fire), the depths of the sea (water), caverns deep underground (earth), or the clouds in the sky (air). Elementals can only be summoned from their element (a fire elemental from a fire, a water elemental from the ocean) so proximity to these is necessary for conjurers of such magic.

# **Unworked Magic**

The cataclysms of Elissar's ancient past have rent the fabric of arcana and divinity asunder a dozen times over, undoing much of the magic of previous ages.

### Rare Conjuration Spells

Elissar's unique planar nature makes the borders of the realms material extremely difficult to pierce and few know how to do so. The following spells are treated as rare spells in Elissar: conjure animals, conjure celestial, conjure elemental, conjure fey, conjure minor elementals, conjure woodland beings, gate, infernal weapon, planar ally. When you would gain one of these spells from a class feature or archetype, you learn a different spell instead (chosen by the Narrator).

### **Unexisting Enchantments**

The following magic items must be crafted to exist in Elissar: armor of resistance (psychic), bag of devouring, bag of holding, bead of force, book of storing, cubic gate, handy haversack, helm of teleportation, ioun stone of agility, lantern of revealing, magic mirror (wall), mirror of life trapping, orb of elsewhere, portable hole, potion of clairvoyance, robe of stars, sack of sacks, talisman of the sphere, well of many worlds.

### **Unworked Spells**

Astral projection and dream cannot be cast here, and a spellcaster must create the following spells to use them as they do not currently exist in Elissar: create food and water, demiplane, heart of Dis, magnificent mansion, maze, plane shift, rope trick, teleport, teleportation circle, tiny hut, word of recall.

## Valya

There is no distinction between the origins of angels, fiends, or gods. These are just mortal words used to try to describe the valya; they're all splinters of Ulvatu, sparks from the flame, and categorized based on their allegiance and actions. Ulvatu is neither good nor evil.

*Unaligned.* Divine monsters—angels, demons, devils, and other celestials or fiends—exist and have the statistics listed in the *Monstrous Menagerie*, but they are organized as above. There's no raging war in the Abyss, all of the conflicts between the valya occur on Elissar or are metaphors about Silyōna. There may be Evil solars, Lawful demons, Chaotic devils, or even Good fiends, but these are just individual traits.

There's also not much by way of hierarchy, although some groups of valya do organize themselves: **Ellmemog** is the most powerful known valya, with fiendish legions under his command. He (and other very powerful valya) cannot enter the world and are trapped in Nülda or far, far away in Silyōna. Whether in the Pit or the Shining Lands, each valya is represented by a star twinkling in the night sky.

There are few valya wanderers on Elissar; some who are angels, and some, in the darkest places, who are demons. Sometimes demons take on beautiful forms and gain influence in the world. A wandering wizard might be a benevolent valya, a charismatic noble might be a power-hungry valya. Their identity as valya is obscure knowledge, often hidden. Examples of valya on Elissar include:

- **Damantharn**, a **dragon turtle** of the Northern Ocean.
- **Duzan Jannoth**, a courtier in Allesund.
- **Elandoron**, the Elf Prince of Par Celundi (arcane blademaster).
- **Elvatar**, a wandering bard known all over the land.
- **Galmoroth**, a **balor** which rules a kingdom deep below the Westwatch mountain range.
- Mazallaath, a great sea serpent in Lach Gwyen.
- **Sheeltielle**, a spider queen in Oldshade Forest.
- Tythesra, a druid that wanders the reaches of western Elissar.

#### **Domains**

Valya often have domains and the more powerful ones can grant miracles to their followers (manifestations of divine magic). Sometimes a cleric might not be worshiping the valya they thought they were; there are evil valya who can be deceitful that way and trick followers as to their true nature.

The valya on Elissar are the weakest of their kind; to be on Elissar diminishes their power. A valya cannot grant spells to their followers while on Elissar.

# **New Player Options**

Elisar offers new cultures, backgrounds, and feats for players.

#### **New Culture: Ostinad Horselord**

The wide sweeping plains and grasslands of Ostinad are home to the horse lords of Elissar,

but this place southeast of Endora is a region and not a nation—there is no capital or king or even an army, only the swords pledged to each horse lord. Ostinads lead free and semi-nomadic lives that are as harsh as they are rewarding, any disputes between different groups won out with contests that demand the best of all participants. Within the meadhalls of the few small towns scattered across the gentle hills and flatlands however, the camaraderie, mirth, and trust encouraged by this rigorous equestrian way of life are all too clear to see.

Wherever they roam the people of the horse lords are accompanied by their beloved mounts. In Ostinad a horse is more than a beast of burden or means of travel, it is as much a member of the family as a sibling or parent. Ostinad equestrians cherish their horses and the bonds they forge are extraordinary, likened to that of a mother and child—and bore out in many legends of steeds that proved to be just as courageous and noble as the Ostinad warriors that rode them.

Characters raised in the Ostinad equestrian culture share a variety of traits in common with one another.

Animal Handling. You gain proficiency in Animal Handling and an expertise die on Animal Handling checks.

*Mount.* You gain a draft horse or riding horse.

Rider's Bond. Once you have spent a week with a creature trained to be a mount, at the end of a long rest you may forge a special bond with it. This bond lasts until your mount dies or you use this trait on a different creature. While you have this special bond, you know what direction your mount is as long as you are on the same plane, your mount has advantage on saving throws against fear, at the end of each short rest your mount heals an additional 2d8 hit points, and as long as it is not fatigued at the end of a long rest your mount regains all of its hit dice.

Spirited Soul. Riding horseback is in your very soul. Choose one of the following: