

## The History of Ezar's War

by

Sir Grolis Chahryn

First Earl of Selvos

Lord Marshal of Kanday

Defender of Larani

in the 13th Year of the reign of

Andasin IV

720 by Tuzyn Reckoning

in Dureve Hundred,

the Shire of Peris,

Kingdom of Kanday

as dictated to his faithful scribe

Taert of Runder

### INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years of conflict, thousands of soldiers and four monarchs dead, all because of one man's ego. Ezar's War began with a raid on Imiden Keep by the *Copper Hook* and grew until it encompassed all of Kanday and her allies in a long and destructive war with Rethem. The end of the war would see Rethem on the verge of civil war, the assassination of Ezar and an uneasy peace between the kingdoms over the objections of the *Copper Hook*.

### 681 - SEEDS OF DISASTER

King Nemiran of Rethem inherited a weak and chaotic kingdom from Obras and was quickly faced with several more revolts. Nemiran, however, was a skilful politician who realized the folly of attempting to rule alone as his father had done. Using the feudal kingdom of Kanday as a model, he parcelled out Rethem to trusted retainers and

managed to unify the kingdom within four years of becoming king.

Nemiran is best remembered as a religious zealot who came under the influence of the resurgent Agrikan church. In 681 TR he granted extensive lands to the *Company of the Copper Hook*. These grants included the castles of Selvos and Menekod and the keeps of Hyen and Dunir, all along the Rethemi border with Kanday.

Buoyed by the support of the King and suddenly flush with lands and money, the *Company of the Copper Hook* underwent a massive expansion. Under the leadership of Ezar of Zhirdoka, the small group of fanatics recruited heavily. They expanded from a few companies (about 100 members) to an order of almost a thousand followers in only one year. Drawn from the urban poor and landless knights, these new members had limited combat experience, but made up in fanaticism what they lacked in skills. Emboldened by their vast increase in numbers and powerful strongholds, the new members of the *Order of the Copper Hook* began agitating for immediate attacks against the hated Laranians in Kanday.

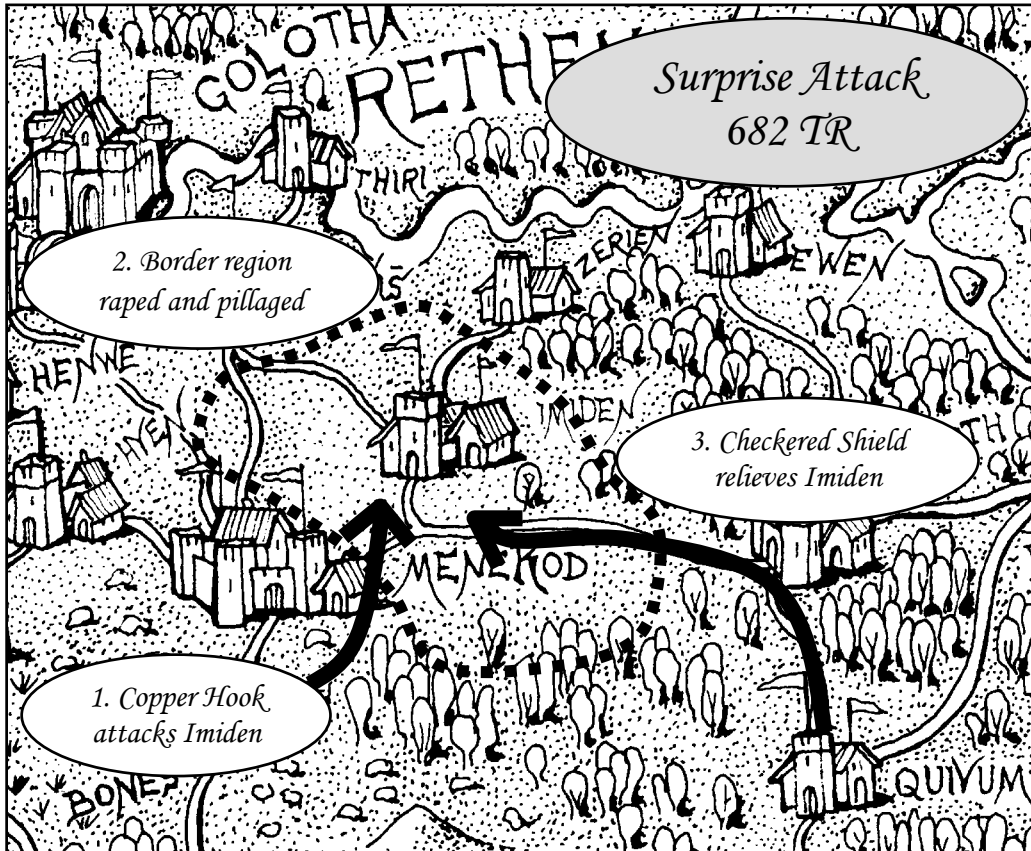
In the spring of 682 TR, Grandmaster Ezar summoned a large force of knights and common soldiers to Menekod. His small cadre of experienced knights and soldiers tried to knock the mob into something resembling an army, but the lack of qualified sergeants and captains and generally combative nature of their fellow Agrikans made this a difficult task. The army also lacked the specialists, like siege engineers, required for a full-scale campaign.

### 682 - SURPRISE ATTACK

Despite the fact that Rethem and Kanday were officially at peace, the *Order of the Copper Hook* suddenly attacked the Kingdom of Kanday without provocation as soon as the ground was sufficiently dry to allow the movement of troops. Advancing northeast from their castle at Menekod, the knights of the order laid siege to Imiden [see map, NOTE 1]. The *Copper Hook's* field army consisted of over 80 knights and 360 men-at-arms and quickly surrounded the keep, raping and pillaging the countryside [NOTE 2]. Lacking a proper siege train, the *Copper Hook* was limited to trying to starve the garrison out, but unfortunately for the Agrikans, Imiden was well supplied and had a strong garrison under the leadership of Sir Grolis Chahryn, Sheriff of Peris.

Clan Chahryn have been loyal retainers of Clan Kand for over a hundred years, dating back to the founding of the kingdom, and have a long and glorious tradition of serving as bailiffs and armed retainers of the King. A skilled knight and a talented leader, Sir Grolis was selected to join the Royal Guard in 662 TR. On the death of the Sheriff of Peris in 676 TR, Sir Grolis was appointed to fill this vital position. Responsible for the security of the

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northern frontier with Rethem, Grolis immediately set about strengthened his keep's defences, stocking up on siege stores and dispatching spies to report on Rethemi activities. By 681 TR he had become gravely concerned at the build up of Agrikans, though his requests for more troops had fallen on deaf ears.

When word reached Dyrisa, the King turned to the Grandmaster of the *Checkered Shield* for assistance. He immediately summoned his commanders and raised a column to relieve the siege. By stripping the Order's manors and leaving only a skeleton garrison in Quivum, the grandmaster was able to field 150 knights and 300 men-at-arms. When word of the approach of such a large, well trained and competently led *Checkered Shield* relief force, reached the *Copper Hook*, it was forced to quit the field and return to Menekod [NOTE3].

Puril, the King of Rethem, had encouraged and supported the Agrikan aggression, so when the Laranian *Order of the Checkered Shield* sent a relief force and forced the Agrikans to withdraw, the Grandmaster of the *Copper Hook* appealed to Puril for aid. Ezar's private war became a national one that would rage for fifteen years.

## 683-687 - LONG STALEMATE

With the withdrawal of the *Copper Hook* to its castle at Menekod, the *Order of the Checkered Shield* also retired

back to Quivum. The King ordered a call up of the feudal levy to support the Sheriff's small garrison. Since their feudal obligation lasted only for two months, Sir Grolis faced the prospect of rotating and training new troops every 60 days. This made it very difficult to organize patrolling to counter *Copper Hook* attacks, and while the *Checkered Shield* did re-inforced its Chapterhouses in the region, their numbers were limited. Faced with this dilemma, Grolis turned to his local nobles for help. He opened his armouries, providing spears and shields to the militia and men-at-arms to train them. Knowing their homes and families were behind them, the militia proved fierce, if not skilled,

fighters. All along the border, a handful of manorial knights and their vassals stood as the first line of defence for all of Kandy [NOTE 4].

Following the frustrating summer of 683 TR, the Sheriff travelled to Dyrisa after both armies had stood down for the winter. He beseeched the King to assign more permanent troops or to give him the funds to pay the levies to stay on. Unfortunately, funds were tight and the rescue by the *Checkered Shield* the previous spring had given the court a false sense of security and again, his requests were denied.

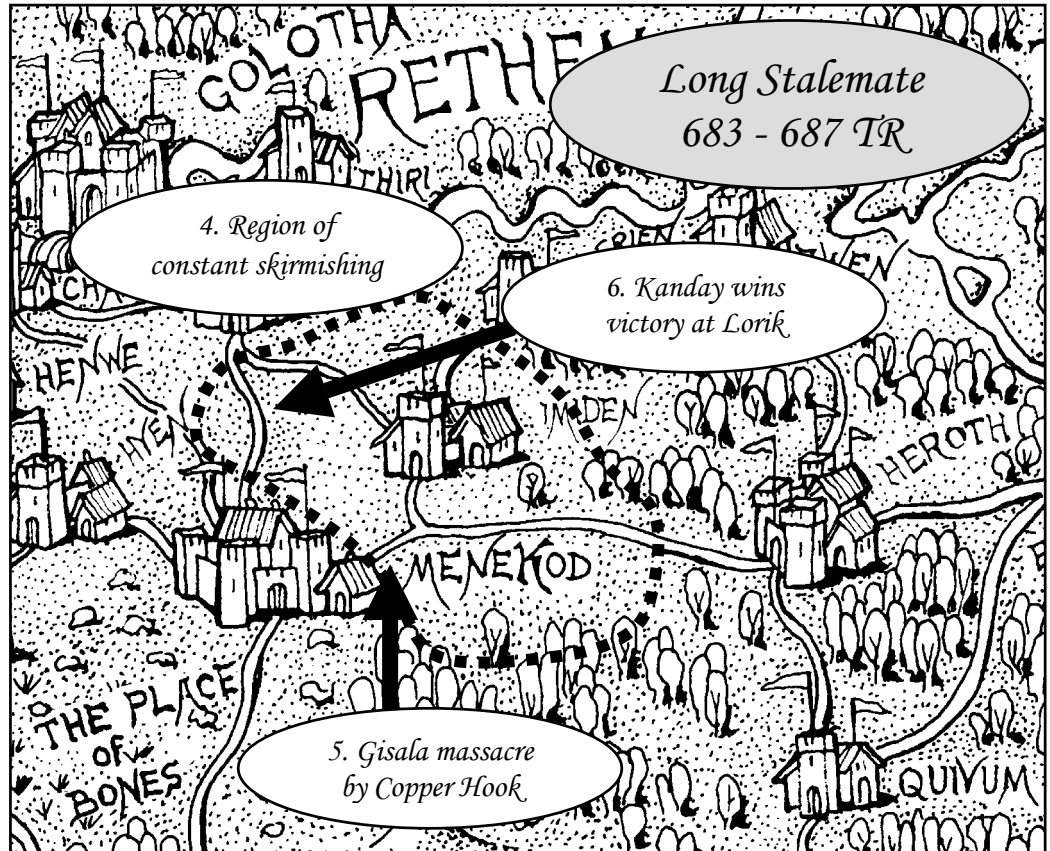
The campaign season of 684 TR saw several large skirmishes. The largest was a massacre at Gisala, a *Checkered Shield* Chapterhouse [NOTE 5]. Within sight of the Chapterhouse, three companies of Agrikan knights surprised ten Laranian knights as they returning from patrol. Seeing their knights outnumbered and trapped, the entire company of men-at-arms sallied forth to their aid. Over twenty members of the Order were killed outright and the remainder were captured and gruesomely tortured. The Chapterhouse was sacked and chapel desecrated. With only a few score of undisciplined levies, the Sheriff was helpless to respond, although the Grandmaster now added his voice to those calling for more regular troops. Six other skirmishes resulted in a loss of almost

100 levies and militia although they did manage to inflict similar casualties on the *Copper Hook*.

Still short of professional troops, despite his repeated pleas, Sir Grolis took matters into his own hands in 685 TR. A number of young, enthusiastic knights had come with the first levies in the spring. Loathe to lose them, he decided to hire them out of his own personal funds. These included two cavalry captains, Sir Petryn Irien (18 years old) and Sir Yuri of Xelados (28 years old) and their lieutenants, Sir Tamys Bakyth (21 years old) and Sir Janzen Collyer (24 years old). The Sheriff also discovered Sir Meurs Silden (33 years old) in command of a score of infantry levies. Deathly allergic to horses, the knight was more than willing to command the lowly men-at-arms whom most knights generally ignored. With this core of energetic knights, Sir Grolis was able to stiffen the levies and scored a number of small victories, including the capture of a dozen *Copper Hook* knights and one of their sacred banners at the skirmish of Lorik manor [NOTE 6].

The situation finally improved in 686 TR with the appointment of Sir Marik of Hunvele as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Like Clan Chahryn, Clan Hunvele were long time retainers of Clan Kand and had worked closely with Clan Chahryn for mutual benefit. The combination of the grandmaster of the *Checkered Shield* and the Chancellor of the Exchequer were finally able to convince the King to raise an "Army of the North" for the duration of the war. Sir Grolis was given sufficient funds to raise four companies of knights and eight companies of infantry to add to his garrisons.

The Sheriff of Peris spent most of 686 TR recruiting and training his new army. The resulting combination of experienced officers, regular soldiers, levies and *Checkered Shield* troops finally allowed him to seize the initiative. For the first time, Kandian troops raided Rethemi manors, destroying crops and stealing livestock. Under Grolis' command, morale soared and patrols won four of six major skirmishes of 686 TR, inflicting major casualties on the



*Copper Hook*. Unfortunately, the Agrikans seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of fanatical recruits and were easily able to replace their losses, though they were unable to translate their manpower advantages into gains on the battlefield.

For six years, the rival armies clashed repeatedly along the northern border of Kanday with little real effect. Unable to bring the other to battle on advantageous ground, neither side was able to gain a decisive advantage. The border had become a meat grinder, eating up troops and money. Both Andasin and Puril searched for a way to break the stalemate.

## 688-692 - SOUTHERN FLANKING

An independent ally of Kanday since 631 TR, the petty kingdom of Gemala had supported Andasin III in his war against Rethem, even sending volunteers to join the Army of the North. In 688 TR Gemala and Sarkum discovered that the price of this alliance was the enmity of Rethem. King Puril, attempting a bold invasion to break the stalemate of Ezar's War, achieved surprise by moving by sea from Golotha and landing his army a few miles from Sarkum, quickly overwhelming the castle [NOTE 7]. Ranald Milaka, the young king of Gemala, only survived because he was inspecting nearby estates at the time.

Immediately following the capture of Sarkum, the Rethemi army, numbering almost 120 knights, 200 men-at-

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arms and 160 archers, advanced on Hebon keep, the capital of the petty kingdom of Andur. The keep fell to a quick and ruthless siege. Most of the ruling clan perished in the attack, but the price of success was the death of Puril, who succumbed to his wounds at Sarkum in 689 [NOTE 8].

Puril's death and the Rethemi failure to kill Ranald Milaka proved to have serious consequences for the conquerors. The death of his rival gave King Andasin III time to arrange the marriage of his youngest daughter, Mirelael, to Ranald Milaka, the exiled ruler of Gemala. Ranald had fled for his life to Kanday and after his marriage, swore fealty to Andasin III. He was instrumental in securing the fealty of the petty states west of Aleath for Kanday.

Andasin also had time to regroup his forces and raise a new "Army of the South" before Kabe, Puril's son, could arrive to assume command. Before he marched to Hebon, the King decided to fill the vacant position of Lord Marshal of Kanday. For this powerful and key appointment, he chose an officer who had loyally served him as Sheriff of Peris and commander of the Army of the North through the early years of the war, Sir Grolis. The new Lord Marshal was ordered to return north to guard the kingdom's frontier with Rethem. With most of his experienced troops committed in the north, the Army of the South was drawn mostly from the scions of the nobility,

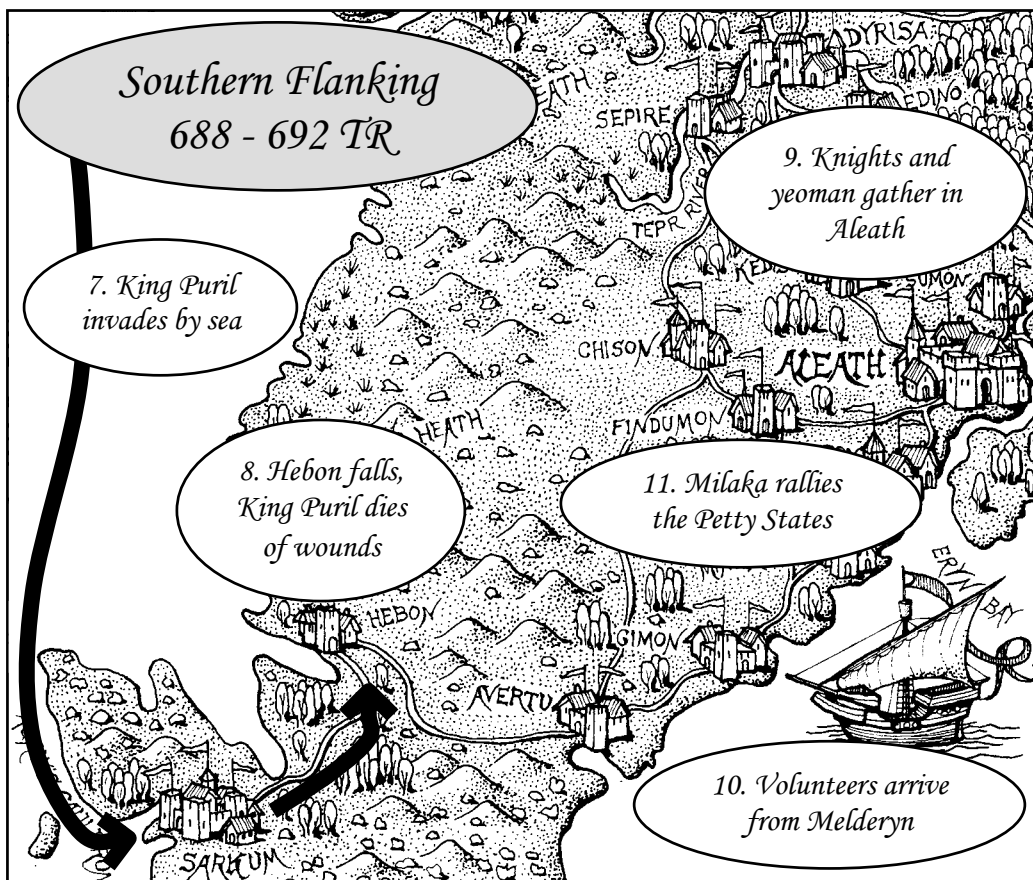
yeomen, militia and men eager to serve their King [NOTE 9]. The Kandians were also fortunate to receive aid from Melderyn, in the form of volunteers led by Sir Salan Parta, who came to Kanday at their own expense to join the war against the Agrikans [NOTE 10]. Andasin dispersed his limited number of knights and men-at-arms to knock some order into this diverse rabble. Ranald proved extremely successful in rallying the knights and soldiers of the petty kingdoms, who would form the offensive wing of the army [NOTE 11]. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was forced to dig deep to find sufficient funds to hire mercenary light and medium cavalry and siege engineers and head tax was levied on every man, woman and child to help fund the war.

Andasin and Ranald's renewed forces moved west from Aleath and besieged Sarkum and Hebon before Kabe could arrive from Golotha [NOTE 12]. In 690 TR Hebon fell to the Kandians, but the victory cost the Kandian King his life [NOTE 13]. When Andasin III and much of his guard were killed in the final assault of Hebon keep, one of the mercenaries, Fodin of Dravaen, defended his fallen body, and was seriously wounded in the process. Later, he was knighted him for his bravery and appointed to the Royal Guard, eventually becoming Constable of Dyrisa.

Andasin III was succeeded by his eldest daughter Eriel.

The Kandians rallied to the beautiful and charismatic twenty-two year old woman, and her visits to the besieging army at Sarkum are still remembered with awe by those who witnessed them. Eriel lost little time in pressing the advantage gained by her father. This beautiful and charismatic woman rallied the besieging army at Sarkum and effectively bottled up the Rethemi.

In 692 TR a mysterious fire broke out in the castle and King Kabe of Rethem perished, possibly murdered. Leaderless, with their defences damaged, and running desperately short of supplies, the Rethemi surrendered within a few days [NOTE 14]. When Sarkum was recaptured, Ranald was made Earl of Sarkum by his sister-in-law, Queen Eriel.



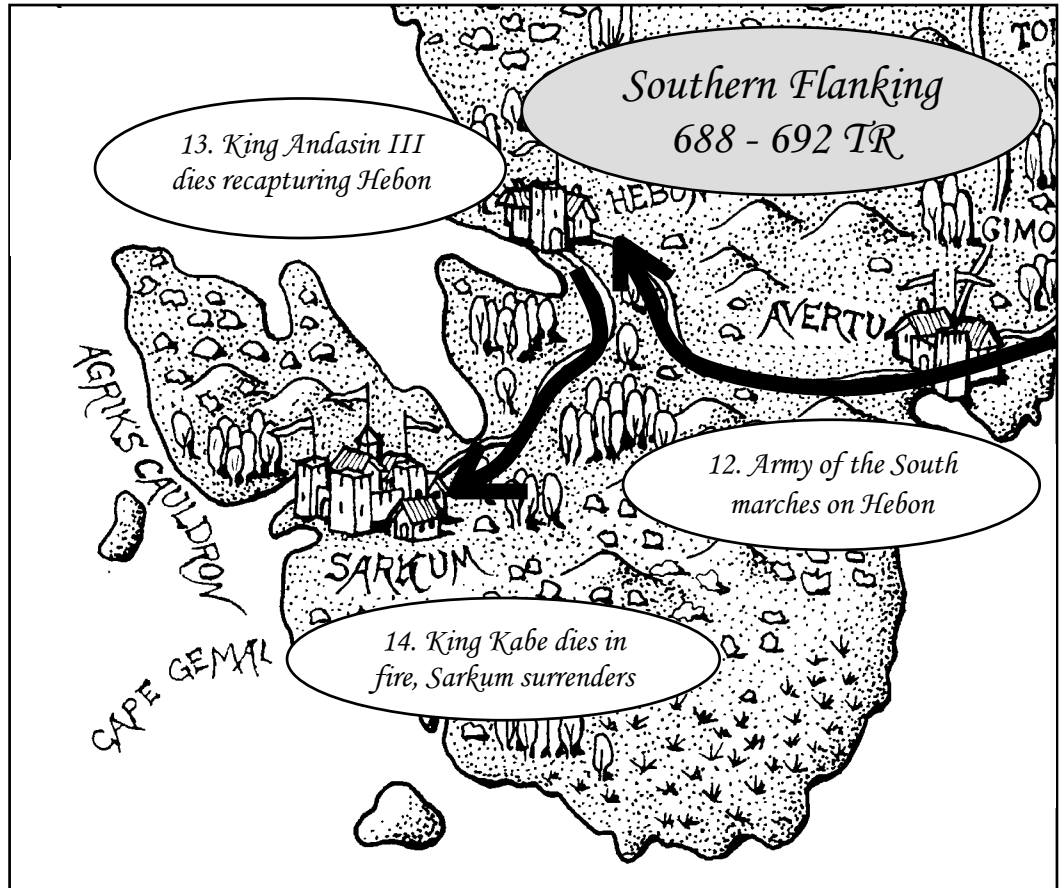
## 693 - NORTHERN STALEMATE

With the surrender of Sarkum, the cream of Rethemi Royal Forces were destroyed or captured. In the north, the *Copper Hook* was under continuous pressure from the Kandian Army of the North under the command of Lord Marshal Grolis. Chafin, the eldest son of Kabe, was a competent strategist, and was able to maintain a stalemate along the Kandian border, though it left him with few offensive forces or reserves.

Fresh from her victories in the south, Queen Eriel marched north to Dyrisa. Confident that the northern frontier was secure from attack, she recalled her most trusted general, Sir Grolis, to the capital to plan the next phase of the war. Through the winter, plans were drawn up for the counter attack against Rethem.

Grolis convinced the Queen that their first target should be the *Copper Hook*'s most vulnerable keep, Dunir. Despite its exposed location, the Agrikans felt secure because the only roads to the keep led from Menekod and Selvos. Grolis proposed a daring march cross-country, up the Eryn River valley and across the Eryne Hills to give the Laranians the advantage of surprise. In the spring of 693 TR, the Army of the South, Army of the North, *Order of the Checkered Shield* and feudal levies converged on Dyrisa. News of their "secret" plan to march the Grand Array (as the massive force was known) north to Heroth and west to Menekod and Golotha was widely rumoured and spies carried word north to Rethem. Secretly, Grolis combed the Grand Array, selecting an elite force for the assault on Dunir.

The army that would attack Dunir was composed of some of the best troops in the kingdom, young, fit, motivated and brave. Grolis handpicked his captains and sergeants from among the veterans of the Armies of the North and South. To escort the queen, 20 knights and 40 men-at-arms were detached from the Royal Guard in

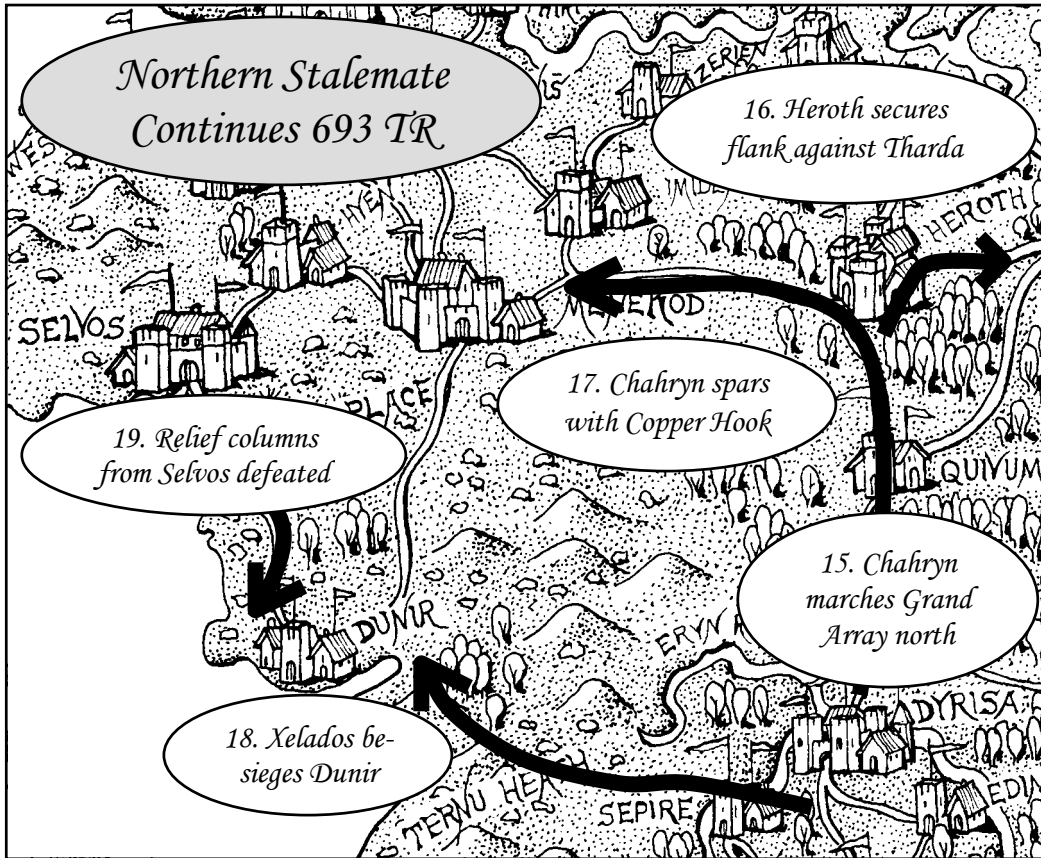


Dyrisa. Twenty knights from the Checkered Shield and 40 men-at-arms joined them. The core of the army would be composed of the veterans of the two Kandian armies, 60 knights and 120 men-at-arms. After a long private audience with the Queen, two additional units were also added to the column, a double-company (40) of Chybisian mercenaries with their wicked longbows and a cutthroat group of freeblades known as "the Forty Thieves" under the leadership of Sir Antin Mulewis, a captain from Shorkyne. In all, the force consisted of 120 knights and 200 men-at-arms plus mercenaries. While not the largest, it was certainly the finest army Kandy had ever raised.

Three days before the Dunir army was to march, word reached Dyrisa of a *Copper Hook* attack along the main road leading to Heroth. Fearful of a major breakthrough while they attacked Dunir, the Queen ordered Grolis to take the rest of the Grand Array north to Imiden to guard the northern border. With Grolis committed, command of the Dunir army passed to his second in command, Sir Yuri of Xelados aided by his deputy Sir Janzen Collyer. A surprising benefit of this decision was that few people noticed when the Dunir army slipped west during the night.

Trusting in Sir Yuri's abilities to execute his plan, Grolis rushed north. Stripped of his best troops, he looked again to the common soldiers to form the bulk of his army

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under the command of Sir Meurs Silden. Befitting his rank, he placed the Earl of Heroth and the older, more headstrong nobles in the van, while placing the experienced, stalwart knights and troops of the *Checkered Shield* in the rear under the command of the Grandmaster. The remaining knights and mercenary cavalry he held in reserve under the command of Sir Petryn Irien and his lieutenant, Sir Tamys Bakyth. Ponderously, the unwieldy army moved north [NOTE 15]. When they reached Heroth, scouts brought word of a Thardic legion massing near the border. Fearful of being caught between two enemies, he convinced the Earl of Heroth and the Grandmaster to remain in Heroth to secure his eastern flank [NOTE 16]. Further denuded, Grolis marched his army to Imiden. For months, he sparred with the *Copper Hook*, tying them down but refusing to risk his fragile army [NOTE 17]. By Ilvin 693 TR, it was obvious that neither side was willing to commit and the armies dispersed for the winter. Much to the Earl of Heroth's disgust, the threat of a Thardic invasion never materialized.

Far to the south, under the eyes of their beloved Queen, the Dunir army completed their march through the Eryne Hills in record time. Wide ranging scouts ensured that no one survived to relay word of their approach and surprise was complete. The army swept out of the hills and into Dunir. The knights secured the town and

cleared the manors, while the men-at-arms encircled the keep. Taken completely off guard, the *Copper Hook* commander barely had time to slam the gates shut, locking over half his men on the outside in the process. They proved easy prey for the experienced Kandian knights.

The siege was long, lasting six months [NOTE 18]. Hearing word of the attack on Dunir, Grandmaster Ezar recalled Sir Lotay from his attack on Heroth and dispatched him to break the siege. His troops, weary from the long forced march, were no match for the Kandian army. Twice Sir Yuri's army took the field to repel a *Copper Hook* relief column from Selvos and twice the Agrikans were

repulsed with bloody losses. Lotay perished on the second attack, robbing the Agrikans of one of their finest tactical leaders [NOTE 19]. While Yuri was sieging Dunir, Grolis pinning down the main Agrikan force in Menekod.

The final assault on Dunir came on a dark, moonless night. One of the castle guards climbed down a rope and surrendered to the Kandians. In return for his freedom, he revealed that the north wall was not manned when the gate was under attack. Under the direction of Sir Yuri, the infantry formed up below the main gate. Carrying scores of torches, the troops screamed, yelled and clapped their shields with their swords, making a deafening racket and drawing virtually the entire garrison onto the ramparts. As the Agrikans revealed themselves, mercenaries let fly with their great longbows. With the garrison pinned down, the troops rushed the gate. The soldiers who were there recount the Queen's bravery as she personally exhorted the troops onward.

Their night vision ruined by the torches and their hearing deafened by Laranians' cries, none of the men of the *Copper Hook* garrison heard the tap-tap of spikes being driven into the walls of the keep. Scaling the outcrop had proven simple work for Sir Antin and his "Forty Thieves". Reaching the unguarded stable, the cutthroats slipped into the courtyard armed with falchions. Attacking the Agri-



kans from behind, they reached the gate, throwing it open and letting the rest of the army in. The garrison gave no quarter nor expected it and many men, including Sir Janzen Collyer, died clearing the keep. Sir Yuri personally led the final rush up the staircase, killing the Agrikan commander in hand-to-hand combat on the roof of the keep. Few Agrikans survived the resulting bloodbath. The fall of Dunir was the high point of 693 TR, on an otherwise stalemated northern frontier.

## 694 - FOUL MURDER

Throughout 694, the Agrikans frequently embarked on ill-planned raids against Kandian forces hidden in Tesien Moor. Commanded by the able Sir Grolis Chahryn, the Kandians took a heavy toll on the Agrikans, subjecting them to death by a thousand tiny cuts.

Chafin I of Rethem, Kabe's successor, was determined to win the war by any means, and he instructed the Agrikan *Order of the Crimson Dancer* to assassinate Eriel. The murder was carried out in the last month of 694 TR; Eriel was slain in her sewing room at Dyrisa [NOTE 20]. The assassin, Brenlyn of Shernath, was captured, and confessed before she was executed. She implicated Chafin I in the crime, and this, in addition to the widely believed (and never denied) rumour that Eriel's body had been mutilated, outraged Kanday.

Eriel's sister, Mirelael, came to the throne in a storm of fury and outrage against the Rethemi. After she succeeded her assassinated sister in 694, Ranald, as consort, played an active role in rebuilding Kanday. He was her most trusted advisor, both in pursuing the war, and rebuilding the shattered economy of Kanday after the Peace of Selvos in 697.

## 695 - LONG MARCH

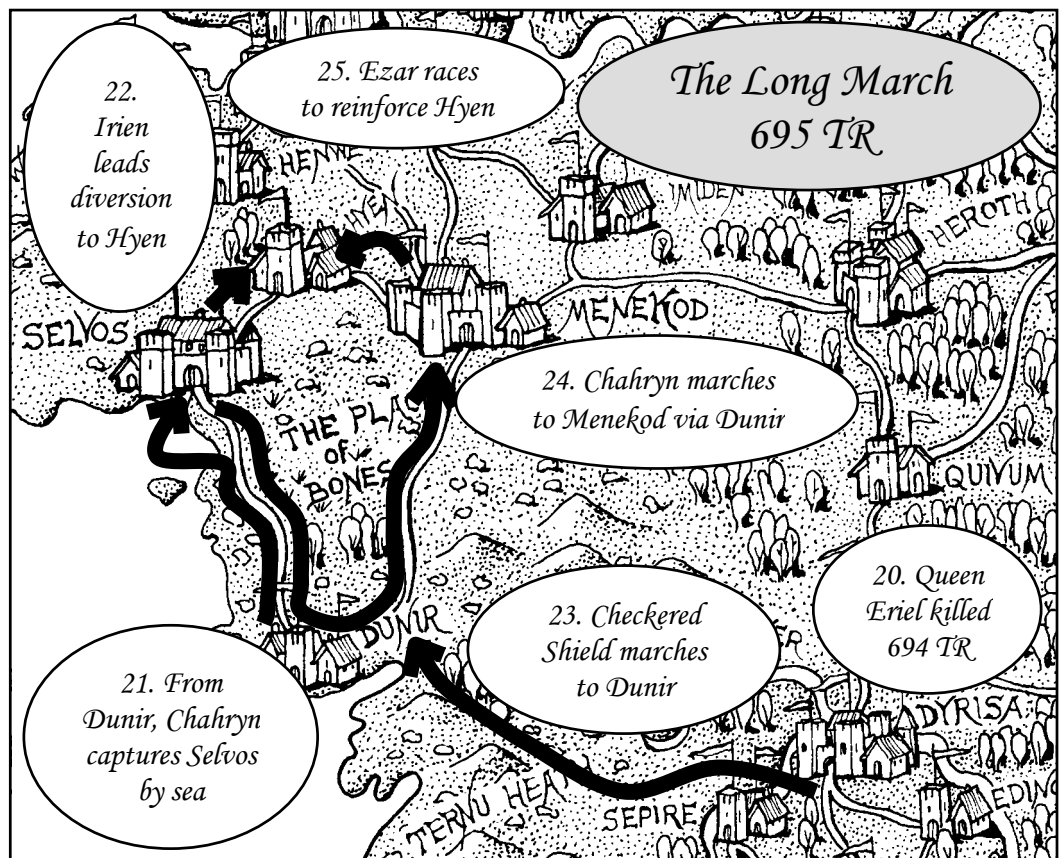
With the assassination of Eriel, all of Kanday wanted revenge. Queen Mirelael's first act upon being crowned was to convene her war council. The council included the Lord Marshal, Sir Grolis, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Marik of Hunvele, her husband and

most trusted advisor, Earl Ranald Milaka, the Grandmaster of the *Checkered Shield* and the Earl of Heroth. Within a week, riders were dispatched to every corner of the kingdom to summon the greatest army in Kandian history.

That spring, knights, men-at-arms and yeomen from every corner of the land poured into Dyrisa. Looking to repeat the success of 693 TR, Sir Grolis again combed the levy for the finest men. This would be a war for young, fit men. His plan was bold and required speed and surprise. Patrols were posted on every road to stop spies from relaying the army's location.

Another elite army was selected for the final campaign. Twenty knights of the Royal High Guard and 40 men-at-arms of the Royal Low Guard would lead the column. Sixty knights of the *Checkered Shield* and 120 men-at-arms would form the rear guard. As before, the bulk of the army would be drawn from the veterans of the North and South armies, 100 knights and 200 men-at-arms. The remainder of the army was made up of elite mercenaries hired at great expense, 60 heavy horse and 120 medium and light foot. In total 240 knights and 480 infantry plus squires and servants formed the attacking army.

The most difficult troops to find were the siege engineers. A highly specialized trade, there are few on Harn, mostly mercenaries who travel from conflict to conflict. After the loss of Sarkum and Hebon in 688 TR, Grolis tried



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to hire siege engineers locally without success. Finally, in desperation he dispatched an embassy to Trierzon. After several months, they returned with Gelsing of Buhay, a highly skilled mercenary captain and his troop of 20 engineers. Although expensive, Gelsing proved his worth at the siege of Hebon and just the news of the arrival of the engineers at Sarkum, shortly after the death of King Kabe, encouraged the garrison to surrender. In anticipation of the attack on Menekod, Grolis sent the mercenaries to Dunir two weeks before his other troops.

The remaining feudal levies and household troops of the nobility totalled over 1500. They would march north to Heroth under the joint command of the Earls of Heroth and Sarkum.

Speed was of the essence. As soon as the ground dried enough for the horses and mules, the attacking army departed for Dunir. Following the route of 693 TR, they made good time. Sir Grolis drove his men mercilessly. Using forced marches they made Dunir in just four days. Stopping only long enough to re-provision, they continued north. In a day and a half they had reached the edge of the settled territory around Selvos. Grolis allowed his men only a half-day's rest while he prepared the attack.

On a moonless night in the late summer of 695, just outside of the range of Selvos' patrols, the army linked up with two ships that had been sent ahead from Aleath. When the infantry reached the shore, sailors from the two ships met them. Each ship carried 10 assault boats. Over-sized rowboats, the assault boats were clinker built with 10 muffled oars. With two men per oar and a sailor to steer, 400 men-at-arms boarded the boats for the three-hour row to Selvos. Leaving just 80 men-at-arms to guard the camp and baggage train (mostly mules), the cavalry moved quietly toward the town.

While the mercenary heavy horse, skilled in murder and unchivalrous means, took care of the outlying manor houses, 40 Kandian knights raided the town. Rycyk, the Agrikan Commander, summoned his cavalry and personally led them against the Laranians in a pursuit that led three leagues south. Meanwhile, the 20 assault boats, commanded by Sir Grolis Chahryn, slipped ashore at the foot of the castle and dozens of siege ladders hit the walls. The Kandians were on the outer battlements of the castle before the alarm could even be raised. Special iron battering rams, that required four men to carry, were hauled up and used to batter down the doors of the keep. Four hundred Laranians seized the castle in less than an hour **[NOTE 21]**. Rycyk returned from his fruitless chase in the dark to find his castle held against him.

Retreating to the town, Rycyk found the elusive Kandian knights, reinforced by 20 knights of the Royal Guard, 60 knights of the *Checkered Shield* and 60 additional levy knights already within the rampart in several

locations. Charging down the hill from the causeway, the Agrikans forced their way through to the temple, where they made their last stand. Rycyk is said to have killed ten Kandian knights before being slain. Word of the Kandian victory spread and most local peasants rebelled and overthrew their masters.

Once the castle was secure, Sir Grolis brought 200 men-at-arms down from the castle to assist in the capture of the town. They weren't needed. The knights had slaughtered every knight and man-at-arms and numerous townsfolk as well. It took over an hour for Grolis and his officers to get the men back under control.

The next morning, gallows were erected and Sir Grolis sat in judgement. Every member of the town was brought before him and questioned, young and old, men and women. Those with the taint of Agrik, Morgath or Naveh were executed on the spot. A hundred people died that morning. For Andasin, for Eriel, for justice, the men cried.

Grolis was not finished yet. The castle was garrisoned with 40 men and several metalsmiths and woodcrafters were set to work repairing the damage. Sir Petryn was detached with 60 mercenary heavy horse and 80 men-at-arms to create a diversion. He was tasked with making the *Copper Hook* think that the main attack would come towards Hyen **[NOTE 22]**.

Meanwhile, Grolis raced back to Dunir, taking only a day and a half. His army was much reduced, with 58 knights and 72 infantry dead and 60 knights and 120 men-at-arms tied up garrisoning his newly won castle, Grolis was left with just 122 knights and 288 infantry. Arriving in Dunir, he met another army.

With the permission of the Queen and the Archbishop, the Grandmaster of the *Checkered Shield* had stripped the entire kingdom bare. Old men, young boys and Laranian priests were left to guard Quivum and the other *Checkered Shield* chapterhouses. The Grandmaster had brought every member of the Order, including 17 members of the *Lady of Paladins* who had been escorting a delegation to the Archbishop in Dyrisa **[NOTE 23]**. In addition to his 20 mercenary siege engineers, there were 203 knights and 372 men-at-arms waiting when Grolis reached Dunir.

Stopping only for a quick meal and water, the general drove his army on. Aided by a well-marked trail on relatively flat ground, the reinforced army made Dinayn manor by nightfall **[NOTE 24]**. At the sight of the huge army, the small Agrikan garrison fled for Menekod. Arriving in Menekod, they were startled to find the barracks half empty. Upon receiving word of the fall of Selvos and the "army" menacing Hyen, Ezar had raced off to reinforce his vulnerable flank **[NOTE 25]**. When word of the real army reached his constable, messengers were sent after the Grandmaster and gates bolted.



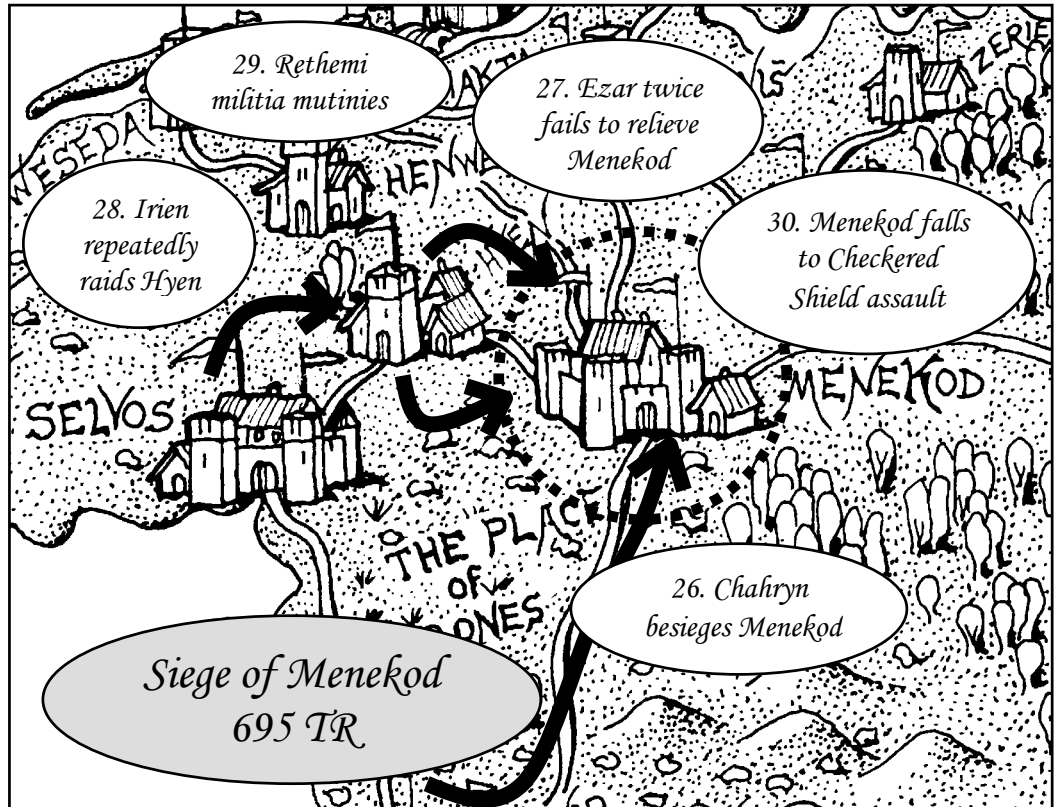
The large Kandian army spilled out into the field east of the castle. Within an hour the town was secure and the general had occupied the Speckled Band Inn. Under the direction of the siege engineers, two palisaded camps were built and a ring of sentry points constructed around the castle. Sentries were posted to warn of approaching forces on the Golotha road and the siege began [NOTE 26].

For the next six weeks, the Laranians besieged Menekod while the feudal levy stood watch at Heroth to ensure Tharda did not decide to join the war. Twice the *Copper Hook* tried to relieve Menekod, but the Kandians had the advantage of choosing the

time and ground to meet them. Both times they were repulsed with heavy losses [NOTE 27]. Sir Petryn's forces repeatedly attacked Hyen, forcing Ezar to tie up valuable troops for its defence [NOTE 28].

The King of Rethem, Chafin I, still smarting from the loss of his father's army at Sarkum, was hard pressed to maintain law and order and hold on to his throne. Lacking funds to hire mercenaries, Chafin called out the militia for the first time since the war begun in 682 TR. Forced to live under ruthless Agrikan nobles and crushing taxes, the militia proved a two-edged sword. Along the Thard River where they were defending their homes, the militia proved to be crafty and loyal, effectively sealing the northern border and securing the King's left flank. The levies from Shostim, Ithiko, Tormau and Golotha proved to be more dangerous to the crown than the Kandians. High rates of desertion and the resulting banditry was bad enough, but when three hundred militia mutinied on hearing rumours that they would be sent against the *Checkered Shield*, the King's own bodyguard had to be committed to put them down [NOTE 29]. Faced with several potential internal revolts, Chafin had no troops to spare for Ezar.

Finally, a mineshaft dug by the mercenary siege engineers reached the south wall and collapsed one of the flanking towers. A great roar rose up from the army. General Grolis had his officers call for volunteers to rush the breach. Many begged for the honour, but the Grand-



master of the *Checkered Shield* stepped forward. "For our dead at the massacre of Gisala, for King Andasin, for our beloved Queen Eriel, we ask you to grant us the honour of this task." Touched, and well aware of the fighting prowess of the *Checkered Shield*, Grolis agreed. The Grandmaster formed up his men and called upon his chaplains to bless them. The knight's chargers were sent to the rear, squires and servants dismissed as the knights and men of the Order closed ranks. Then, with a great roar "For Larani. For Kanday. For Queen Mirelael." They charged. Few of the first rank survived, or the second, or even the third, for the Agrikans are fierce and devilish fighters, but the fourth rank seized the breach. With a deliberate, unnerving calm, the Order waded forward, taking first the west bailey then the east [NOTE 30].

All the while, the siege engineers had been moving their great battering ram against the main gate. While the *Checkered Shield* battered Menekod from the inside, the Royal Army attacked the outside. The main gatehouse was the last part of the castle to fall.

Three days later, Queen Mirelael arrived. The carnage was so great that men were still being collected and buried. Helped by the Royal Consort she mounted the rubble of the breach in the south wall. Looking down from the top, the castle was strewn with *Checkered Shield* dead. Calling forward a badly injured Grandmaster, she decreed that, in memory of their sacrifice and loyalty to Kanday,

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the great castle of Menekod, key to the north, would be granted to the *Order of the Checkered Shield*.

## 696-697 - PEACE OF SELVOS

Faced with the destruction of the majority of the *Copper Hook* and the loss of a keep in 693 TR and two key castles in 695 TR, and fearing that some of his own lands might fall to the enemy, Chafin sued for peace. The *Copper Hook* was ordered to fall back to Hyen on the pain of annihilation. Heralds and emissaries spent the winter of 695 TR and all of 696 TR shuttling back and forth between Golotha and Dyrisa.

In exchange for the great castle of Menekod, the *Checkered Shield* returned the keep at Quivum to the Kandian crown. Scores of new recruits flooded into the Order to replace those who had died so bravely in the assault. Dozens of masons and other craftsmen were recruited to repair the damaged south wall and remove all traces of the Agrikans.

The Grand Array was stood down and allowed to return to their homes. Most of the remaining troops and mercenaries were released except for 80 knights 160 men-at-arms under the command of the Sheriff of Peris (as Sir Grolis was again known, after he relinquished the position of Lord Marshal).

In all, 696 TR was a quiet year. Mindful of their fragile position with the King, the *Copper Hook* withdrew to Hyen to lick their wounds. Despite the loss of Dunir, Selvos and Menekod, the Order remained a potent force. Fifteen years of war had taken the ill-trained mob of 681 TR and forged it into a deadly weapon poised to strike at the Laranian heartland. The knights and men-at-arms that remained were mostly composed of the elite troops that Ezar had stripped from Menekod to meet the false invasion of Hyen. Even counting the grievous losses suffered in the two attempts to relieve Menekod and repeated attacks on Hyen, the Order is still larger and stronger than they were in 680 TR. Regular raids on Selvos and Menekod keep their men in fighting trim while the Order bides its time. Few on either side of the border underestimate the threat they still pose.

Queen Mirelael and King Chafin met at Selvos castle in the spring of 697 TR. A treaty, known as the Peace of Selvos was signed in the main hall in the presence of ambassadors from Tharda, Kaldor and Melderyn, ending the bitter fifteen year conflict and establishing the present Rethem-Kanday border.

Mirelael devoted the remainder of her reign to rebuilding the shattered economy of Kanday and establishing peace. As a result, Kanday emerged stronger than ever from Ezar's War. The independent states west of Aleath, and lands taken from the *Order of the Copper Hook*, had

added to the kingdom. Rethem, on the other hand, verged on civil war.

## AFTERMATH

Chafin had the notorious Ezar assassinated in 698. The *Order of the Crimson Dancer* enjoyed the disfavour of the king to the extent that they emigrated to Orbaal in 701. Chafin I was assassinated in 703; this time no one was caught.

In Kanday during the summer court of 698 TR, Queen Mirelael with the support of the Grandmaster of the *Order of the Checkered Shield*, Archbishop of Larani, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Earl of Heroth made Sir Grolis Chahryn, the first Earl of Selvos, granting him title to the castle and all of its surrounding lands. She also made his deputy, and the commander of the assault on Dunir, a baron of that fair keep and vassal of the Earl of Selvos.

Two years later, after some backroom deals and friendly persuasion, Sir Petryn Irien, another of Grolis' captains, was made baron of Zerien. Queen Mirelael's decision to appoint these men and create the Earldom were over the objections of her Royal Consort, Earl of Sarkum, who, it was common knowledge, coveted those estates for his own. Many believed the Queen chose to do this to balance loyal Clan Kand retainers against the growing influence of Clan Milaka in her own household.

Despite his annoyance over the loss of Selvos to Sir Grolis, a man he once looked down upon as an upstart sheep farmer from Perishire, Earl Milaka has been forced to admit, however grudgingly, that he has done a good job securing the border. Over the last two decades, relations have thawed and the Earl of Sarkum has developed a basic working relationship with Sir Temilin Chahryn, the heir to the Earldom. The knight's intelligence and calm demeanour have smoothed over the waters and allowed these two powerful clans to work together. Of late, Ranald Milaka has been too busy trying to thwart the Earl of Heroth's attempts to marry his daughter to his son, the King, to worry overmuch about things he can't change.



## SIR GROLIS CHAHRYN

The son of a founder of the *Checkered Shield*, Sir Grolis proved himself a skilled knight and a talented leader. Selected to join the Royal Guard in 662TR, Sir Grolis was appointed to the vital post of

Sheriff of Peris on the death of his predecessor in 676 TR. A post he would fill for twenty-two years. In 686, after a year of war, he became commander of the Army of the North. With the invasion of Sarkum in 688TR he was made Lord Marshal of Kanday, a title he retained until 696. During the summer court of 698 TR, Queen Mirelael made Sir Grolis Chahryn, the first Earl of Selvos, granting him title to the castle and all of its surrounding lands. He has proven to be an excellent Earl and has proven more than able, in cooperation with the *Checkered Shield*, to contain the *Copper Hook*. Who have never recognized the treaty, not least because all of the land ceded by King Chafin was Orderial land. Now aged 79, he has all but abdicated his duties to his son.

## THE COMPANIONS

The son of a minor noble, Sir Grolis Chahryn rose to the rank of Lord Marshal of Kanday during Ezar's War. During his meteoric rise to power, he surrounded himself with men chosen for their leadership abilities and personal loyalty rather than rank or political connections. During the war, the Earl of Heroth jokingly referred to Grolis and his men as a hero and his loyal companions off to slay the evil Agrikans; they became quite taken with the archaic title and adopted with pride. The Companions in turn took to referring to their leader as Messer Grolis, the form of address an old family retainer might use for the young master, not what another member of the upper classes would employ. Grolis hated it, but its use soon spread to the entire army.

During the war, the traditional nobles, led by the Earl of Sarkum, view the close bond and solidarity of the Companions with ire and suspicion. Referred to as "Grolis' Hounds", they are viewed as baseborn nobodies, mercenaries and upstart sheep farmers from Perishire, promoted to positions of command over loyal men of good birth because they owe everything to Chahryn. However, the Marshal's steadfast loyalty to Clan Kand has

earned and kept the trust and respect of King Andasin III, Queen Eriel, Queen Mirelael and now King Andasin IV. Even old Ranald Milaka can deny his service to the kingdom.

**LADY EMMENALLE FORSTIN:** Raised by her senile uncle, she was the orphaned daughter of a minor functionary of the royal court. Lady Emmenalle met Sir Grolis when he joined the Royal Guard. They fell in love and were married in 677. She became his constant companion, even joining him on campaign. Her instinct for court intrigue and close friendship with Princess (later Queen) Mirelael aided Grolis' rise to power and protected him from political treachery, especially the Earl of Sarkum. She bore him two sons, Temilin and Eldan, and a daughter, Jocie (now a High Priestess in the Laranian Church). Lady Emmenalle died in 712 of a lung disease and is buried in the family vault in Tyrinale.



## SIR YURI OF XE-

**LADOS:** The third son of a bailiff, Sir Yuri was 28 years old when he was sent to serve with the spring levy in 685. A superb horseman and natural cavalry commander, he quickly rose to become Sir Grolis' second in command and trusted deputy.

Trusted for his ability to execute commands independently, he led the successful siege of Dunir. Following the war, he was made a Baron.

**SIR JANZEN COLLYER:** The son of a knight in the Royal Guard, Sir Janzen was assigned to be Sir Yuri's lieutenant in the spring of 685. Known for his reckless bravery, he was killed at age 32 leading the final assault on Dunir Keep in 693 TR



**SIR PETRYN IRIEN:** The youngest member of the companions, Sir Petryn is from an old and noble family. His father had been a member of the *Checkered Shield* with Sir Grolis' father. With three manors near Zerien, they sent their youngest son to the spring levy in 685. Just 18 years old, he

proved to be a dashing and daring cavalry commander, especially skilled at leading reconnaissance and finding

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Rethemi forces before they could find the Kandians. Appointed steward of Selvos at just 28 years old, he was made Baron of Zerien in 698TR.



**SIR TAMYS BAKYTH:** A retainer of Clan Irien, Sir Tamys was sent to watch over the young and impulsive Sir Petryn. A mature 21 years old at the beginning of the war, he served as Sir Petryn's lieutenant throughout the conflict. Appalled by the carnage at Menekod, Tamys left the service of Sir Petryn and entered a Laranian monastery.

He spent several years contemplating his sins before returning to public life. Once he re-entered the main stream of the church, his rise was rapid aided by his natural talent and powerful connections. In 711 TR he was made Bishop of Perinore and in 717 TR he was made Sheriff of Norea. He still maintains his close ties to his fellow captains and the Earl of Selvos.



**SIR MEURS SILDEN:** Looked down upon for his aversion to horses (caused by his allergies) he never truly fit in with the other knights. Instead, he found a niche commanding the Kandian infantry. Long ignored by traditional knights, he forged them into a disciplined and effective force. Sir Grolis understood medium foot could break a charge and bowmen could keep them at bay, giving the cavalry a base to regroup and reform. Forty-four years old

at the end of the war, Sir Meurs found it hard to adjust to the peace that followed Ezar's War. When Sir Grolis retired to Selvos as Earl, no one else seemed interested in him or his elite infantry. Finally, at the invitation of Gelsing of Buhay, he recruited two companies of veterans and travelled to Trierzon, where he became quite wealthy as a free blade for hire.

**SIR SALAN PARTA:** Raised in the peace of Melderyn, Sir Salan was inspired by the war against the hated Agri-

kans. In 689TR, he assembled a group of young knights and yeomen from the island and at his own expense chartered a ship to Aleath. There, he joined the crusade, earning great glory as a cavalry commander in the Army of the South. After the war, he returned home flush with loot and ransom. A number of his men settled in Dureve Hundred and their accent has influenced the local dialect.

**SIR FODI OF DRAVAEN:** Also from Melderyn, Fodi of Dravaen began the war as a mercenary. Queen Eriel knighted him after the assault on Hebon Keep where, although sorely wounded, he guarded King Andasin's body after he was killed. After the war, he rose to become Constable of Dyrisa Keep.

**SIR ANTIN MULEWIS:** Another mercenary captain, Antin hailed from Shorkyne. The leader of a group of irregulars known among the army as "The Forty Thieves", his men specialised in infiltration and intelligence gathering. Held in contempt by the traditional nobles, Grolis skilfully used him to gather information and sneak behind enemy lines. His group of misfits and sailors were key to the fall of Dunir Keep. Knighted by Queen Eriel in 693, he retired home to Shorkyne a very wealthy man.

**GELSING OF BUHAY:** Finding a common mercenary is easy, finding a siege engineer is extremely difficult. A very specialized trade; there are rarely more than a handful on Harn due to the lack of employment. During the war, Grolis sent an embassy to Trierzon. There, they found and recruited Gelsing, a veteran mercenary captain, in 689TR. He served for seven years and was very well paid for his work.

**MUZZAF KERPATIK:** A mercantyle, he was the only non-military companion. Employed by Lady Emmenalle to manage her husband's assets, he was a person-of-doing; he invested their money in trading interests, shares in quarries and mines and rental property in Aleath and other towns. Ransoms and shares of loot made Grolis rich, Muzzaf's investments made him truly wealthy. Although he died in 715, his son Steu is bailiff of the Clan estates in Selvos.