



**C**yre is a quiet manor that lies one third of a league south of the Fur Road in the Nelafayn Hundred in northwest Kaldor. Located next to the Caliprast Stream approximately one and a half leagues west of Olokand, it is about two and a half leagues east of the frontier. Held by the Ertanars, a lesser branch of Clan Odasart, since 676 TR, Cyre accounts for about one third of the lands ruled by the wealthy lord of Hesby, Sir Ercamber Odasart.

## HISTORY

Jarin settlers reached the area of Cyre around 1000 BT. Legends say this Jarin tribe established a permanent community named after its founder, a chief by the name of Cyrena, and carved his name in two scripts upon a large stone. These people formed a primitive school that taught early medicine and philosophy. They reputedly had peaceful contact with woodsmen who were described as otherworldly and fair of face. However, after three centuries, the community elders lost track of their ways, and the tribe's knowledge declined. By the time of the Battle of Sorrows, the community at Cyre had become just another settlement. During the next several hundred years, the Jarin peacefully assimilated the invaders. Sometime thereafter, it was absorbed into the Kingdom of Olokand.

When Lothrim and his Chelni stormed Olokand in 113 TR, the small settlement at Cyre was scraping out a living by farming the banks of the Caliprast. Drunk on victory, some of the Foulspawner's Chelni horseman ravaged the countryside for several days. These troops wandered into Cyre. The resulting murder and pillaging destroyed the settlement and nearly wiped out the population. The Chelni captain eventually ordered that the survivors bury the bodies, and they dug a mass grave. By the time the horsemen left, the remaining settlers had either died or been driven from the area. Cyre lay more or less abandoned for over half of a century, serving as the home of a lonely hermit and the occasional traveler.

In 178 TR, after the Kingdom of Nurelia was founded, its third monarch, King Brant, returned to Olokand from the west. The Kath and Tael-da had started to raid Nurelian settlements, and the monarch ordered that a small fort be built on the hill to defend the land around Olokand from the barbarians. Brant also ordered two farming families from his own fiefs to resettle Cyre to provide food for the fort. This hamlet slowly grew and managed to avoid the worst of the Migration Wars due to the proximity

**Location:** Meselynshire, Kaldor  
**Government:** Sir Rald Ertanar  
**Liege:** Sir Ercamber Odasart  
**Population:** 103

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## CYRE 2

of the fort. Over time, many of the villagers intermarried and mixed with the soldiers from the garrison.

By 250 TR, with the barbarians driven back and Nurelia joined to the Kingdom of Kaldor, the fort was no longer needed. It eventually fell into disrepair. The hamlet, however, prospered as part of the Barony of Olokand. For the next two hundred years, Cyre stayed a modest village, governed by Olokand-appointed reeves. Those in the village kept to themselves and quietly paid tribute. Usually, the baron chose whoever the villagers put forward to hold the office of reeve. Two of the fief's current clans, clans Tyain and Melris, claim descent from these villagers. In 377 TR, after emerging victorious at the Battle of Kiban, Fierth of Qualdris had Baron Klunas executed for supporting Aidrik II. The crown seized the baron's fief, and one-fifth of Cyre's population was later rounded up to construct Olokand's castle walls.

Clan Odasart was granted the fief in 476 TR, by Queen Myselbane, for the clan's support of Kaldor's first female monarch. The queen also sought to counter the wealth of another Meselyne clan that had a strong claim to the fief. The first manor house was built on the mound in Cyre two years later. Cyre's first lord, a bailiff appointed by the Odasarts, removed what was left of the fort and built a wooden hall. Successive bailiffs were given leave to strengthen it, and minor improvements to the quaint manor house and fief were made. Rumor has it that at one time the Odasarts kept a favorite mistress of King Roloth there.

In 627 TR, the Odasart heir, Sir Brus, became bailiff. Known for his vanity, Sir Brus spared no expense constructing a square stone-walled manor complex for his seat. He added three stone buildings inside the walled courtyard and filled them with expensive furnishings and tapestries. Sir Brus held Cyre in his father's name for the next fifteen years, until the lord of Hesby died.

Clan Ertanar claimed Cyre in 655 but did not actually hold the manor until 676, when the newly knighted Sir Orth returned from Chybisa. In 673, before Sir Orth was made lord of Cyre, Clan Odasart fought with honor in the Salt War. As the clan's fighting men were returning from the Battle of the Ramala Gap, Cyre was attacked by a mob of lawless men who sought to steal some of the manor house's wealth. Cyre's bailiff at the time, Ercayn Odasart, a hobbled, lackwit nephew of Sir Brus, was besieged in the manor house. When the men stormed the complex and set fire to the outbuildings, Ercayn sought shelter in the great hall. He refused to leave and finally had to be carried out the gates, after which the mob looted and burned the remaining buildings. The fire gutted what the mob had left and destroyed the supports to the buildings, which caused them to collapse. Much of the surrounding wall was undamaged, but the manor house was not rebuilt until 678 TR.

## GOVERNMENT

The noble Clan Ertanar was created in 655 TR, when Rors of Ertanar, a woodsman, mercenary, and sometime brigand wed the only daughter and favorite child of Sir Brus Odasart, lord of Hesby, Doerin, and Cyre manors. Rors was poaching coney on the margins of Hesby's meadows when two of them escaped from their trap. The brigand, starving and angry, chased the rabbits toward a small brook. As he neared the water, he startled a pretty young noblewoman who was seated on the nearby bank. The fair maid, Anena Odasart, was alone. Her guard had left with the manor's physician to gather felsha hazelnuts in the nearby woods to ward off pain from her ailing father's joints. Rors saw his chance, abducted her at swordpoint, and took her to wife.

In spite of several valiant attempts at finding her, Lady Anena was missing for several months. Sir Brus, desperate to get her back, offered the lordship of one of his manors as a reward for his daughter. He also prayed to Larani and publicly promised that he would treat whoever took her with mercy if the goddess should grant the girl's safe return.

Months later, the brigand appeared in Hesby with the young lady, bearing an achievement with two coney and a hazel twig separated by the curved line of a brook. He claimed both the reward and the right of a £4 dowry for his new bride. He also stated that he should be treated as gentle, for he was the father of Anena's yet unborn child. Sir Brus, in a cold rage over the insult and rape of his daughter, declared in his hall that he would honor his pledge and that the brigand would be treated as nobly born. Rors received his reward, and Cyre Manor was enfeoffed to Clan Ertanar, with Anena as Rors' heir. Sir Brus promised to deliver the dowry in a few days. That night, while the brigand slumbered with the girl behind a barred door, a guard quietly slipped into the room through a secret door and murdered Rors, slitting his throat.

That night, the Lady Anena dreamed that an unknown knight in a red and white tunic held her safe as her tormentor died next to her in their bed. Much to the dismay of Sir Brus, his daughter insisted that she keep her child and raise it in his household. The child turned out to be a boy, who was named Orth in honor of the Knight-Commander of Tirith. Orth grew into a strong man and was respected enough to be knighted in 676 for his service in Meselyne and Chybisa. Flushed with newfound wealth in the form of two Chybisian manors, Sir Brus's heir upheld his father's promise and granted the burnt manor house at Cyre along with the fief to his sister's son. In spite of Clan Odasart's later loss of their Chybisian fiefs, Cyre has been held without incident by the Ertanars ever since.

The current lord of the manor is 32-year-old Sir Rald Ertanar, a knight with a notorious reputation among the local gentry. He is the great-grandson of Rors Ertanar, the brigand knight, and it is said he has that man's temper. Sir Rald became clanhead when his father, Sir Pamel, died in 712 from a stomach disease. Sir Rald's father and grandfather are buried at Abriel Abbey. His senile mother, Lady Elana, is in her final years and now resides with her younger brother at his manor of Hesby. The successive lords of Cyre have had close ties with Clan Odasart and have been strong supporters of their liege lords.

Cyre's lord cares about the wellbeing of his fief and the serfs who are bound to it. Sir Rald governs the manor with a light hand except during planting and harvesting season, when he has been known to lose his temper. Hallmoots, which are held on the 15th of every month, are usually kept short, as the lord finds them tedious. Lying a third of a league from the prosperous Fur Road, Cyre sees some merchant traffic. Travelers coming from the Fur Road or Olokand usually pass through the fief on their way to the manors of Kessan, Wilmerith, Albernet, Eldibrin, Myrenath, and Kaikefrin, which lie in the northwest of the Nelafayn Hundred. Tolls are charged on those passing through the fief, a task Sir Rald has delegated to the Peonian priest, Ebasethe Urnin. The amount varies, based on how wealthy the traveler appears to be.

The fiefholder, Sir Rald, owes the service of one heavy horse (himself) and two light footmen, plus 250d in scutage, to Clan Odasart at Hesby manor. Sir Ercamber Odasart, the clanhead, prefers that his vassals provide feudal service. Hesby's lord then sends the men on to his liege at Olokand, as part as Odasart's obligation to the Sheriff of Meselyne. When Sir Rald is away on this service, the Beadle, a veteran yeoman, watches over the fief. In addition, if the manor house itself is attacked, the ostler and woodcrafters can fight as light foot. The militia, which consists of all able-bodied men, trains once a ten-day under the tutelage of the yeomen. As the manor is not too far from the frontier, Cyre's militia is better trained than most. Many of the men usually wear some sort of leather or quilt tunic; they are required to bring their own weapon. Members of the militia vie for the twenty or so round shields that Sir Rald provides.

## ECONOMICS

Cyre is located in the northern central part of the Nelafayn Hundred of Meselynshire, on the south side of the Caliprast Stream, which flows down to Olokand. The manor lies not too far from the town but owes its first allegiance to Clan Odasart. The fief itself has a total of 1450 gross acres, 75 wooded and 1375 cleared. The cleared land consists of 20 tenant households (600 acres) and the lord's demesne (775 acres). Much of the thick soil has been continuously cultivated for nearly five hundred years, but thankfully it remains relatively rich and fertile (LQ 1.15). The land is about evenly split between crops and livestock rearing.

The cultivated acres contain flax, oats, vegetables, and barley, along with a successful orchard. Much of the flax is grown near the Caliprast, while the remaining crops are grown farther away from it. There are 300 sheep, 150 goats, 100 swine, and a small herd of two score hardy, long-haired, Orbaalese cattle. During harvest, any excess livestock and surplus crops are transported first to the lord of Hesby. From there, any remainder is sent east to the market in Olokand. Several of the poorer families fish, and Sir Rald demands one fish in four for his own table.

Cyre does not have a mill of its own. The manor is subinfeudated to Hesby on the other side of the Caliprast. A term of this infeudation requires that most of the grain be milled at Hesby Manor. The people of Cyre therefore face about a one and a half league round trip to get their grain milled. Several of the villagers own illegal hand-mills and use them with the tacit support of Sir Rald.

## RELIGION

Cyre's religious atmosphere is typically Kaldoran. The nobles worship Larani, while the serfs worship Peoni. Wandering clerics of Ilvir once in a great while pass through Cyre, but they are not welcomed and never stay long. Open displays of worship of Agrik, Morgath, or Naveh are punishable by death (usually by burning or hanging).

During the month of Morgat, the villagers of Cyre hang stones from their windows. These stones all have a hole through their center and are suspended by rope from the top of the window. The villagers claim that the stones ward their homes from evil. This practice has been in use for at least seven generations.

Nele, the Peoni patron saint of infants and the second baptism, is especially revered in Cyre. Reslava Soris Haen, a mendicant priest from Montivel, near the Shorkyni-Triezi border, settled along the banks of the Caliprast Stream ninety years ago. There he began preaching about the infant saint and won over the villagers. When the first bridge was built over the stream in 641 TR, a shrine was added to honor her.

The feast day of Nele is the 25th of Navek. As the villagers hold Nele in high esteem, the sacrament of second baptism, Neleaeach, and the naming of a newborn are important events. During the ceremony, each female serf receives from Sir Rald two cups of red wine and eight loaves of bread. In Cyre, the Angyla Festival is held on the 3rd of Nulus. Even the manor's Laranians are expected to attend. After Sir Rald and the other gentlefolk have been blessed, the villagers begin the holy celebration by lining up before the stream to be ceremonially washed by Ebasethe Urnin.

# CYRE 4

## 1 MANOR HOUSE

The manor house is built on a twenty-foot-high motte hill. This hill has held a manor house since 478 TR, when Cyre's first lord built a wooden hall on the site. The current stone wall that surrounds the buildings is from 627 TR and shows signs of the foundations of the stone buildings that were destroyed in 673 when Cyre was attacked by brigands while its lord was returning from the Battle of the Ramala Gap. The hill itself is much older and was the location of a Nurelian-era hill fort.

## 2 ORCHARD

Sir Rald's large orchard is the envy of many of his neighbors. The trees and beehives in the orchard have produced a surplus for the past twenty-three years. The orchard's apple trees are hardy and produce small green sour apples every fall. Much of what the orchard produces is eaten by the lord or sent to Hesby.

## 3 COTTAR (Konil of Tyart)

Size: 3

Konil is a decent, baby-faced man who has had a difficult life. When he was a child his right arm did not develop properly, and it has a withered, claw-like look to it. His wife has had a stroke and is paralyzed on her left side. His fourteen-year-old son now fulfills their labor obligations for them and works for the other clans for food. Konil is not trusted by the villagers, with the exception of his cousin Kaeth [14] and the lord. Many believe him to be an Agrikian due to his withered arm. While he once was a pacifist, unbeknownst to all he has been driven to quietly pray to the god out of spite.

## 4 GLEBE (Urnin of Melris)

Size: 1

Ebasethe Urnin, a devout Peonian, is the only permanent member of the clergy in Cyre. He is the younger brother of Norlen [9], the village Beadle, and the two brothers can't stand each other. Urnin left Cyre when he was sixteen and traveled to Tashal, where he became an Esolani of Peoni and served for four years. After becoming an Ebasethe in 718 TR, Urnin asked and received the position back home in Cyre, which had been vacant for several years. He has had disturbing dreams of late and has not been sleeping well. Urnin is the only person besides the lord and lady who can write. The Ebasethe lives in a small chapel located next to the road. The chapel itself is a small wattle and daub house, identical to many others in the village. As most services are held on the common, at the stream, or in the Lyncyard, the chapel is only used during inclement weather.

## 5 HALF-VILLEIN (Telin of Cadbor)

Size: 3

Telin "the Red" of Cyre has the misfortune to share his name with a notorious local bandit. Twice a traveler has held Telin at swordpoint when a villager has referred to him as "the Red". The twenty-five-year old Telin of Cyre owes his nickname to his horrible

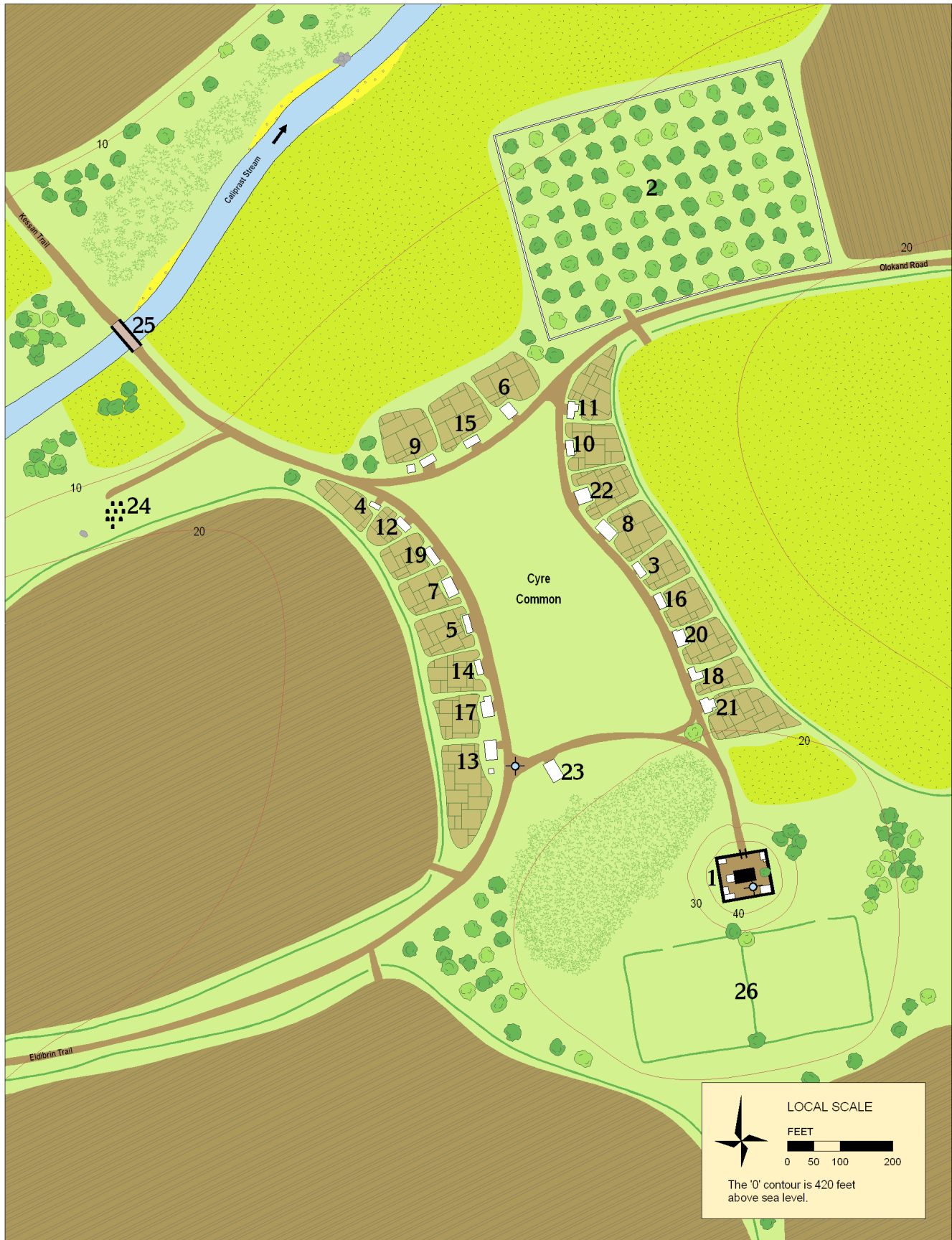
eyesight and the fact that he insists on shaving his chin and lip every morning. His two ugly younger brothers have equally bad sight, and the three young men live in unmarried squalor. As a result, Telin's face, which is a red ruin, is ripped open anew each day. It is not likely to stay healed anytime soon.

## 6 YEOMAN (Mortin of Barlis)

Size: 4

A young light foot yeoman, Mortin is a veteran of several skirmishes but no major battles. The eager twenty-year-old helps Norlen [9], the Beadle, police the manor but grows anxious every year when campaign season begins. Mortin is the cousin of Lumil of Relren [10] in Cyre and Terba and Kedris of Barlis at Iversen. These two brothers hold the metalsmith and weaponcrafter franchises at Iversen Chapterhouse. Mortin and his new wife, Nerlael, visit Iversen every other month. Mortin lives with his two incorrigible two-year-old twin daughters, who were born before the couple's marriage. Like Cyre's other yeomen, Mortin and his family live in a large wood cottage with a few feet of stone near the ground and a stone fireplace.







## 7 REEVE (Corlyn of Tyain)

Size: 7

Nearly fifty, with gray hair and the gout, Corlyn is a widower. The Reeve is less than adequate but has a high opinion of his own worth. Although Corlyn thinks otherwise, Cyre would function just as well without him. In the past year it has become harder for him to remember recent events, and he will sometimes forget that his wife has been dead for ten years. The usually confused Reeve is also the head of the Tyain clan, the largest in the village. Corlyn's son, Jerend, and daughter-in-law, along with their two children, all share a crowded cottage. They fulfill many of Corlyn's labor duties. Corlyn's elderly mother and sister also live with him. The two women are skilled weavers and run a small business making clothing.

## 8 HALF-VILLEIN (Alarn of Luras)

Size: 4

Alarn looks strangely like Sir Rald's father. Many in the village believe him to be the elder half-brother of the lord, but Sir Rald refuses to treat him any differently than the rest of the villagers. Alarn claims to be a devout Peonian but is really a man who bends as the wind blows. Alarn's skinny wife Werile sleepwalks, a trait his young son and daughter have not inherited.

## 9 YEOMAN (Norlen of Melris)

Size: 4

Norlen is the diligent village Beadle and a light foot yeoman. Five years ago, two years after Norlen was wed, his mother grew very ill. With a wife great with child and no one else to help, the Beadle had to care for his mother. As the woman grew more feeble, Norlen became more and more angry at his brother Urnin [4], who had left to join the Peonian church one year earlier. Urnin did not return until after the death of their mother, and the Beadle has not spoken to him since. Norlen will not allow his family to pray anywhere with the Ebasethe. Recently, the Beadle's five-year-old son, Otrin, has been filching the manor's stored seed from the nearby wooden-slat silo in order to feed the birds. Otrin's younger brother, Elos, is a precocious two-year-old who likes running around the cottage.

## 10 HALF-VILLEIN (Lumil of Relren)

Size: 5

Left Hand Lum, as everyone calls him, is a good husband and father to his family. He is strong as a bull and stubborn as an ox. Lum is the cousin of the yeoman Mortin [6] and the brother-in-law of Arin the Herder [13]. Lum loves animals to the point that he can't watch one butchered. He can herd cattle, though, and helps Arin as best he can. Unfortunately, Lum is allergic to wool and starts sneezing whenever near a sheep.

## 11 VILLEIN (Baen of Firlel)

Size: 4

Baen is the clanhead and uncle of both Drisson of Firlel [16] and Hesdin of Tyain [18]. The village orcharder, Baen spends his time in the lord's orchard or tending his beehives while his two teenage sons tend the family acres. Baen is paranoid that other men find his lovely wife, Arwyn, attractive. Extremely jealous, he demands that she stay inside the cottage whenever he is working.

## 12 HALF-VILLEIN (Jiryla of Barl)

Size: 4

Jiryla's husband Lewke died of a lung disease last winter, leaving her with three sickly young daughters and the only surviving bull in the village. Since then, Sir Rald has seized the bull for his own herd as payment for holding Jiryla's acres in wardship. The widow has a long scar from a fishhook across her face; she now lives only for her children.

## 13 HERDER (Arin of Luras)

Size: 7

Arin is the Luras clanhead, village herdsman, and the first cousin of Kaen [21]. The herder suffered from a pox when he was young and is usually quiet. Arin and his wife Yrigeth have five children, three of whom they adopted when brigands killed Arin's sister in 712 TR. Two of the teenage boys help with the herds. Arin's eldest son, Ronas, is courting Daros' [22] only daughter, Lelen. Yrigeth is now trying to find good husbands for her two daughters but is hobbled by the close relationships between clans Luras, Tyain, and Firlel. The manor's smokehouse lies nearby.

## 14 VILLEIN (Kaeth of Tyain)

Size: 5

Kaeth is a skilled farmer but is rude and hates women. He has been fined twice for beating his wife and daughter. His eldest son, Erlis, hates his father and plans on killing him next time he lays a hand on either woman. The thirteen-year-old has buried a rusted dagger near the Lyncyard and has told his younger brother of his plans.

## 15 YEOMAN (Galis of Jaldum)

Size: 5

Galis is a light foot yeoman. He has a tuft of honey colored hair on either side of his bald head. The bribable veteran is the only non-gentle worshiper of Larani in the fief. Galis claims that his father was knighted by King Torastra for his efforts in the Salt War. Unfortunately there were no witnesses to this event, and most believe Galis' story is a result of his overactive imagination. Thankfully, the aging yeoman has been wise enough not to repeat this story in front of the lord.

**16 HALF-VILLEIN (Drisson of Firlel)**

Size: 6

Drisson is a beaten man. Last year, his wife ran off with some traveling merchants, and he was fined by the lord after she was not found. Drisson blames his wife's brother, Konil [3], for encouraging her flight from the village. With five children, all too young to work, and only 10 acres, Drisson's future does not look bright. This family is poor, but Drisson tries to make up for it by fishing and acting as the village thatcher. On occasion, his uncle Baen [11] will give the children food to keep them from starving.

**17 COTTAR (Wevran of Ardel)**

Size: 5

Wevran, his paranoid wife, who is the only daughter of the Cadbor clan, and their three teenage sons are always busy. Many times the five of them can be seen working in the fields until after sunset. They hire themselves out as laborers to the other village clans in order to survive.

**18 WOODWARD (Hesdin of Tyain)**

Size: 5

As the woodward for a fief with almost no wooded acres, Hesdin has an easy job. So much so, that he has had the time to carry on an affair with Arwyn of Firlel [11], the orcharder's wife. Hesdin's wife suspects, but she has no proof that he is involved with Arwyn, who is also his uncle's wife. The woodward lives with a widowed sister, his mother, and a newborn son.

**19 VILLEIN (Terryin of Relren)**

Size: 6

Terryin is the clanhead and is the village teamster. He is lazy and has been fined for failing to keep his cottage in good repair. Yet Terryin is also trustworthy. He has volunteered to take the village's goods to Hesby (chiefly grain to be milled), in order to escape his difficult wife. As the road to Hesby passes through Doerin, another of Clan Odasart's manors, Terryin will on occasion also drop off goods there. The trip to Hesby and back is over one and a half leagues, and Terryin is often gone from Cyre. Sir Rald owns two large wagons, which are used heavily during harvest. Terryin usually drives one of these. The teamster is a talented musician with the flute, and the lord allows him to carry a staff on his trips. His wife Shesya constantly complains about her husband to any who will listen. The couple's four children work in the fields and around the cottage. In mid-Kelen, when the Fur Road caravan reaches Olokand, Sir Rald will send Terryin along with his squire and the Beadle to the town to trade with the Orbaal merchants. Cyre's lady has a fondness for amber, and Sir Rald has for the past three years had his squire buy a piece to give to her on Nele's feast day.

**20 HALF-VILLEIN (Saris of Gaelin)**

Size: 4

Saris is a hard worker and a dependable man. He moved to Cyre two years ago with his homely wife and their two daughters. Originally, Saris was a free farmer in Myrenath, but he tired of the dangerous frontier and left after his son was killed in the forest. Saris tends the hedges and is paid well by the lord. He is deathly afraid

of running water and avoids Caliprast Stream like the plague. His wife Meline acts as the village's midwife.

**21 VILLEIN (Kaen of Luras)**

Size: 6

Russet of beard and bushy of eyebrow, Kaen is a frail and gentle man universally liked by the villagers. Although he holds no office, Kaen's opinion is usually asked by the lord. Forty-eight-year-old Kaen and his sickly wife Elina are becoming elderly and will ask the lord for chevage at the next hallmoot. Sir Rald has already quietly approved and knows that they wish to take a pilgrimage to Erone Nunnery. Elina is the village wisewoman, known for her grasp of local folklore. Kaen once was able to plow the straightest furlong in Cyre, a feat his eldest son, Ragan, can now claim. Kaen's younger son is planning to ask the lord for gersum if his brother inherits. Kaen's two sons are twenty and eighteen and have wives of their own. Kaen's three daughters, Nerlael, Shesya, and Silia, have all been married off.

**22 VILLEIN (Daros of Cadbor)**

Size: 5

Despite his recently broken nose, Daros and his children are overflowing with joy. They received an extra five acres of land at the last hallmoot and now have food to spare. Daros and his wife Silia are devout Peonians and donate one fourth of their income to Ebasethe Urnin [4]. When Daros was wed, many joked that he seemed chained to his bed, so hotly did he lust for Silia. Now, after three children, and an accident that prevents Daros from fathering more, his gossip wife prays daily to Tirrala, the Handmaiden of Renewal, that he will get his vigor back.

**23 BARN**

This building is a large, dilapidated wooden barn, used to store anything oversized or bulky in the fief. The double door is always locked with a heavy chain. When they are not in use, Sir Rald stores his two wagons here. During the harvest the barn holds grain waiting to be milled. As most of the wood plank-ing is rotting, items of value are kept at the manor house. There is a lean-to against one side of the shed; it serves as the home of the herder's four Kaldorin Sheepdogs.

**24 THE SITTING STONE & LYNCYARD**

This oddly shaped granite stone stands about two feet high and is about three feet in diameter. Carved on the side of it is the same word written in Khruni and Selenian. A sage from Tashal came in 692, studied the markings, and claimed that they spelled the word "Cyre" in both scripts. (The Khruni part has been known for many a year, as it is the script used by the Laranian and Peonian churches; the language they use is very similar to the Old Jarinese in which it is written.) On the hill nearby is Cyre's graveyard, known as the Lyncyard. A few of the events of the Peonian Angyla Festival occur here, and the site is also used on other feast days.





## 25 CALIPRAST BRIDGE

The trail to Kessan Manor crosses the Caliprast Stream on a small, well-maintained wooden bridge. At the middle of the bridge, a shrine to Nele, the Peoni patron saint of infants, is carved into the side. The shrine consists of a carved wooden skull of an infant girl, which sits in a hallowed out niche in the northeast side wall. The villagers claim that the saint protects those who travel past the skull, especially children. Ebasethe Urnin visits it in the morning to pray for the safety of the day's travelers and those who contribute alms.

## 26 CLOSE PASTURE

These two animal pens, which are filled with blooming blue habsularas in spring, are used by the lord to graze his horses or to allow the herder to keep some animals close to the manor house. Habsularas grow sparsely all over the fief's lands except for here where they cover the entire area. The fief's pasture land is broken up by a mix of hedge rows and rail fences. These are located off the map to the southwest, northeast, and southeast.

## THE MANOR HOUSE

Cyre's manor house sits on a large mound of earth and is surrounded by a seven-foot-tall stone wall. The complex includes a slate-covered hall and four wattle-and-daub, thatch-roofed outer buildings. These contain a stable, a barn, a guesthouse, and a woodcrafter's workshop. At the west end of the hall and outside the guesthouse are covered areas to store wood. This timber is used in the fireplaces and occasionally by the woodcrafter. The floor of the upper story is built of wooden beams and planking. Many of the other floors are packed dirt. As Sir Rald has a bonded woodcrafter, much of the furniture is new and solidly made. The hall is made of stone from the quarry west of Abriel Abbey, while the wall surrounding it is constructed of brittle, light gray stone. Originally, a few stone buildings were connected to the wall; these were gutted when brigands set fire to the manor in 673 TR. The villagers reused many of the stones. The scorch-marked stones used in the houses of the three yeomen attest to this fact.

[1] Gate - The manor house gate is made of heavy oak and is studded with nails. It is the only entrance to the manor. The gate can be barred with a nearby pair of iron bars. There are post holes in the ground and metal brackets on the gate, so that the bars form a large X brace. During the day the gate is left open and watched by Sir Rald's squire or the ostler.

[2] Hall - Cyre's hall is a modest affair, but comfortable and warm in the winter. Sir Rald is unsatisfied with it and wishes to enlarge the hall by adding a guestroom onto the building. He has been trying to get freemason Harayn of Ashata in Olokand to agree to his price. Yrigeth of Luras [13] and her two daughters attend to the domestic needs as their feudal service.

[3] Kitchen - The cook, Myna of Thyin, hails from Olokand; she is the half-sister of the shipwright there. The daughter of a Jarin refugee who fled the rebellion at the far end of the Fur Road, Myna is an excellent

cook, but she is simple minded. She has worked at the manor for one year now, having been discovered by Lady Aharyn and brought into her service. Myna has never married in spite of several proposals from corrupt men. At night, she sleeps in the kitchen.

[4] Latrine - Unlike many latrines, this small shack is clean and relatively fair smelling. The woodcrafter's daughter often mucks it out, since it stands next to the workshop.

[5] Workshop - This building contains a workshop owned by Sir Rald, who employs a bonded woodcrafter in his household. The master woodcrafter, Saery of Hrap, is a cranky old man who constantly complains about his daughter and the large wen on his cheek. He prefers payment in coin because he secretly shaves some off the sides. Saery's daughter, Inesa, is betrothed to the journeyman woodcrafter and is pregnant. The journeyman, Boel of Murart, does most of the work for the manor now. Boel, the black sheep of his metalsmithing clan, is the nephew of Ulder of Lindel, the metalsmith at Loban Manor. Boel is devout and acts as a lay brother to the Peoni priest. Saery sleeps in the workshop while his daughter and journeyman bed down in the manor house's hall.

[6] Barn - Here Sir Rald holds some of the rents that have been paid in kind. It is well stocked with foodstuffs, extra cloth, hides, and tools. Sir Rald keeps a cat here to cut down on the rats.

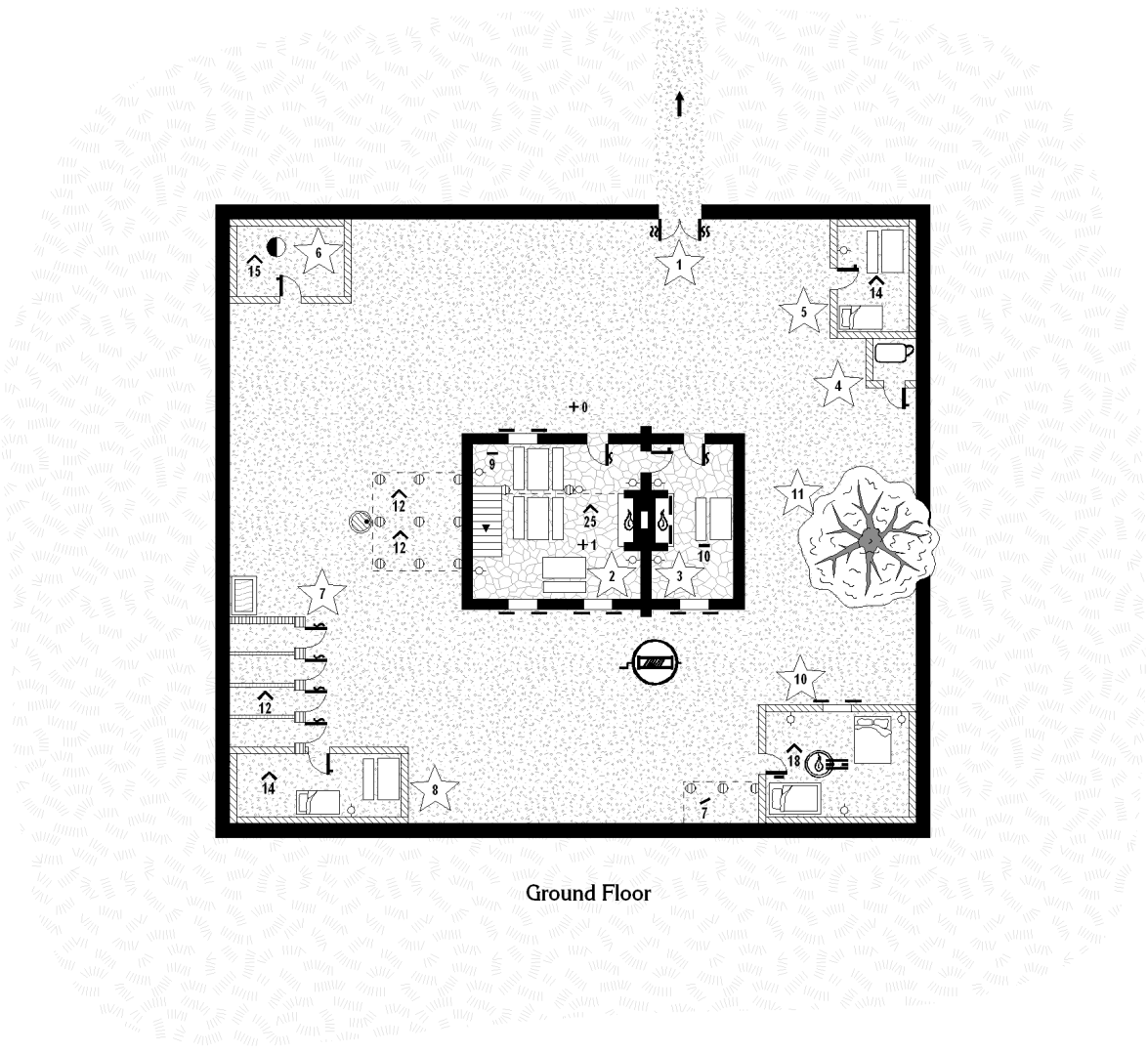
[7] Stables - The stables can hold up to four mounts. Here the bonded ostler, Gunart of Parmel, cares and tends to Sir Rald's warhorse Wrath.

[8] Stable Barn - Gunart of Parmel, Cyre's bonded ostler, lives here. Gunart suffered from a pox when young and was once found guilty of being a vagabond. As punishment, Gunart was burned with a hot iron through the lobe of his right ear. The sixty-five-year-old ostler has served the Ertanars for over thirty years, and Sir Rald has grown fond of the old man.

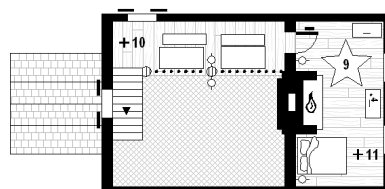
[9] Lord's Room - This room is located off a small balcony where Lady Aharyn usually dines. The lady's prized books are kept hidden under her bed. The bed itself is covered with finely stitched sheets, which are elegantly embroidered.

[10] Guesthouse - The guesthouse provides additional living quarters for the gentlefolk of the manor, as the main building lacks the space. When Sir Rald hosts a greater lord, he and the Lady Aharyn move in here. When a knight of roughly equal rank stays overnight, he is given this room, and its usual occupants move to the hall floor. Most nights, Sir Rald's squire, Edan Quarne, sleeps here along with Pamel. In a few years, Yarea may share the room as well.

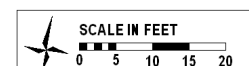
[11] Courtyard - The courtyard surrounds the hall. It is unpaved, and a short bushy oak tree grows on the east side. Carved into the tree are the initials "R E". When the manor house well was dug in 681 TR, it was revealed that the motte is a funerary tumulus, containing dozens of graves. The bones of eight people were removed from the well and subsequently reburied in a mass grave in the Lyncyard.



## Ground Floor



## Upper Floor





Sir Rald

### Sir Rald Ertanar

Sir Rald is arrogant and knows he is a better man than any of the folk who call him lord. Known among the local nobility for his foul temper and his favorite weapon, the lord of Cyre has earned the nickname "Black Rald". It is said that he once shot a serf in the eye rather than waste his time hanging the man. Unbeknownst to many, Sir Rald's foul temper is always under his control. His outbursts are merely a tool that he uses to his advantage to intimidate others.

The lord's favorite weapon, despite the fact that it is not chivalric, is a heavy black shortbow. When he has grown bored, he can be seen taking aim at any birds overhead. Sir Rald always fletches his own arrows with white goose feathers and spends many an evening either working on them or enjoying the pleasures of the table.

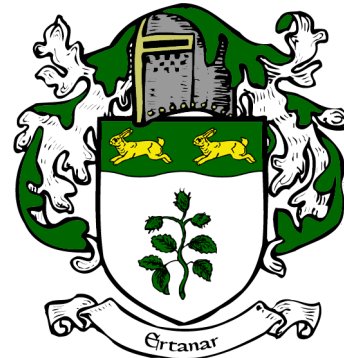
Many of the villagers see another side of their lord. While known for his temper, Cyre's lord does mind his peasants and his fief. Sir Rald is a caring father and spends a fair part of the day with his six-year-old son, Pamel, at his side. His wife is relatively well treated and keeps to herself. The head of Clan Ertanar is now in his thirties, having succeeded his father (who was also named Pamel) in 712. He is steadfast and loyal as a dog both to his liege lord and to the Sheriff of Mese-lyne.

### Lady Aharyn Ertanar (*nee* Quarne)

Sir Rald's wife, the sickly and melancholy Lady Aharyn, is the only sister of the lord of Goffin Manor. Although never an attractive woman, the lady still was not pleased with her father's arrangement for her to wed Cyre's lord. In the eight years since, their marriage has only been dutiful. Now approaching her twenty-sixth year, Lady Aharyn has borne her husband four children, two of whom survive. The eldest, Pamel

(b.714 TR), is her favorite child and receives most of her attention. The next two, Mylera and Eleia, born in 715 and 716, died while still infants. Her youngest, Yarea, is a few months old, having been born this last winter.

Besides her skill at knitting, the lady can read. She is somewhat of a scholar and has become fascinated with the Sirion Scrolls. She has traveled to Olokand and once as far away as Tashal to purchase books for her collection. Lady Aharyn owns a few books on various subjects and is as fond of them as she is of her children. Due to her delicate health, she will often spend the entire day in her chambers. When Sir Rald is away, she acts as his steward.



*Argent, on a chief wavy vert, two coney's courant or, in base a hazel twig slipped and leafed of the first.*

*Motto: Seize the moment*

### Pamel Ertanar

A happy child, little Pamel is equally content to spend his time at his father's side or with his mother. The young heir also likes playing games with the children of Left Hand Lum [10]. Pamel can do almost no wrong in his parents' eyes. He has a Trierzi terrier, named Mendiz, which he keeps as a pet. The dog follows him around everywhere.

### Yarea Ertanar

Named after her mother's mother, Yarea is a small babe only a few months old. The child is usually cared for by Lady Aharyn or the cook, Myna of Thyin, who has grown close to the girl. Sir Rald has pledged the child to the Laranian church if she survives; Yarea will join as an acolyte on her twelfth birthday.

### Squire Edan Quarne

Brown of hair and of eye, Sir Rald's squire is small for his age. Edan Quarne is the third of four brothers, the eldest of whom, Sir Edric, is lord of Goffin Manor. The seventeen-year-old squire loves joking around. Not one month passes in Cyre that someone is not subject to one of his practical jokes. Only the fact that he is the Lady Aharyn's brother has saved him from being roughed up by the villagers. Edan's laugh resembles that of a snorting mule.

## TRIAL AND ERROR

Trial and Error is a Hârníc murder mystery set in the village of a modest feudal manor. It is a low-magic, clue-based adventure scenario that uses the characters and background of the fief, set in the unstable and intrigue-filled northwest of Kaldor. It is designed to highlight Cyre and act as a transition adventure as the party moves through the Nelafayn Hundred.

## INTRODUCTION

Ideally, to get the most out of this adventure, the players should spend a day or so around the fief and become acquainted with the manor's lord and the villagers. A party made up of solely of gentlefolk will have less luck getting to know all the residents of Cyre than those who bring commoners along. The incidents described below can occur at any time of the year. Weather permitting, the ground should remain somewhat dry. It should not rain enough to leave heavy footprints) or snow (as a layer of snow may interfere with several of the clues that the party should discover.

It all begins when a two-year-old boy is savagely murdered during the last night that the party is in Cyre. As this occurs at night, the remains aren't discovered until sometime the next day. It is best if the party spent the night with someone who is not a suspect. If they are gentle born, or in service to a noble, Sir Rald will have invited them to stay at the manor house (and sleep on the hall's floor or in the guesthouse, depending on their status). If they are common, the Reeve, Corlyn of Tyain [7], will ask them to stay in his cottage. Either way, the barred doors and the fact that their nightly actions are accounted for should free them from suspicion.

## NPC Help

This adventure assumes that the players are willing to help the manor lord and want to investigate the murder of an innocent. As there is little or no combat involved, the party should be able to handle this on its own. The Gamemaster should use the Beadle or Sir Rald as needed to prompt the players when necessary.

It is important for the Gamemaster to remember that the murder will bring turmoil to the quiet manor of Cyre. Villagers will act unnerved but will not bend over backward for the player characters just because they are PCs. Characters will react to apparent social status based on clothing, weapons, and personality. Most important, the true villain will not easily confess to his crimes until it is apparent he is headed for the noose. Only then will he come clean in order to distract the party so that he can escape or to gain sympathy and possibly spare himself.

## Lead-Ins

**Passing Through:** It is always possible the players are in the area of Cyre. If they are nobles, the Gamemaster can always remind them that there will be a comfortable bed and a warm fire nearby. Also, guests of a manor house are far less likely to be robbed or woken unpleasantly in the middle of the night.

**Teamster Recruiter:** If the players happen to travel the fur road, they could come across Cyre's teamster, Terryn of Relren, somewhere in the vicinity of Doerin or Hesby. Terryn explains that his lord is seeking the help of honest folk (preferably with one or more women in the party) to safely see two of the villagers off in the direction of Erone Nunnery. The flute-playing teamster is wary of bandits. He once was almost robbed by Telin the Red's men, but some kindly noble folk rode up and scattered the scoundrels.

**100 Bushels of Rye:** If the players have successfully completed the adventure *100 Bushels of Rye*, and Loban's metalsmith, Ulder of Lindel, has survived, he asks them to deliver something to his nephew in Cyre. The item is a metalsmith's hammer and includes a message on thin vellum. The letter (written in rough handwriting) is a plea to "stop playing with wood" and to become a real man and join the metalsmith's guild. The letter also says that this well-crafted hammer once belonged to Boel's father and bids the fires of Balgashang consume anyone who dares to steal it. Alternately, after the players have completed Trial and Error, they could be sent to Loban to return the hammer with a reply from Boel (assuming someone else had earlier delivered Ulder's plea to the woodcrafter).

## Timeline

### Day 1: Morning, "A New Day"

The Peonian priest and journeyman woodcrafter discover the severed head at the shrine. The area and the villager's cottages are searched, and riders are sent to neighboring manors. The party is asked to lead this investigation, as the Beadle is missing. During the search, the Beadle returns and is put under guard. The boy's body is discovered in the smokehouse. The herder is put under guard.

### Day 1: Afternoon, "Roundup the Usual Suspects"

Sir Rald goes with the PCs to talk with the Beadle and the herder. The party is also asked to examine the boy's remains. The villagers begin to go back to their routine, and most head to the fields.

### Day 2: Morning, "A Funny-Looking Acorn"

The murder weapon is found in the branches of a tree at the manor house. The Beadle reports that someone tried to open his bolted door last night.

### Day 2: Evening, "A Ghost's Lament"

Toward sunset the figure of a woman is glimpsed by one of the villagers in the fields. If night does not bring an early end to the search, and the PCs follow her tracks, they disappear after a tenth of a league.

### Day 3: Morning, "Depression and Discovery"

Tracks are found around the Beadle's hut in the morning.

### Day 3: Afternoon, "Errors Solved"

Two of the villagers go missing as the murderer makes his move. The party must race against time and find them.

### Day 3: Evening, "A Trying Evening"

Sir Rald brings all of Cyre's inhabitants to the hall and, after a trial, dispenses his justice.

## A New Day

The day begins in the quiet manor of Cyre like any other. The roosters in the village crow and the villagers rise shortly after first light. Around an hour after sunrise, a two-year-old boy's severed head is found in the shrine to Nele halfway across the Caliprast Bridge. This grisly trophy is discovered by the Peoni priest and Boel of Murart, the acting lay brother, when they walk to the shrine to pray to the goddess for the safety of travelers and a fruitful day. Boel immediately raises the hue and cry, and Sir Rald, the lord of Cyre Manor, comes down out of the manor house to investigate.

Sir Rald briefly looks at the head and then conducts a search of the area by the stream for the killer or more clues. Three riders (Sir Rald's squire, the village teamster, and the ostler) are sent on the lord's palfreys along the roads to the nearby manors (Doerin, Kessan, and Eldibrin) to spread the word and check for any persons fleeing on the roads.

Either the PCs will still be in the village or they will have just started to travel along one of these roads, where they will eventually encounter one of the riders. Their curiosity should be enough to involve them; if possible (as long as they are in Cyre), Sir Rald will forcibly solicit the party's help.

The search of the bridge and streambed is fruitless. There are no tracks or objects left besides the head. Sir Rald sends a villager (Kaen of Luras [21]) downstream to see if anything washes up, but eventually the serf returns empty-handed. Corlyn, the Reeve, is useless, for after ordering the villagers to search the area (right after Sir Rald orders it), he gets down on his hands and knees and crawls around "searching", but in actuality he is only picking weeds. (In truth, the Reeve is beginning to show signs of Alzheimer's disease.) Halfway through the search, one of the villagers remarks that the Beadle is missing. No one seems to know which way he went (including his wife, who seems shaken). This fact is brought to Sir Rald's attention.

The lord directs that the players (if he trusts them) conduct a search of the village with the two remaining yeoman, Mortin [6] and Galis [15]. As each house is searched, nothing out of the ordinary is found until they get to the herder's cottage. When the PCs search the smokehouse next to the herder's cottage, they find the boy's headless body. The body is behind several flanks of smoked beef and is wrapped up in a filthy, bloody, and grass-stained child's rough wool undertunic, with the lacing on the sleeves tied around it. If the herder is standing nearby, he goes white with shock. After the discovery, the herder's wife looks at her husband and starts sobbing. She claims that her husband heard his dogs barking in the middle of the night and went outside. He was gone for a half hour. When this fact becomes known, Sir Rald has him seized and brought up to the manor house, where the cranky woodcrafter, Saery of Hrap, keeps watch over him in the complex for the next several days.

Norlen, the village Beadle, returns about an hour later. His actions are suspect, and Sir Rald orders him home (after his cottage was searched) and sets a guard (Galis the yeoman [15]) to keep the Beadle prisoner.

Norlen has been honest in the past, and the lord is inclined to release him but cannot get him to say where he has been and what he was doing despite his protestations of innocence. Galis remains to guard the Beadle in Norlen's cottage until the adventure's end.

The players must now solve this crime. They need to figure out who the child was, how the murder took place, and who did it. Unbeknownst to them, they also need to work quickly, as the murderer blundered the first time and killed the wrong child. He plans on solving this error.

## Round Up The Usual Suspects

At this point, Sir Rald tells the party that they should speak with the Beadle and herder before the two suspects have time to get their stories straight. The Beadle is uncooperative and won't say where he had been or why he left during the morning's search. He will claim that he is innocent and will appeal to Sir Rald to trust him enough to release him. Cyre's lord does trust him, but not enough to believe him. Arin the herder is scared out of his mind. His story is that he heard the dogs barking at the smokehouse. Three of them returned to the barn after he quieted them, but one ran south, barking at something. It took Arin awhile to chase the dog and bring him back to the others. Arin did not go into the smokehouse and did not see or hear anything besides the dogs.

Along with the two most suspected for murder, many of the villagers think they know who really did it. If the party members speak with the villagers during the day, they will get the following info:

- The herder, Arin of Luras [13], is the obvious suspect. He stepped outside for awhile in the middle of the night. His smokehouse held the body, and it was carefully wrapped and hidden behind some of the smoked meats.
- Some of the villagers think that the Beadle, Norlen of Melris [9], is the culprit. He mysteriously disappeared in the middle of the search. He was out in the night as one of his duties as Beadle is to patrol the village after dark. Finally, Saris [20], the midwife's husband, claims that he saw Norlen near the smokehouse about an hour before midnight.
- Nothing has been found yet that implicates Konil of Tyart [3]. However, many of the villagers suspect he is a vile Agrikian, and his withered arm shows his evil nature. Some are sure he ripped off the child's head with his claw-like appendage and drank its hot blood.
- Wevran of Ardel [17] has been seen many a night after dark if the moon is bright. What nefarious deeds has he been doing at night? Why can he be seen working with his tools in the fields after dark?
- One or two of the villagers think Saris of Gaelin [20] is responsible, because he is relatively newly arrived in the village from Myrenath. What evil has he brought with him and awoken? He claims to have seen the Beadle around the smokehouse. Is he lying to cover his own crime?



- Some suspect that the bonded ostler, Gunart of Parmel, is guilty. He has a shady past, and the lord trusts him too much. Could it be that the old man has snapped from working for the Ertanars after all these years?

After the interviews, the PCs should closely examine the boy's remains, as both the head and the body hold clues to the crime and the murderer. Unless asked not to do so, Sir Rald will personally take both remains to the barn, where they will be watched over by a villager (the Reeve's adult son, Jerend [7]) and the Peonian priest until the lord orders the child buried. By this time, the villagers will have gone back to their usual routines, and most will head to the fields.

- The body: A close examination of the body will reveal some interesting clues. Wrapped up between the undertunic and the corpse are three hab-sularas leaves. These appear not to have been placed there on purpose. The neck shows that a knife was used to saw off the head, as there are several cuts that were not successful.

- The head: The wounds on the head match those on the body perfectly, indicating that they are from the same person and that the boy was killed when his head was sawed off with a knife. Because a corpse's jaw typically drops open, the PCs won't be able to tell if the jaw had been clenched. If the players examine the victim's mouth, they may notice that several of the front teeth are especially loose.

Nothing else eventful will occur the rest of the day. The riders whom Sir Rald sent out will return, reporting nothing, and the PCs probably won't make any connections to the clues. (The close pasture is trampled, as the ostler led out Sir Rald's horses first thing in the morning before the hue and cry. The party won't be able to see any tracks or signs of a struggle. If the PCs demand to see all the residents' hands, skip ahead to "Errors Solved" and modify it accordingly so that the two go missing while the herder is being questioned.)

### A Funny-Looking Acorn

The next day, the murder weapon is found in a tree at the manor house. As she is drawing water from the manor house well, the cook, Myna of Thyin, sees the sunlight reflect off something in the branches of the oak tree that grows inside the wall. She tells the squire, Edan Quarne, of the object, and he climbs the tree and drops it down. The object is a blood-encrusted common hunting knife, similar to many in the village. It was driven into the oak about nine feet up. (The knife won't be able to be traced at this point; it actually comes from the victim's mother.) When Sir Rald or the PCs visit the Beadle, Norlen reports that someone tried to quietly open his bolted door last night. In the dead of night, as his wife was holding their two sons asleep in her arms, she heard the door rattle and saw the bar strain.

### A Ghost's Lament

After sunset, as darkness falls, the figure of an unknown woman is glimpsed in the distance by one of the villagers working in the fields. Wevran of Ardel is

a hardworking cottar with a superstitious wife. Wevran runs away from the "ghost" and goes straight to Sir Rald (and the PCs). If the party looks for her tracks, they should be able to follow them for a short while before losing them. (The woman ran southeast, making deeper impressions, after she saw Wevran, but she eventually slowed, and the impressions of her footprints become lighter as they get closer together. If the PCs follow her tracks, they disappear after a tenth of a league. Most likely the PCs will have to continue their search the next day, as their search should be cut short by nightfall.) Within four hours, Wevran's wife will have embellished the story enough to scare even the most doubtful of the villagers. The Gamemaster should use these tales to make the party wary.

### Depression and Discovery

The morning of the third day, tracks are found around the Beadle's hut. These match the "ghost's" tracks and are deep. These tracks look to be from a person with average-sized feet. It looks as if the "ghost" spent time pacing around the cottage.

### Errors Solved

During the middle of the day, two villagers are found to be missing. Norlen's wife has not seen her youngest child and brings this fact to Sir Rald's attention. It soon becomes clear that the Peonian priest and Elos, the Beadle's younger son, are nowhere to be found. Many are not too alarmed at this, as Urnin is the boy's uncle and Elos is always running around. The Beadle and his wife, Forissa, are concerned, though, as Norlen does not like the Ebasethe and presumes he is filling the boy's head with falsehoods.

If all the villagers are questioned, Jerend of Tyain [7] will claim that as he and the Ebasethe were preparing the murdered child's body for burial, Jerend inquired about the wound marks on the priest's left hand. Urnin became quiet and said that he accidentally cut himself with a sickle the other day. Jerend has not seen the priest since finishing the preparations and doesn't think it is suspicious, except that the marks looked odd.

What is really going on is much more sinister. Ebasethe Urnin has now abducted the Beadle's child and must be stopped by the party before the boy is killed. The two are on foot and headed southwest on the Eldibrin Trail. The priest hopes that he will have time enough to dispose of the child and any evidence before his absence is noted. The PCs should be able to catch up if on horseback, but they must be quiet, as Urnin will take to the bushes on the side of the road if he hears riders approaching. The Gamemaster can adjust the difficulty of finding Urnin and the boy as he sees fit. If his absence is discovered, Urnin has plans to blame Telin the Red's men as the cause of his and Elos' disappearance. He will claim that he was blessing some furlongs on the edge of the fief, and that the child asked to come along and learn of Peoni's goodness. While he was teaching, bandits fell upon them. He was forced at swordpoint to watch as the boy was taken, and he was tied to a tree by the scoundrels when they rode off.

## A Trying Evening

If the PCs rescue Elos, the Beadle will be grateful enough to confess to Sir Rald. He will explain about Merela of Lemmen and even show his lord and the party their campsite, if the PCs have not discovered it yet. As for Merela herself, the party should encounter her at the camp in fear and shock over her missing child. (It is up to the party to break the terrible news to her.) As dusk settles over the manor house Sir Rald will drag the Beadle, Merela, the Peonian priest, and anyone else who should speak to his hall for a trial. As the lord of this fief, Sir Rald must decide how to dispense justice. As he finds these things difficult, the PCs will be asked to help. (The GM may want to encourage them to act as advocates for Norlen or Merela.)

## The Truth

The herder, the Beadle, and the other early suspects are all innocent. Norlen has in fact been framed for this murder by his own brother. The murdered child was a two-year-old by the name of Teris. The boy was the lovechild of a traveling minstrel and his peasant lover (the "ghost"). The peasant, Merela of Lemmen, ran off with the minstrel, whom she knew by the name of Lorenin, because her husband, Produn from nearby Stybrin Manor, was so boring that she could not stand another day with him. Teris' father was an Aenarin, an elven half-kin who abandoned Merela after the child was born.

Norlen the Beadle discovered the boy the day before the murder, at dusk, wandering with his mother in the fields on the southeast edge of the fief. Crying and upset, Merela told the Beadle that she was a free woman who was trying to find the child's father and some food. Norlen calmed them and told them to camp in a nearby meadow. He promised to return the next day with something for them to eat and some help. The Beadle returned to the village, and around midnight he stole a smoked ham, hiding it in the bole of a tree by the fief's barn while he made his rounds. Then the Beadle took the ham and made off past the close pasture to the campsite. Norlen, while a diligent Beadle, knew Merela had to be an escaped serf but decided to aid her anyway by stealing some food.

Unbeknownst to Norlen and the villagers, the Peonian priest, Ebasethe Urnin, saw the Beadle take the ham. Urnin has been troubled by nightmares lately and has not been able to sleep. What nobody knows is that the Ebasethe left Cyre originally because he was in love with Norlen's wife, Forissa. While in Tashal as an Esolani, he heard rumors of a group of spirits who walked unseen and watched everyone as they slept. Urnin began praying daily to these beings' unnamed master and simultaneously advanced in the Irreproachable Order, even though he did not learn much of Peoni's teachings or doctrine. He attributed this rise to this saving force, this Vesha, as he learned to call it. Urnin has in reality fallen under the sway of this mouth of falsehood, one of the Gytevsha of the god Naveh.

Urnin left Tashal for Forissa's sake. It pained him to know that she was wed to his brother, and Urnin had to come back to be near her again. Winning the empty position in Cyre through luck and a little blackmail, Urnin has spent the past year and half working up his

courage to prove his love to Forissa. He dreams of holding her in his arms to comfort her after she has lost both her children and her husband. Now, with Vesha's blessing, he has planned to begin ridding himself of them and win Forissa for good.

Urnin was puzzled that his brother would steal from the smokehouse, so he followed Norlen from a distance as the Beadle went to the camp. Seeing that his brother was helping what looked to be an escaped serf, Urnin planned to go to Sir Rald in the morning in hopes of causing trouble for Norlen. As the priest sneaked back to his cottage, Merela's boy Teris discovered him around the close pasture. The boy had seen Urnin watching his mother and Norlen. Teris decided to follow him and left as the Beadle and his mother were talking. The boy was carrying his mother's knife at the time, unbeknownst to her. Along the hedge to the close pasture, the priest nearly tripped over the child. Angry for stumbling, and thinking that this boy was Elos in the dark, Urnin pushed him to the ground and covered his mouth with his left hand. The priest, who had planned to get rid of his nephews eventually, decided not to pass up this opportunity. The boy struggled and bit the priest hard on his hand (leaving teeth marks where the skin was broken). This enraged Urnin, who grabbed the boy's knife and sawed off his head. After the deed, the priest mopped up the blood with the child's undertunic.

In a moment of madness, the priest thought that defiling the shrine would make a good offering to Vesha. Urnin wrapped up the body in the undertunic. Holding the head upside down (so as not to drip blood), he walked past the manor house. Setting the grisly trophies down (head upside down), he climbed the wall on the outside and stuck the murder weapon into the oak tree that grows on top of the mound. Taking up the remains again, he sneaked into the smokehouse, disturbing the herder's dogs and causing them to bark. After hiding the body behind some meat, he waited a few minutes to let the dogs calm down. Then he walked to the Caliprast Bridge and placed the severed head in the niche of the shrine to Nele, balancing it on top of the carved wooden skull. Urnin believed that he had killed Elos until he discovered the wrong child's head in the shrine.

## Resolution

The trial portion needs to be resolved before the adventure ends. There are three concerns before Sir Rald: first, the murder of the boy, Teris. (The party may need to act as guards to keep Merela from strangling the priest in the middle of the hall.) Second, what to do with the runaway serf from Stybrin. Third, how to punish the Beadle for stealing, aiding a runaway serf, and failing to explain where he was (even though by this time he has confessed that he went to see Merela to warn her to leave but could not find her). Keep in mind that both the Beadle and the priest hail from free clans and may appeal to the King's justice at the hundred moot in Abriel. The Gamemaster should play this out word for word. He should emphasize the crowded hall, the room's smoking torches, and the villagers' short tempers. The anger and the tension are palpable, with Sir Rald and the party stuck in the middle.

**Epilogue**

If the players solve the murder or seem honest enough to be trusted, Sir Rald or his wife may call on them again. The priest or the Beadle may appeal to the hundred moot depending on the outcome. Sir Rald may ask the PCs to accompany him to Abriel Abbey to guard against the prisoner's escape. The Gamemaster can adjust the difficulty of this as needed but should allow the party to reach and explore Abriel as it offers a host of adventure opportunities in itself. Also, if the party members are capable, they may be asked to go to nearby Goffin Manor, where Lady Aharyn's eldest brother may soon be up to his arms in trouble and is in need of a few good men. (Both she and Edan are sympathetic to Sir Edric but have only the bit of knowledge that he may need help. They do not know that he has plotted with another noble clan against the local Sheriff and has made powerful enemies. Cyre's lord would be furious if he knew what his brother-in-law was really doing.) Alternatively, as Sir Rald's wife is interested in the Sirion scrolls, the party might be directed to go to Tharda for the Lady Aharyn, to purchase a basic text on the region's history. Once there, they may get involved in the adventure *Carved in Stone*.