

The Grayflags: A Tainted Oath

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THE GRAYFLAGS: A TARNISHED OATH

*SOMETIMES DOING WHAT IS RIGHT MEANS DOING WHAT IS
WRONG.*

In Waeldonstone, the law was honored and executed by a circle of knights. When Elyza Kaylein – one of their own – took justice too far, it was her neck the noose was cast around. But that didn't end her crusade...

A dramatis personae for use by GMs

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HONOR-BOUND

*A 'thank you' would have sufficed.
—Elyza Kaylein,
at the gallows*

Paved with the Best Intentions...

Without a central law enforcement organization, it falls to the corners of the realm to sort out their own laws and make sure their followed. This lack of oversight can obviously lead to corruption and abuse. But what happens it's not some evil monster, some succubus-controlled politician that twists events out of control? What if it's just the squeamish public that the laws were written to protect? Waeldonstone is one such place, where the law grew to be something greater than its walls could hold.

Being slightly off from the main travel routes, Waeldonstone was not a major hub of traffic but could sustain itself off the surrounding farmland and the traffic that did pass through. It was decided that the city didn't need an organized guard, but a militia would suffice. The farmers and craftsman would take turns in rotation to watch the main gate with pikes in hand to watch for would-be bandits. Occasionally when an up-and-coming hero would be in the area, the town's council would offer a reward to the champion if he would train with the militia for a bit and show them a new technique or two.

So it was for Waeldonstone for many years. The simple gray architecture emphasized the stable, uneventful lives of its people. The militia was enough to keep opportunists from paying on the town. They did eventually meet their match, however. A druid, misguided in his quest for purification drove a den of owlbears mad and herded them into the town. The minutemen were overwhelmed, blood and feathers littering the streets. The town's bells rang in a plea for help, but even the ringer felt no hope in his bones as pulled on the rope.

The last peal stirred Sir Aderlard Kaylein from his slumber. The retired knight had accepted compensation from the town's coffers to run a 'sword-and-board' workshop. The demonstration he put on that night would inspire the next generation of boys to favor the shield over the pike. He drove the owlbears back with the help of the militia, eventually cornering the druid. Sir Kaylein offered mercy, but the antlered diviner brought his sickles to bear and fell alongside the beasts he had driven mad.

Sir Kaylein would make Waeldonstone his home after that. The city council placed him in charge of the militia and allowed him to update them as he saw fit. The knight recruited and promoted a small circle of fellow men-at-arms to act as the military leadership. They were to be the pinnacles of virtue for the town and took their name from the stone-colored banners that sat atop the towers. Thus, the Grayflags were born.

Time passed and with it Sir Kaylein. His granddaughter Elyza eventually took his place as leader of the Grayflags and renewed the knights' zeal for protecting the city and upholding the honor their families had worked to maintain. More and more travelers visited Waeldonstone and the militia grew with the town and the interest in it. Elyza Kaylein struggled to find worthy peers to stand by her side as examples, however.

Gossip about vice-worshipping among the circle spread through the public like locust feeding on crops. The militia was slow to respond to the knights' orders, citing a deficiency in authority that likened to the weakness against temptation so many of the knights had shown. Elyza could barely show her face around in public. She was pressed to resolve the issue and began an inquiry into her men. Finger-pointing and accusations flowed freely and only lead to more names dragged through the muck.

Elyza started stripping titles and station from knights as her inquiry became more of an inquisition. She believed there to be a rotten core and

pursued every suspicion until she found herself face-to-face with the man she had grown up alongside, who had listened to all the same stories her grandfather had recited from the comfort of the hearth. He had been her sparring partner through adolescence and many speculated the two were lovers on and off. She didn't take his title, his sword, or his reputation. She took his head from his shoulders, acting as judge, jury, and executioner in a moment of passion.

The townsfolk that had flocked around the confrontation were now horrified. Mothers tried to shield their children from the visceral image. The minutemen called for *real* justice. They didn't see this as the solution to their issues with the knights, but Elyza taking her need for justice too far and feared for their own lives now. Elyza Kaylein surrendered her weapons and was ushered in front of the town council to hear her fate. Their words drowned out by the beats of her heart, the one she had sundered with her family sword.

After days of debate, it was decided that the Grayflags would be officially disbanded, what was left of them. Elyza would be tried for murder in a public court. She didn't resist the militia who escorted her, or raise her voice in defense of the accusations. It was a unanimous decision to hang her from the neck until dead.

There was a celebration to mark the end of the Grayflags and the new era of self-governance for the militia. Gallows were erected; vendors sold treats and trinkets to commemorate the event. The assembled watched as a thick rope with thirteen knots was fitted around her neck. They cheered as she refused the hood, excited to watch the light fade from her eyes and her defiance shake loose from her toes.

They were robbed of their sick spectacle, however. The escort who had brought her in revealed themselves to be the retainers that had served the Grayflags. They struck the unsuspecting and freed their champion. Elyza was ushered out of town under

the cover of a cloak and taken to a safe place far from Waedonstone on horseback.

Losing everything took its toll on the former knight. While her supporters had been able to recover her armor and personal effects, her grandfather's sword and shield had been shattered. She wept for the relics, for the years they had served the town that now turned on her. Word spread that the Grayflags had fallen from grace. The city even pulled down the iconic pennants to distance themselves from the shame.

No longer the patient and protective knight she had been, Elyza became more reckless in battle showing little concern for her life. Her battle-rage pitted her against a magistrate and his disciples that had been manipulating a town and he was crushed under the weight of her heavy blade without a second thought. One of the town's wardens had been taken captive after uncovering the magistrate's ploy. He offered her a reward for her good deed, if she would be return with him to town.

Elyza Kaylein considered for a moment taking the compensation like any mercenary would, but as the warden explained how the magistrate had been profiting at the expense of others and how much damage he had done with his string-pulling she realized there was something more valuable being offered. A purpose. A *mission*.

She declined the reward, instead reclaiming a silver of the soul she thought she had given up. With a clearer mind and focused intent Elyza Kaylein rallied what was left of her Grayflags and set out to right wrongs and rout dishonor without the oppression of a government or oversight that was prone to corruption.

Using Elyza & the Grayflags

Neither Elyza Kaylein, nor her remaining retainers are evil. They are absolutely not mindless killers, but dispensers of justice, even if it's a thankless job and puts their own lives in danger. They make an

excellent counter to players who tend to think about the reward first and never the ramifications. Elyza's intentions are to intervene in bad situations and settle scores. This makes her an excellent foil to work both with and against the players as they navigate through issues of morality that are weighted against reimbursements of gold.

Elyza Kaylein

Medium humanoid (human), Neutral Good

Armor Class 18 (plate)

Hit Points 52 (8d8 + 16)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	11 (+0)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	11 (+0)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Con +4, Wis +2

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Brave. Elyza has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

Actions

Multiattack. Elyza makes two melee attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d10) piercing damage.

Leadership (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). For 1 minute, Elyza can utter a special command or warning whenever a non-hostile creature that it can see within 30 feet of it makes an attack roll or a saving throw. The creature can add a d4 to its roll provided it can hear and understand her. A creature can benefit from only one Leadership die at a time. This effect ends if Elyza is incapacitated.

Reactions

Parry. Elyza adds 2 to her AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, she must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

Elyza's new style is a bit more heavy-handed, but not cruel. She is not a murderer and will not kill in cold blood. Should a character be evil or selfishly-minded, she will not side with them. If the situation demands, she will take a life to minimize the spread of corruption.

She is often found with an appropriate number of her retainers.

Former Grayflag Retainers

Medium humanoid (human), Neutral Good

Armor Class 16 (chain shirt, shield)

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+1)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

Spears. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage, or 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

Adventures and Stories

Stories that involve a conflict between what's right and what's easy create good opportunities for Elyza to butt into. She was an honorable woman who was betrayed and sent running; she'll empathize with people in similar situations and defend them. Or she could be ruthlessly rooting out a manipulator who's protected by the court of public opinion.

She could even be running her own court in the woods, hearing pleas for mercy and deciding what fate shall befall the storyteller.

Elyza Kaylein is presented here as a character that can fit rather easily into any setting. She originated from my own campaign that features larger-than-life fantasy and questions of loyalty that is known as **Dragon Reign**. For more information about her and her native setting, you can check out my website gramrpg.com.