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SAINTS, RELICS AND THE KNIGHTS OF KALDOR

The search for the relics of the Knights of Kaldor is central to the plot of the campaign of the same name. In short, the heroic leaders of King Medrik's forces were given objects in reward for their services during the Migration War. Unknown to anyone, these objects were in fact Agrikan artifacts of great power. Since the late second century TR, a heretical sect of Agrikans has tried to recover these artifacts. This sect's warriors are called Devil Riders and they have ranged throughout eastern Kaldor for centuries looking for these relics. More information on the Devil Riders is in the Devil Rider article

The following sections discuss the nature and operation of the sacred cairn, the properties and details of the relics that are associated with the cairn, and the Laranian saints that had the misfortune to have their heroic service rewarded with tainted treasure.

Who is looking for the Relics?

The Devil Riders will use their spy in the Abbey to gain information about the relics and anyone who is searching for them. Since their spy is Mistress Conatar, the Sulorana, she is very well positioned to arrange for investigators to be ambushed and taken to the bandit camp in the ruins of the Royal Hunting Lodge in the KIRSTA Forest. She thinks that Loran is a harmless eccentric; otherwise he'd be long dead.

Loran the Southron is searching for the relics out of pure academic interest. As a Save K'norran, he places no particular religious significance on the items and would donate them to the Laranian Church after he was done studying them. Loran will hire or co-opt (ask favors) PCs to follow up lines of investigation for him.

The Laranian Church is not actively seeking the relics but, once concrete evidence of their existence is known, will politely require the relics to be donated to the Church.

The Cairn

The Devil Rider temple guards one of Thomor's sacred cairns. If used with the proper ritual, the cairn enables a priest to communicate directly with the mystical beings of the Eternal Warlord's plane. Wondrous things can be seen, future events foretold, and (according to legend) great magicks transported from Balgashang to Kethira.

The cairn is a jumbled pile of rocks approximately 8 feet long, 3 feet wide and 3 feet high – surrounded by a circle of stones, each of which stands only ankle high. This pile would not be noteworthy to an observer except for the dull orange glow that emanates from deep inside the rocks. As the observer draws closer, he will detect the unmistakable odor of sulfur and ozone.

If the observer steps over the ring of guard stones, he will feel the physical force of the cairn's power. A blast of heat envelops him, as if he had suddenly stepped in front of an open oven or blast furnace. The core of his body warms and the observer feels a blast of strength fill him but the Lord of Balgashang has already claimed his soul. The warmth grows, like the pressure inside a closed pot, until the observer's soul erupts from his body. All that is left is the sound of his useless flesh sizzling on the rocks.

As a portal to the Warlord's palace, the cairn emits a fantastic amount of energy. It is this radiation that dispatches the unwary. Unguarded exposure to the cairn results in a quick and final death. Prolonged exposure to the cairn from outside the guard stones leads to a unnatural extended life span but requires constant re-exposure to the radiation. The cost of this pseudo-immortality is radiation poisoning.

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Rethrik's Horn

The priests of the temple's Inner Circle bear the marks of the radiation poisoning. All the priests are bald, most have red, sometimes charred-looking, skin, and all eventually go blind. The more senior members of the clergy rarely leave the lower level of the temple, using their elaborate robes to hide pus-filled lesions and large, deformed growths on the fleshy parts of their bodies.

The Relics

The Relics that are the keys to the KoK campaign were created to operate the cairn. The reader should note that this operation does not imply control, as using the cairn is akin to riding a rodeo bull. Like a bull rider, a priest starts the ritual, hangs on, and sees where the cairn takes him. Each relic has a specific purpose and must be in its proper place for the ritual to be successful.

Five relics are required for the ritual. One is the "instruction manual" and the other four are the cairn's "steering mechanism." The relics and their locations are:

Rethrik's horn – This large horn is banded in rings of a strange metal and is covered in runes. During the ritual the horn acts like a spiritual doorbell. The horn is in the Chapel of Calsten at Lethyl abbey. An adventurer found Rethrik's horn in the mid-sixth century. He mistook it for an artifact of Saint Syrele and donated to the Abbey. The Suloran examined the horn and concluded that it actually belonged to King Calsten and had it placed in the Chapel. There it has sat, in full view and without special protection, for the last one hundred and twenty years.

Freden's mace – This three-foot long iron mace is used during the ritual to anchor the end of the energy flow. The priest inserts the mace, butt first, into a socketed guard stone at the foot of cairn. The mace is in the crypt of St. Freden's ruined manor east of Ominstru and is guarded by the shade of the Saint.

Ebryn's sword – This sword is used during the ritual as a sacrificial knife. After the celebrants are in place, one of the priests cuts the sacrifice from shoulder to hip from behind, allowing the body to topple forward and land on the cairn - the blood of the sacrifice 'charges' the cairn. No one can remember why or when it left the temple but the sword was undeniably found on the battlefield. The sword is imprisoned with Ebryn's shade in a hidden grotto under Hyzevel tower. The lord of Hyzevel knows the sword is there and will try to stop anyone from discovering its location or freeing Sir Ebryn from his prison.

Börne's helm – The helm looks like it is made from steel with an attached steel mask. It is the control device for the whole ritual. This relic enables the wearer to direct the energy flow and communicate with the other side. It is in Börne's crypt in his ruined manor north of Lethyl.

Perkal's shroud – Since the Agrikan temple language has no alphabet (Surikal isn't written), the temple masters needed to create a "user's manual" for the cairn to prevent the knowledge being lost and with it contact with Balgashang through the cairn. This information was woven into a tapestry of fine linen. At



Freden's Mace



Ebryn's Sword



Börne's helm

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one time it hung in the High Priest's chambers but was carried into battle as a talisman. After the battle, Perkal lay dead and the tapestry was used as his shroud. His barrow has become a gargûn nest and his burial chamber, the gargûn king's feast hall.

The fact that these relics were taken from the temple demonstrates the desperation the temple masters felt at that time. While history has it that Medrik and his forces were fighting Taelda warriors, the truth is that the Taelda were reinforced by Devil Riders intent on forging a new Agrikan kingdom in the east. When Medrik's armies battled their way to the doorstep of the hidden temple, the temple masters acted by using every relic, spell, and dirty trick at their disposal. Despite their best efforts, and the lives of several thousand Taelda, the battle was lost and all of the relics became prizes of the victors.

What few of the Agrikans (and definitely none of the Serelindians) realized was that the relics carried some of the cairn's radiation. Just as a piece of metal will absorb radiation if placed in proximity to a radioactive source, the relics had stored enough of the cairn's energy to become lethal to anyone who handled them for extended periods of time. Each relic had a slightly different effect on its owner but all of them impart enhanced strength and stamina to anyone that handles the items for an extended period of time. The unfortunate effect, however, is that the radiation poisoning compels the handler to sacrifice living creatures to Agrik. Whether this compulsion is the result of the artifacts' construction or a byproduct of the centuries of use in the cairn ritual is of academic interest only.

Within five years of the Battle of Noneth, the effects of the relics can be seen in the legends of the saints. Saint Freden's legendary strength as he breached the walls of Kobing or Saint Ebryn's supernatural sense of danger that he used to avoid Pagaelin ambush time after time are examples of the relics' effects. Similarly, by the end of the Migration Wars the Mace had driven Saint Freden to sacrifice humans, as the Sword did to St. Ebryn. The Helm, perhaps because of its

proximity to St. Börne's head, killed the saint before he could perform any (known) unholy acts.

Even today, the relics affect those that are close to them. The Horn has caused Mother Harquey's advanced senility and her assistant's growing imbecility. Any person handling the Mace, the Sword, or the Helm will find his mind being bent by the residual radiation. Agrik's unholy fires will light the darkest recesses of the soul, bringing forth the urge to offer sacrifices to the Warlord.

Because it is not made of metal, the Shroud lacks the lethal qualities of the other relics. It has had no effects on the gargûn that have inhabited the barrow. Since no human has laid eyes on the Shroud since it was buried with St. Perkal, wary adventurers might be reluctant to come into contact with the material without elaborate (and unnecessary) precautions.

Individuals may attempt to invoke the Agrikan artifacts by testing their AURA. Physical contact is necessary throughout the invocation and use of the artifact. The test is conducted by rolling a percentile dice against AURA x5. The result of the test is indicated in the table below, where Fx is the number of fatigue levels indicated for each artifact. For example, a player attempts to use St. Freden's Mace and rolls a MS during the invocation. His attempt is, therefore, successful but he incurs 2 Fatigue levels (F1 + 1) during the attempt.

Table 1 Effects on the Wielder attempting invocation of one of the cairn's artifacts

CS	Attempt succeeds Fx		CF	Attempt Fails Fx + 4, Shock Roll
MS	Attempt succeeds Fx + 1		MF	Attempt Fails Fx + 2

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St. Freden's Mace

Size	3 ft. long	Weight	4
<i>Description</i>			
Weapon will not shatter in combat A/D 15/5. A long iron headed mace with an iron spike at the end of the haft. The wood of the haft looks burned where it is not wrapped in leather to improve the wielder's grip.			
<i>Power</i>	<i>Mental Bolt (F1) 25 – SI sec.</i>		
The Mace enables the wielder to project a blast of mental energy at a spherical area three feet in radius (total volume = 113 cubic feet) centered on a point within SI x 15 feet and line of sight. If the invocation succeeds (see Table 1), a MS causes the victim to accrue two Fatigue Levels (F2) and make a Shock Roll (SKILLS 22) as if the mace had physically damaged them (B6). A CS inflicts four Fatigue Levels (F4) and make a Shock Roll (SKILLS 22) as if the mace had physically damaged them (B12).			

St. Ebryn's Sword

Size	3 ft. long	Weight	3
<i>Description</i>			
A broad sword of an ancient design. A/D 15/10			
<i>Power</i>	<i>Mental Bolt (F1) 25 – SI sec.</i>		
The Sword enables the wielder to project a blast of mental energy at a spherical area three feet in radius (total volume = 113 cubic feet) centered on a point within SI x 15 feet and line of sight. If the invocation succeeds (see table XX), a MS causes the victim to accrue two Fatigue Levels (F2) and make a Shock Roll (SKILLS 22) as if the sword had physically damaged them (B3). A CS inflicts four Fatigue Levels (F4) and make a Shock Roll (SKILLS 22) as if the mace had physically damaged them (B6).			

St. Rethrik's Horn

Size	2 ft. long	Weight	2
<i>Description</i>			
An old hunting instrument carved from a huge horn. The surface of the horn is engraved with scenes and runes that the scholars think record St. Calsten’s life. In fact, these carvings record the travels of Ilpylen as he sought the cairn.			
<i>Power</i>	<i>Induce Fear (F2) 10 – SI seconds</i>		
If the wielder successfully sounds the horn, every sentient being within SI x 100 feet (range centered on the wielder) will be beset by fear (??).			

St. Börne's Helm

Size	sized for an average human male	Weight	5.6
Description			
A 3/4 helm with eye protection.			
Power	Command (F2) 25 – SI seconds		
The wielder may attempt to command sentient beings (corporeal or ethereal) within a spherical radius of 10 feet from the helm (in other words, the wielder must be wearing the helm and the helm's effect is within a 10 feet of the gem on the front of the helm.) The wielder tests against the beings' WILL. An invocation that results in a MS allows the wielder to compel the being to perform a simple task such as answer a yes/no question within its knowledge, move in a direction that does not appear to be threatening, open a door, etc. A CS allows more complex tasks to be commanded (d6 – 3 simple tasks.) If the invocation results in a MF, the beings run away in a random direction from the wielder at full speed for d6 turns. A CF allows the being to resist the command and remain in place.			

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The Immortal Six

The outlook of the average Serelindian during time of the Migration War was bleak. Savage Taeldans and ravenous gargûn swept down from the Sorkin Mountains and raided with impunity. During these dark years, vast swathes of Thicesund, Rumerill, and KIRSTA were depopulated; only piles of rubble and thorns now remind passersby of the manors that once stood proudly in these hundreds. The dark Yalten Hania Forest, a dangerous place even in good years, fell firmly under the control of the Taelda. Legends even told of dark beasts and dragons that crept out of their foul lairs to prey upon the helpless. Desperate, many of these unfortunates turned to banditry and added to the destruction visited on Serelind and Pagostra.

Into this maelstrom rode King Medrik of Serelind. He was armed with the 'magical' sword given to his father, Calsten, by the Khuzdul. More importantly were his household knights that followed him. These men shared implicit trust with Medrik, enabling the small Serelindian army to strike deeply into the hearts of much larger forces or to fly around the flanks of an opponent to cut off their retreat. The commanders of this valiant army became known as the Immortal Six, both for their embodiment of Laranian virtue and their service to the kingdom. The King, of course, was first of the six but five other men quickly distinguished themselves from this august company. Each began as a knight of the royal household but rose to hold distinguished rank before the end of the campaign. By the time of the Battle of Noneth, Medrik had named each of them Commanders in his forces.

Ebryn Kobarney, a knight from western Serelind, was the army's greatest tactician and battlefield leader. He was named First Captain of Serelind's forces, in effect making him the second in command to the army of the entire kingdom. He stood at the center of the line at Noneth and directed the counter attack when the left wing of the Taelda was outflanked. After the battle, the King gave him a sword of one of the enemy's generals.

Freden Rynsel hailed from the forests of Thicesund but had seen his family killed in one of the earliest raids. He was the strongest of the five and always held the right of the battle line. His men often took heart from his courage and would sing with him as his axe rose and fell against the necks of the invaders. Freden's axe broke during the melee and King Medrik gifted him with a large mace that he had found on the field.

Börne Asan commanded the left of the line. Pinned against the river and outflanked by the savages, his troops held the Taelda and waited. When the battle was over, most of the dead were from his troops. Many more succumbed to their wounds in the months to come. His reward for holding the line and preventing a rout was a helmet chased in gold.

Rethrik commanded the household cavalry and delivered the deathblow to the Taeldans. He led the charge that swept the savages from the field and harried them back into their mountain holes. For his swift thinking and valor during the battle and its subsequent pursuit, Medrik gave him a horn that he could use to rally his troops whenever he saw the chance to charge to victory.

Perkal, the knight who had served Medrik the longest, held Serelind's banner. He died at Noneth and was buried in a great barrow there, as was the custom for warriors fallen in battle. His companions used the enemy's battle flags for his shroud. His grave was filled with the spoils of war and Taeldan prisoners forced to join him as guardians on his long journey to stand at the Shieldmaiden's side.

After the Migration War, these men were celebrated in song and story. Laranian priests extolled their heroism and faithful service to their king as examples of true chivalric virtue. When Medrik rode south against the Pagaelin, Ebryn, Freden, and Rethrik rode with him. Already soldiers and knights whispered their names with reverence. Rethrik died at Kobing. Ebryn returned to his manor and King Medrik granted lands to Freden. The wars ended, these gallant knights slipped away from court and became akin to living legends. Within a few years, they were

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being called saints by the populace and the clergy alike; their places in Dolithor already reserved.

In truth, those that had died in battle gained the best reward. The gifts that Medrik gave his most faithful knights carried the unholy taint of Agrik. Although these items would pass into legend as relics, they were like the seals on the saints' death warrants. Börne's death was swift and undeniably caused by the helm he wore but Ebryn and Freden bore the curse the longest.

Sir Ebryn returned from the war and quietly built a chapel beneath the tower, adorning its rough hewn altar stone with the sword. The sword's fell demon demanded to be fed blood and Ebryn was powerless to resist its whispers. People started to go missing and soon rumors started about a dark specter haunting the forest. Sir Ebryn showed no signs of aging after the War and lived well into his tenth decade. Curiously, none of his heirs ever survived their twentieth birthdays, although more junior members of the family married and had children.

Crolin Kobarney, Sir Ebryn's great-grand-nephew and squire, discovered the truth and rallied his family to erase the curse that threatened them. He recruited a hedge witch from the forest who bedazzled Sir Ebryn while Crolin and the other squires disarmed and bound their lord to his foul altar. Working in secret, the squires built a stone wall over the stairwell and imprisoned Sir Ebryn in his chapel. Once they were done, the witch sealed the wall with another spell to prevent Sir Ebryn or his sword from escaping. The wall and the chapel have been long forgotten but Sir Ebryn sits there still, brooding in the dark and waiting for the Fates to grant him an opportunity for revenge.

The Kobarneys have kept this secret for centuries, preserving Ebryn's reputation as well as the family's. Only the lord of the manor knows where the sealed wall is and why it is sealed. The witch that assisted Crolin still lives in the forest west of Hyzevel. Her magic has kept her looking young and lithe for centuries, so she often visits the manor market and can be found, if she wishes

it, in the Black Lily Inn enjoying the taste of a mug of ale and the song of a minstrel.

Saint Freden met a similar fate. He established his manor, which he called Vorsten, and sequestered himself in the rugged Chyle Forest. He had fallen under the evil thrall of the mace that he carried. Like Sir Ebryn, Freden lived a long life with seemingly unending youth and vitality. He never married but women that went to his bed seemed to lose their luck and fall victim to accidents soon after. Freden's life was extended by the demon (the radiation) that possessed him through the mace. In return for immortality, the radiation poisoning compelled him to sacrifice the life energies of other humans. As a result, Freden waylaid people he found in the forest and sacrificed them to his mace.

When the villagers finally realized that their lord was sacrificing their young maidens, they tried to run away. The manor's Peonian priest and Freden's squire were the rear guard. The ghost possessed the squire but, while the spirit was weak from the possession, the priest was able to seal the crypt and imprison the now corporeal ghost. The villagers escaped to a cave in the mountains and recorded the priest's story on a stone tablet, which now rests in the workroom of a Fyvrian hermit who lives on the slopes of Omin Mountain.

In the cases of Saint Ebryn and Saint Freden, the stories of their depravities were lost in the turmoil of the Civil War. The men have remained revered as saints for centuries and their legends used as part of the Laranian catechism in parts of Neph and Vemion.

Epilogue

The real twist is that if the PCs succeed and recover all of the artifacts, the items will be collected at a Laranian cathedral or abbey (Gardiren or Brynd most likely). The radiation poisoning will have its effect on the clergy of that church and the poison that took the Saints' souls shall work once more ...

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Finding the Truth

It is through the stories of the saints that scholars have a hint of the relics' true nature. Unfortunately, war and the passage of time has spread reliable sources far and wide. In 720 TR, there are three places that an interested scholar can learn about the relics.

The first place is in Lethyl Abbey. The Abbey's library has a number of books that deal with the history of the Serelindian period. The memoirs of King Medrik I and the journals of Baron Macerin of Getha, both of which include excerpts of the Letters of Arlin (see below), discuss the years following the battle. The scholastic challenge in this case is not in finding sources but in narrowing the search to focus on the aftermath of the Battle of Noneth. Many scholars have wasted years studying the early lives of the Immortal Six, while the relics did not become part of their lives until 180 TR.

In addition to the library, the abbey's infirmary has many murals illustrating the lives and deeds of the saints. From these pictures, a scholar could discern the physical characteristics of the relics and the relationship between the individual saints and the items.

The second place is at the home of Loran the Southron. He masquerades as a wealthy, eccentric nobleman whose passion is pre-Kaldoric history. In reality he is a Save K'norran priest from Tashal who is looking for clues to the relics of the Immortal Six. He has not yet realized that the relics are more than Laranian religious artifacts. Like many Save K'norrans, his quest for knowledge is near to an obsession with him and he will shamelessly manipulate anyone he thinks can bring him new information.

His home library contains few original sources, but the walls are covered with research journals and copies of murals, bas-relief, and written works that describe the life and miracles of the six saints. Loran's research has already determined that the Sword of Calsten (the relic carried by Medrik) was different from the other relics. He occasionally sponsors expeditions to ruined

manors that might have a connection with the relics. He has had adventurers investigate the Narador manor (and found nothing) and has been physically ejected from Hyzevel after Sir Tommas Kobarney caught him in the tower's basement.

Loran's current obsession is to find Saint Freden's manor and have it investigated. The manor, which he knows was near Ominstru, was abandoned in the latter part of the third century TR and most records of it lost during the Kaldoric Civil War.

The third and final place to learn about the saints is at the Narador manor. Finding the manor will not be easy. Jilëa Narador (see Lethyl infirmary) remembers her grandmother telling stories about a manor east of Hundholt but knows no more than that. Loran might tell prospective investigators where this is but will not pay them, as he still believes the report from the last expedition.

The original copy of the Letters of Arlin are there, hidden in the ruins of the manor house. The expedition sent by Loran never actually went there. Its members hid in the Broken Wheel Inn in Hundholt for a week before making a false report and taking the scholar's money.