

The Bandit Lands

The Bandit Lands are the most chaotic and uncontrolled of all Iuz's captured domains. This is due to their sheer size. If one includes the Fellreev Forest, these lands are larger than the Horned and Shield Lands combined. It is simply impossible for any occupier to fully control this territory, just as no single bandit chieftain, no matter how powerful, could ever have ruled them all in the two centuries of their existence prior to the wars.

Rather, Iuz's forces have secured key cities, towns and settlements, and recruited as many of the generally evil bandits to their cause as possible. Some 10,000 of the bandits have become part of Iuz's troops and raiders, swelling his armies considerably. However, there are great swathes of the land where only chaos reigns. In some areas, Iuz's forces may only have been seen once or twice in all the time since the wars began. In others, bandits are left to their own lives as long as they don't dare to oppose the might of Iuz.

Rulership of the Lands

Iuz's writ runs no farther than his forces can impose themselves, for the most part, and the Bandit Lands are bedeviled by petty conflict among the priesthood and mages of Iuz. Just as the bandit chieftains competed to possess the largest forces, the biggest city base, and the largest herds of livestock, so do the puppets of Iuz now in Rookroost, Riftcrag, Stoink and elsewhere. Indeed, as the map shows, all three have been designated regional capitals, though the regions have not been specified by Iuz.

Cranzer, a Lesser Boneheart mage, is stationed at Riftcrag and is technically the ruler of the lands in Iuz's name. What this actually means is that if anything goes wrong and Iuz learns of it, Cranzer gets the blame. Thus, the mage spends much of his time covering up the problems which the key resources, locations and peoples of land face him with frequently. His position is tricky indeed, for the rulers of Rookroost and Stoink are both ambitious themselves and frequently ignore orders Cranzer sends them or "interpret" them to their benefit. Worse still, Archmage Null and Jumper are frequent visitors and they often "drop in" on Cranzer unannounced. They generally like to leave him

with the feeling that the job he's doing in the Rift Canyon isn't quite up to snuff and that they would like to see some improvement immediately.

In many areas of the Bandit Lands, the "ruler" is whomever has the troops to enforce his rule. Further, some areas of the Bandit Lands have no settlements larger than hamlets of one to two hundred people. The typical way of life of all but the largest bandit groups does not include settling down in towns and cities. This is especially true of the western margins of the lands, as the color map shows.

Iuz's commanders adopt a wide range of strategies dealing with the Bandit Lands. They vary wildly, from one local commander to another, from time to time, and certainly on the nature and size of the bandit groups being dealt with. Leaders may try to recruit "free" bandits, ally with them, hire them as mercenaries, force them into submission, try to wipe them out, or just warn them away from important roads, cities, towns and fortifications. The bandits respond in a variety of ways, as noted below, but in very few cases can they actually offer stiff opposition to Iuz's forces, especially in the controlled castles and cities. Thus, Iuz hasn't fully subdued the lands, but they offer him little in the way of stern opposition and aggression.

Humanoids in the Bandit Lands

The indigenous humanoids of these lands come mostly from the Rift Canyon and the Bluff Hills, but half-orcs in particular have been readily accepted into most bandit gangs. The cities of Stoink and Rookroost had a significant half-orc enclave before the wars. Iuz's priests have generally made a special effort to recruit these half-orcs, placing them in positions of seeming authority and using their local knowledge to good effect. There are tensions between the half-orcs and the humanoids imported from Land of Iuz and the Horned Lands though, and controlling those is an all-too-familiar problem for the priests and warriors Iuz places as local rulers.

Urzun ores are important in Riftcrag and the Leering Keeps which serve as watchposts over the Rift Canyon. Because they are trained with local orcs, a combination of magical duress and suitable instillation of terror from fiendish

The Bandit Lands

sources is used to keep the groups from ripping each other's throats out. Elsewhere in the land, Horned Lands hobgoblins are used at distant garrisons and on patrols in areas where few local humanoids are found, such as the Fellreev camps.

Goblins form a larger percentage of humanoid troops serving Iuz in this land than they do elsewhere. The goblins are easily cowed and bullied, and they dare not oppose their orc leaders, whether indigenous or imported from the West.

Humans in the Bandit Lands

Before the wars, nearly a hundred thousand humans lived in these lands. Now there are not many more than half that number. Many have fled to the Fellreev, Tangles, Rift Canyon or abroad to escape the invaders from the west. For those who remain, understanding their current lives can only be done by understanding how they lived previously.

Most outsiders thought of the people from the Bandit Kingdoms as marauding raiders and pillagers who rode across their lands taking whatever they could by banditry. However, it is obvious that 100,000 people could not survive in such a manner within their own land.

While there were raiding horsemen aplenty, there were also many thousands who lived a semi-nomadic life, travelling with large herds of livestock who foraged on the generally poor grazing. To be sure, they would take to arms if their chieftain commanded, if their honor was impugned, or if they saw a chance for an opportunistic strike, but the bandits were certainly not all blood-crazed, parasitic pillagers. The Bandit Kingdoms had cities, and within them artisans and craftsmen could be found. Even if sages and men of learning weren't exactly common, mages were. Magic gives a keen advantage in strife and struggle, and no few foreign mages found that bandits respected wizardry and had a healthy fear of it. As a result, settling here and building a tower or stronghold was attractive to them.

In the last two to three years, Iuz's forces first drew bandits to their service to swell the armies striking into the Horned Society and Shield Lands. This was quite to the taste of the bandits, especially in the latter case, since the Shield

Lands nobles were great enemies of the more powerful bandit groups. Some bandits still serve in Iuz's occupation forces in those western lands. However, Iuz's forces began progressively to exert control over the Bandit Kingdoms themselves, securing the vital silver mines of the Rift Canyon, establishing bases to pursue escaping men in the Fellreev Forest, and taking control of the cities. In a piecemeal way, the bandits had to come to terms with this.

As noted, some bandits have become part of Iuz's armies within the Bandit Lands. This often allows them to even up old grudges against other bandit groups who have not allied with Iuz. Some bandits have come to an understanding of sorts with Iuz's leaders. This is especially common in the eastern lands, where bandits raid into Urnst, Nyronnd, the Pale and Tenh with the full consent of Iuz's priests, who then feign to those other nations through Iuz's ambassador in Greyhawk that such actions are due to rogue elements beyond their control. In return, the raiding bandits do not raid Iuz's cities, camps, or supplies. Sometimes, even Iuz's forces must respect the strength of those they seek to subjugate by force. The events of Hellstone are fresh in the minds of many still.

A few bandits are dispatched abroad as spies. Because they cannot be fully trusted, they are often deliberately given false information by Iuz's taskmasters so that if they turn traitor, those they inform will be misled. Finally, around 3,000 Grosskopf bandits have been assembled into the grandiosely-styled "Marauders of the North" and set loose upon the Rovers of the Barrens.

Thus, the bandits have made their peace with Iuz one way or another in most cases, but by no means all. There are some 20,000 exiles who have fled across the Flanaess to avoid Iuz. Many of them have taken to raiding in the lands they now live in, everywhere from the fringes of the Hold of Stonefist to Urnst and even as far east as the fringes of old Aerdi. However, a fair few look to the day when they may return to their homeland. Others fled to the forests and the Rift. Some still roam the lands themselves, actively seeking to strike at Iuz. This is most true in the western lands, where few forget the atrocities of Iuz's troops at Steelbone Meadows.

The Bandit Lands

Religion in the Bandit Lands

Favored cults among the bandits are those of Olidammara and Ralishaz and they have not been opposed by Iuz's priests. The few priests of these faiths have simply been told, quietly, who is boss. Other previously favored faiths such as those of Hextor, Erythnul, and Nerull are not acceptable, by and large, to Iuz's priests and their priests and clerics have fled, been banished or slain. Few still survive, although simple worship of these evil deities is not uncommon among ordinary bandit warriors.

Across the Borders

The Bandit Lands border on many eastern states and Iuz's attitude to each is important. Broadly, Iuz does not seek to escalate conflict with his neighbors at this time. His control of the Bandit Lands is not secure enough and his armies are not numerous enough to strike eastward yet.

Tenh: Tenh is occupied by Stonefist men allied to Iuz and is described in a later chapter.
County of Urnst: The County is a rich and powerful state. It has a number of very strong fortifications along the Artonsamay, notably the Charn Castles. Its troops are not excessively numerous, but they are well-trained, have very good morale, and are exceptionally well equipped and supplied. For these reasons, raids by bandits serving Iuz into the County are few and far between. Cranzer and Renfus in Stoink are well aware that any significant skirmish would invite a crushing counter-blow from the County, so they bide their time. The County refuses to trade with the Bandit Lands, with a handful of local exceptions, which angers Cranzer since he badly needs the food which is so abundant in Urnst.

Theocracy of the Pale: There is a tiny border area at the meeting of the Artonsamay and the Yol rivers. The attitude of Iuz and the Theocracy to each other can be summed up in one word: contempt. Both sides despise and virtually ignore the existence of the other.

Nyrond: For some eighty miles of the Artonsamay's length south of the Nurtherwood, Iuz and Nyrond face each other, with Starkwall

anchoring Nyrond's defenses. Iuz is aware of Nyrond's weaknesses, no concerted attacks are made here because of the distance from Iuz's homeland and center of control. However, skirmishes are not uncommon and are growing in frequency given Renfus's liking for raids. They are random, hit-and-miss affairs involving humanoid and bandit troops which often lack experienced, powerful leaders.

Lands and Locations

Four broad areas of land are considered first, together with any special locations within them. Specific locations elsewhere in the Bandit Lands are detailed subsequently.

The Western Lands

These can broadly be taken to include the lands west and north of the Tangles and south of Fleischshriver. The map shows a complete lack of any significant settlements here and population density is very low. There are but 5,000 nomadic bandits here. The bandits of these lands are deeply hostile to Iuz, for one terrible, historical reason.

In late 584 CY, when the Pact of Greyhawk had been drafted and the war was ended but for skirmishing in the far-distant lands of the Pormarj, Ratik, and the margins of the Lost Lands, the priest Bernel of Hallorn commanded a gathering of bandit forces drawn from these western lands at what is now called Steelbone Meadows. Bernel was certainly paranoid, possibly completely insane. Ten thousand bandits gathered to celebrate the war's end, expecting to be given instructions for the new campaigns of pillage they looked forward to after the winter. As most of them slept in their huge tented campsite, Bernel, who believed that the bandit leaders intended to turn against Iuz and reclaim their lands from Iuz's control, had over half of them slaughtered by fiends, orc assassins, and lethal magic. The survivors fled in all directions. They currently eke out a perilous living in these infertile, poor plains lands.

Unfortunately, the survivors own chaotic evil disposition prevented them from allying against

The Bandit Lands

their oppressor. Many of them turned on each other, claiming that the other had cooperated with Bernel, betraying his fellows to ensure his own survival. Thus, the roaming bandit gangs are as likely to attack and kill each other as they are to strike against Iuz's forces, who rarely patrol these lands any more. Bernel was swiftly replaced by Iuz and is now a prisoner in Dorakaa's dungeons. The new commander at Hallorn has suffered a strange fate of his own. Perhaps the dying curses of the men slain at Steelbone Meadows have affected one victim, at least.

Steelbone Meadows

This site of the infamous massacre is still littered with untold thousands of weathered bones and rusting armor and equipment. Rotting tarpaulins and decomposing, bloodied furs flap in the cold winds from the north. The site is plagued with undead, especially wraiths, wights and ghosts. While a few magical items and some treasure may be scattered about, the risks of trying to obtain them are too great for any to venture into this accursed place. The undead here cannot be commanded by priests of Iuz due to their history and the endless hate they bear against them. An intriguing possibility is that they could be commanded by a priest of another evil deity or ally with him, if a plan of vengeance was presented and their mortal remains were laid to rest here.

The Tangles

This forest stands right at the northern fringes of the barrens around the Rift Canyon. Despite standing so close to barren land, the forest is very thick and has very dense undergrowth. However, the wood is of no great size and this fact, together with its impenetrable floor cover and proximity to Riftcrag and the Leering Keeps, means that few bandits have sought to hide out here. There are probably no more than three to four hundred humans in the woods.

However, the Tangles have received some very intriguing visitors of late. Three Furyondian fighter-priests of Trithereon have made their way here using a plane shift spell, and they are training the bandits in guerilla warfare tactics

and bringing in supplies of food and weapons. One of the Furyondians also has expert knowledge of forest plants from living in the Vesve and has been able to help the bandits stay alive from the forest flora and the trapping of small animals. The bandits resist conversion to Trithereon's faith, but they're glad for any help they can get. The priests have an opportunity for revenge strikes against Iuz with a freedom denied to them in Furyondy itself. This is a strange alliance, but it seems to be working.

How long these people can survive is anyone's guess. Iuz's troops are instructed simply to raze the Tangles, using axe and fire to destroy it, although the wood resources are also useful and are shipped to Riftcrag and Hallorn. Oddly, the Tangles regenerates damage very swiftly, so some renewing magic must be at work here, though it cannot keep pace with such pillage for ever. Also, the Tangles hold some lyrannikin, mobats and other dangerous monsters who present an ever-present menace to the human fugitives therein.

The Rift Canyon and the Barrens

The Rift Canyon is probably unique in all Oerik. This huge, near-200 mile long fissure is over a mile deep in places, with great sheer rock faces, scrub-wooded screes, paths which only the most agile can clamber down, honeycombs of caves, caverns, and warrens, and dark things slithering in its deepest recesses. In this unpromising place, nearly 6,000 bandits manage to survive in the caves and passages. The original 2,000 settlers have been joined by 4,000 exiles who have promised faithful service to the self-proclaimed Plar of the Rift, Durand Grossman. The exiles are mostly Reyhu men, angry at their displacement from rulership by Iuz's priests. They have joined an extraordinary society.

The way in which the bandits negotiate and travel within the Rift Canyon is astonishing enough in itself. Virtually all are effectively expert rock-climbers, have the Rope Use proficiency for group travel and belaying, and have become skilled in the use of slings, sling-staffs, light crossbows, lariats and similar hillsmen's weapons. They have developed a very complex system of signs involving rock-marking, scratches on moss and lichen patches,

The Bandit Lands

and the use of plant stains and such to signify safe and unsafe paths and the presence of Iuz's forces. The bandits have shown real resilience by surviving here

The Plar doesn't just have humans to call upon, either. Hobgoblins, orcs and half-orcs native to the Rift have allied with him, and the Plar has some other monstrous aid too. A pair of trained adult hippogriffs are sent aloft with agile riders to spy and the Plar himself has almost a dozen "pet" displacer beasts. Most startlingly, the Plar is able to call on the services of a deep-laired gorgimera in times of real need. A handful of hell hounds, kept well away from the displacer beasts, are used to protect tunnel entrances which lead to major eaves and caverns around the Rift. The loyalty of these creatures may in part be due to the services of the ex-Aerdi mage Menfri Rauveen, who is researching the magical secrets of the Rift. He is also good for morale. Seeing an invading warband of orcs toasted by chain lightning is an awesome sight for bandits, many of whom have never seen such mighty mages before.

Survival in the Rift

However, these survivors are beset with problems. Cranzer is determined to wipe out as many as possible, mostly because the vital silver mines scattered around the area of Riftcrag are the only material resource worth having in the Bandit Lands. To secure their safety, his troops ruthlessly exterminate all bandits seen within some 30 miles of Riftcrag, where the mines are located. Others may be captured, in the hope of getting them to yield information about safe pathways. Since such routes are often sabotaged, booby-trapped, and then renewed by the Plar's men, any information which is so obtained by Iuz's men is soon rendered out of date. Nonetheless, Cranzer employs goblins and orcs for mass attacks in warbands of 200 and more. Well-equipped strike parties of orcs, orogs and hobgoblins with priests and mages are used for more important actions against the Plar.

The second problem the Rift bandits have is simple: just getting enough to eat to stay alive. The Rift itself has fish, lizards, and the like in the caves and their pools and springs, and some hardy goats on the hilly surfaces of the canyon and even the barrens beyond. Trapping yields a few birds, hares and other small animals. But this

is meager fare and the bandits are forced to raid beyond the Rift in search of food. The Tangles provides some, and raids on supply trains headed for Riftcrag, Balmund or Hallorn provide more, but starvation is a very real threat.

A third problem is the bizarre weather of the Rift. Highly localized, swirling, gale-force winds can sweep men away from rock faces in the blink of an eye. In the winter, bitter frosts make any traversing of the rocks very dangerous indeed and Iuz's forces have learned most of the direct passage routes to the surface by now and stand guard over them. Drifting mists can make rock moist and as hazardous as ice and frost. Rockfalls are common, and cave-ins are hardly uncommon. This is dangerous terrain, to be sure.

Finally, the most inaccessible parts of the Rift, both on the Rift floor and in the deepest caves, have many monsters still, though bandits and humanoids have wiped out most of those which lived along the sides of this great crevasse over the last hundred or so years. Around a hundred ogres, though, still hang on to possession of one cluster of eaves due north of Sheerwatch and represent a real threat to anyone approaching their domain. Behirs, carrion crawlers, cave fishers, giant lizards, and gelatinous cubes are among some of the more-commonly reported hazards. A singular annis, a beholder, and, allegedly, a small group of illithids present more formidable, if thankfully rarer, threats. It is also very likely that passages to Underdark are to be found in some part of the Rift and there have been reports of dinosaur-like and prehistoric beasts in some of the very deep caverns below the Rift.

Magical Secrets of the Rift

Legend tells that the Rift was created in a battle between greater Powers. Which ones varies from version to version of the tale, but it is said that a great axe or hammer smote the ground and sundered it. Be that as it may, it is certain that the very deepest recesses of the Rift hold powerful and wild magical forces and probably certain relics too. Again, there are legends that a primordial giant race used the Rift as a burial ground and their immense, cavern tombs can be found below the Rift. The bandits have always had enough to do fending off the monsters from these deeps without trying to retrieve such magic, and as yet Menfri's researches have not

The Bandit Lands

been able to pinpoint any specific locations of these reputed magical relics and artifacts.

Riftcrag and the Leering Keeps

Once the home of the leaders of the Reyhu bandits, Riftcrag has been occupied by Iuz's forces in a heavy-handed manner unlike Stoink or Rookroost. Humanoid soldiers prowl the streets, stomping up and down the Martial Square of the inner walled keep district, and only some 2,500 humans remain. The workshops of the town district known as the Smithy" are undermanned now, and the smelting of ores from the silver mines is slow. Still, Riftcrag is an almost impenetrable fortress with its double-walled design, both sets of walls bristling with towers, ballistae and catapults. The inner town walls are nearly twelve feet thick and the greatest attention was always given to defensive detail, from murder holes to archery slits. As the home of the only precious metal mines in the country, that was essential.

Cranzer fumes at his problems here. The productivity of the mines has been reduced for several reasons, including lack of skilled labor and the maraudings of the Rift bandits are an eternal problem. Trying to organize defenses with the forces of Sheerwatch in the Shield Lands is virtually impossible, and warbands in the Rift have suffered severe casualties from time to time. Cranzer commands but a handful of fiends among his troops and his half-dozen mid-level mages cannot often be spared for patrols or skirmishes, being needed to secure the mines. Riftcrag's defensive role is secured, but trying to conquer the Rift bandits and avoid their attacks on supply trains is very difficult. Much effort has to be expended on patrolling known exit routes from the Rift Canyon, and with a canyon length of nearly 200 miles and incompetents stationed to the south, commanded from Balmund, this is a thankless task.

The Bluff Hills

The Bluff Hills formed part of the Bandit Kingdoms simply because no-one else bothered to claim this monster-infested land. Ferocious hill ogres, trolls, hill giants, and flying monsters from the Griffs dissuaded most attempts to mine the silver and copper said to lie below them.

There are deep mines worked by svirfnebli, but they lie far below the surface. The Bluff Hills also boast groups of the Eiger tribe of orcs, separated from the main body of their people, but proudly independent, resisting all attempts to recruit them into Iuz's armies. Around 1,500 free bandits roam through these hills too. They are very ill-equipped, but mount raids with the desperation of those with nothing much to lose.

Groucester

This town (pronounced gr-ow-ster) is the eastern watch over the Felreev, but its commander, priestess Xavendra, also looks to the Bluffs for any signs of mining activity or free bandits. She has a rare resource, a dozen trained griffons who fly over the Bluffs with warrior-riders from Iuz's lands. With her ring of human influence, she has been able to get the native bandits of the town to join her orcs. She restricts the bloodthirstier rituals of Iuz's cult to private ceremonies in the dungeons below the town keep. Groucester is also a departure point for fiends heading into the Northern Barrens to maraud. Xavendra as a magical ring which has a resonance with Iuz's own gate in Dorakaa, so that fiends gated there can be instantly transported here. She has detected the mines at Perdition and is biding her time for a strike there to occupy the mines.

Groucester is also curiously notable for its seemingly civilized veneer. Xavendra has relatively few humanoid troops here and has maintained the richer houses as quarters for her human officers. Baron Kerzinen of Rookroost often visits here. He and the priestess walk the spacious hall of the town's newly-established library where paintings and other objets d'art taken from the sack of the Shield Lands provide a fine decor. To walk herein would be to enjoy a place of refinement and quiet pleasures if one were not aware of the true darkness of Xavendra's heart and the poisonous nature of her personal household, an alu-fiend infested pit of debauchery and depravity.

Perdition

This is the one known active silver mine in the Bluff Hills, save for a tiny handful of pitiful gnomish endeavors on the brink of extinction. Perdition has a formidable Guard of over two hundred ogres who will fight to the death

The Bandit Lands

(Morale of 20) against any seeking to take possession of it. The history of Perdition is a strange one indeed.

Bandits fleeing from the advance of Iuz began to infiltrate the hills two years ago. Among them, a rare mage located the silver vein by divination. The valley also had the advantages of pure water from a spring, fair grass for grazing, and a plentiful supply of small animals which could be trapped. However, the area was swarming with ogres and this seemed an insurmountable problem until the mage hit on a bright idea. He polymorphed himself into ogre form and announced himself as a priest of Grolantor, the patron Power of hill giants and many ogres. Emphasizing this with some showy magic, the mage also cast a charm spell on the ogre leader. Since that time, the ogres leave followed the mage/ogre with the zeal of the truly faithful.

The mage/ogre has told his newfound followers that Perdition is a sacred site to Grolantor and the ogres must Protect it. Buried in the mines, the shafts of which are too small for ogres to enter comfortably or safely, there is a sacred club which, if retrieved, will lead the ogres to great battle victories. The humans, the mage/ogre claims, are his slaves and they can find the club which will remain untouched until the ogre's chieftain takes it into his own hands. At times, the ogres appear somewhat unhappy that the club has taken so long to find, but on the other hand their new "priest" has used magic to great effect. At least half a dozen of them owe their lives to his holding a rogue fomorian attacking them. The ogres are deeply superstitious and reverential of this Power-given magic. The mage/ogre skillfully manipulates their gullible natures while his bandit colleagues manage to retrieve some silver from the mine. They use some for trade in Tenh, purchasing weapons and supplies there, and hope to be able to excavate enough from the mine to leave as wealthy men in a year or two.

Other Locations and Settlements

Camp Arnsten

This large camp is a ramshackle settlement of hobgoblin soldiers who are charged with patrolling the Artonsamay and the borders of the Phostwood. Since Tenh, with its "friendly" Stonefist occupiers, lies across these borders, the hobgoblins are under permanent instructions

from Granzer not to maraud across the border. However, if they do it at night and don't get caught, Cranzer doesn't mind looking the other way. Morale is very poor here, with skirmishes and fights being common. Supplies of food are not of the best quality and disease outbreaks occur from time to time. Arnsten was actually the site of a mutiny in Readying, which was put down with fiendish aid and great cruelty. Since that time, Arnsten has 30 fiends permanently stationed there, many of whom polymorph/shape change into hobgoblins to spy on the troops.

Edge

This square tower is so-named because of the razor-sharp stone edges of the construction and the weapon enchantments crafted by its resident mage, Gennen. After the events at Hellstone, Cranzer decided against trying to force the mage into servitude and settled for a deal which provided enchanted weapons for his officers. Gennen supplies one +1 weapon per month, one +2 every two months or one +3 every three months in return for being left alone and paid with supplies of food and some raw materials for his work. Gennen is a highly unusual man in that he appears as a pureblood Flan, but he only communicates with Iuz's forces through his gnome craftsman/apprentice and is very rarely seen.

Fleischshriver

This grim citadel is of fiendish design and construction, with twisted towers and walls, viciously barbed iron railings, and grotesquely obscene fountains and decorative stonework. The castle houses a sizeable force of humanoids, used as scouts and skirmishers in the Fellreev forest. Troops rotate between this place and the three unnamed northern camps below the Fellreev. Jebli orcs and hobgoblins are less common than Uroz in these camps.

Fleischshriver also has another purpose. Boneheart members Jumper, Null and Haiga all visit here, researching new spells and magical effects. Something of the magic of the Abyss itself seems to infest this forsaken place, and many of its dungeons are chambers with magical qualities of their own. Here, the mighty spellcasters can experiment with profoundly destructive magic while remaining safe, since many chambers "dampen" magical effects. This isolated place was chosen for such work precisely because of its isolation. There are few to see the acidic smokes which drift from its spires, the toxic effluent oozing from the castle's cesspools, or the twisted remnants of monster-modification experiments which crawl away to expire in agony on the surrounding plains.

The Bandit Lands

While the results of these experiments are left for the DM to develop, at least two lines of research have been known to bear fruit here. Jumper has been able to devise spells which create shadow monsters and demi-shadow monsters, though not yet shades with an unusually malign effect. As the shadow monsters inflict damage on an opponent, they are strengthened in force, so that for every 5 hp of damage inflicted, the shadow monster itself gains an extra 10% of the strength (HD/ hit points) of a normal monster of its type. These pseudo-vampiric shadow monsters, as yet, only function within two miles of Fleischshriver itself, but Jumper should soon be able to project them into the Fellreev to hunt its occupants.

Worse than this, however, is Halga's success with the resident ring of seven priests here in developing a wraithblade spell which calls upon the energies of the Negative Material plane to infuse a sword or similar edged weapon with the ability to energy drain those it strikes. As yet, this spell is hazardous, because its casting can energy drain the priest casting it unless that priest is of 14th or higher level. At least, that is Halga's estimation at this time. If this problem of channeling the Negative Material energies can be overcome, Iuz's priests will have a truly formidable spell to deploy against their opponents.

Finally, Fleischshriver has a gate to the Abyss which can only be utilized if an Archmage or High Priestess is present. Summoned fiends are mostly used for divination, information-gathering purposes, but rarely some bar-igura are summoned to strengthen the forces entering the Fellreev Forest.

Behind its forbidding walls and phalanxes of zombie and wight guardians, Fleischshriver holds many secrets. None who do not serve Iuz have ever returned after entering it and the place defies most magical scrying attempts.

Hallorn

A small village on the western edge of the Tangles, Hallorn is a backwater more or less forgotten by Cranzer. Its ruler, the priest Rilstone, has become wholly insane and managed to slay every living person in this place, even his own troops, with the aid of a renegade group of nabassu who have allied with him for their own purposes. Now, the entire population of the village is composed of zombies. Rilstone sits gibbering and drooling into the drugged wine he drinks from morning until night, fearing arrival of Granzer's armies. Incredibly, troops passing through here, usually headed for Fleischshriver, have not rally noticed

the curious state of the village guards. Most people detour around the village anyway given its relative proximity to Stahzer where the warring fiends dissuade visitors.

Hellstone

In early 584 CY, Cranzer marched to Hellstone and demanded the surrender of the mage known to live in the tower complex there. Cranzer offered good payment in return for the mage's services, but his bullying and arrogant manner cost him dearly. The mage appeared atop the central tower, invited the troops to enter by the opening metal gates, and as they marched he vanished. A split-second later, the tower simply blew apart in a tremendous explosion, killing nearly seven hundred orcs and bandits, and nearly destroying Cranzer in the bargain. Where the mage vanished to is entirely unknown.

All that is left here now are chunks of blasted, blackened stonework and rock scattered over many square miles. The base of the tower is visible as a ring of stone which seethes, boils and radiates tremendous heat (radiant damage is 1d10 hp/ round within 10 yards). Certainly, magic of some kind still remains in the dungeons below the base, but its nature is unknown.

Kinemeet

When the bandit chieftains of old had something resembling a peace between them, perhaps because they allied to fight off reprisals from Nyrond or Urnst, and could trust each other enough to meet on neutral ground, Kinemeet was often the place chosen. Richfest was the time meeting and the chieftains would present their finest oxen and stallions and compete for trophies. Being judge at Kinemeet was a misfortune. Losers many times held grudges for a lifetime.

Now, Kinemeet is a garrison overlooking the western Tangles and providing patrols for the highways to Rookroost and Riftcrag. The garrison commander is an enormous Celbit orog warrior known as "The Mammoth" to troops on account of his prodigiously-sized tusks. Kinemeet is virtually an orcish city, and it has been thoroughly vandalized and pillaged. The orcs are very warlike and maraud into the Tangles constantly.

The Bandit Lands

Larn's Tower/ Salfrayfields

The mage Larn is playing a treacherous and dangerous game from his home here. He has made a peace of sorts with Renfus of Stoink, being left alone in return for conducting trade with the Urnst town of Jedbridge. Larn buys food and basic equipment there that is in short supply in Stoink. In return, he sells the fragrant salfray herb from the village he protects to the north, which has been likewise left alone by Iuz's forces. Salfray is a powerful benison, since it neutralizes natural animal venoms, such as those from snakes, spiders and similar poisonous animals, not monster venoms. A small sachet of dried herb will fetch 10 gp in Urnst. Larn takes a share of the money he receives in Jedbridge and in return has protected the villagers of Salfrayfields from attacks by bandit gangs. The people of the village themselves have settled down to a good living under the mage's rule and their marauding days are over. Many of the villagers are old men and women, and Larn watches over them protectively.

Larn is also a spy for Urnst. He sends information to the burghers of Dryburgh, telling them all he learns. He has heard of events in Stoink, where he takes goods and some money to Renfus's agents, and around the Rift Canyon, which he often hears from Rift Canyon bandits giving up the struggle and attempting to escape across the river. The appearance of a pair of fiends recently, prowling the edges of Larn's lands, suggest that someone may suspect the truth about Larn's cross-river trips.

Rookroost

The oldest of the Bandit Kingdoms' cities, Rookroost is a four-walled city with three internal, concentric city walls, each with their own gates, within the exterior walls. In the central heart of the city stands the palace of "The Baron." Before the war, he was "The General," but cambion Kerzinen, who had the previous ruler quietly done away with and now impersonates him, prefers to use his true title.

Kerzinen has adopted a strategy not unlike that of Althea in Molag, by feigning that "General Pernevi," the ruler, still lives. But he rarely meets with the powerful bandit thieves, warriors and assassins who still control much of Rookroost. Most are content to ally with Iuz, but this is a city of true chaotic evil and there are treacheries

aplenty in its back streets and alleyways. Half-orcs and even a handful of ogres, goblins and the odd hill giant can found among Rookroost's populace. The soldiery here are mostly imported humanoids from the Horned Lands and the Land of Iuz, including 100 superb orogs. Their barracks have been walled off from the rest of the city. Town patrols are manned by the original, pre-war police as cut-throat and corrupt as a bunch as one could find anywhere.

Kerzinen's major concern is with control of the eastern Fellreev forest and protecting the trade route running to the village of Marsakeer and downriver to Senningford, Narleon and on to Nevond Nevnend, where Kerzinen obtains food, some Tenha slaves, and a little equipment. Kerzinen's dominion lies from the Artonsamay to the Fellreev, from the Bluff Hills to the Zumker and he has many troops constantly prowling these lands and stationed along the trade route. Within the city, Kerzinen adopts a velvet glove/iron fist policy. Most of the time, Rookroost's residents can get on with life as they did before the wars, save that their raids are directed now mostly against "free" bandits, the Fellreev, and into the Northern Barrens. What happens in Rookroost society is of no interest to Kerzinen, though temples of Powers other than Iuz have been closed down around the city, not that there were ever that many. But if, as happened on the third Moonday of Fireseek this year, two priests of Iuz are found with their throats cut in a back alley, Kerzinen acts decisively. Four prominent members of the Thieves' Guild were rounded up and tortured to death by fiends in public and their screams still echo in some people's nightmares at night.

Thus, Kerzinen has control over Rookroost through potential extreme force. He doesn't need to use or display it on a daily basis. Further, alu-fiends in Kerzinen's service have charmed an increasing number of the more influential Rookroost bandits and succubi have availed themselves of the bandits' naturally carnal instincts. As a result, Kerzinen has "orphanages" full of growing young alu-fiends around Rookroost, all deeply loyal to their acknowledged cambion master. In years to come, the ambitious Baron will have a powerful force at his disposal.

Kerzinen considers Cranzer weak, and while he is polite to his face, he mocks him with the alu-fiends, succubi and two glabrezu of his inner court of advisers. The resident priests of Iuz, who lack effective leadership here, accept Kerzinen as leader and do not question his orders. They are far enough from Iuz's homeland to be pragmatic about the situation.

The Bandit Lands

Stoink

Stoink's character has survived all the events of the wars, although a new despot has taken control of the city after the previous ruler tragically choked to death on his supper. That his supper was rammed down his throat with a quarterstaff might have had something to do with this, of course. Stoink has always been a bawdy, drunken, brawling city, its people deliberately ill-mannered ruffians, though real violence such as murders and assassinations were actually rather uncommon. Stoink is still the same. Despite the presence of a large number of Iuz's priests and no few fiends, the vast figure of Renfus the Mottled is the undisputed ruler here. He actually commands the troops and sends them out on raids and patrols as he wishes. When Iuz's men set out determined to terrify him into submission, they return submerged by the avalanche of words and colorful oaths Renfus yells at eardrum-bursting intensity. The magical protections and influences Renfus carries have much to do with this, as they do with his seeming lack of fear at a visit from a fiend. Stoink is the only city in Oerik where a glabrezu sent to bully a man into servitude can crawl back on all fours along the gutters, reeking of brandy and unable to speak.

Renfus is no fool. He constantly encourages his troops to pillage and loot, but takes care never to raid the same places too often so as to invite reprisals. He is especially wary of raiding into Urnst, given the forbidding castle and garrisons of Ventnor to the south. He would rather send raiders into Nyronnd than risk reprisals from Urnst. Renfus is shrewd and he doesn't push the priests of Iuz to far. When they need something done as a matter of urgency, he attends to it. He has, so far, managed to keep the bandits of Stoink as happy in their drunkenness as they were before the wars.

The Wormcrawl Fissure

A mile-long ravine away from the main body of the Rift Canyon, Wormcrawl Fissure is said to have been the home of the infamous evil priest Kyuss. What lies in the fissure's depths is unknown, but certainly Sons of Kyuss prowl the lands for some 10 miles around, attacking any sentient creature they see. Within the fissure itself, there are reports of Favored Sons, very strong (18/76 Strength) and of unusual toughness (6+6 HD), who are able to breathe clouds of stinking fumes as per a stinking cloud 1/day, while remaining unaffected, in addition to their radiate fear effect.

A regular punishment for junior clerics and priests of Iuz throughout the Bandit Lands, if they have disappointed or offended their seniors,

is to be sent to this area to bring back Sons of Kyuss as zombies. This can be done by casting *remove curse* or *cure disease* on a Son, but that means touching the horror, of course. The zombies are useful for the undead legions of the land, but the risk to the junior is considerable. Fortunately, the order is rare and a special compensation must be given to use such a repellent spell, only available in rare scroll form. The Sons themselves are very resistant to turning or commanding effects (treat as Special undead). Iuz's priests would dearly like to ascertain the nature of the necromantic magic they have detected at the base of the fissure, but the hazard of trying to reach it is too great. A hundred troops and six junior priests have already swollen the ranks of the Sons by attempting to descend into the fog-filled, reeking lands which lie at the foot of this great fissure.

The Bandit Lands

Armies of Iuz

Camp Arnsten

Orc: -	E. Orc: -	Orog: -	E. Orog: -
Hobgob: 160	Goblin: 100	Other: -	Gt. Type: 18
Warrior: 180	Priest: 12	Shaman: 17	Wiz: 8
M Undd: 400	G. Undd: 140	Fiends: 30	

Fleischshriver (including Fellreev camps)

Orc: 800	E. Orc: 70	Orog: 50	E. Orog: 50
Hobgob: 160	Goblin: 100	Other: -	Gt. Type: 18
Warrior: 180	Priest: 18	Shaman: 6	Wiz: 21
M Undd: 400	G. Undd: 140	Fiends: 30	

Note: minor undead are Zombies, 75% of Greater are wights. All undead are in Fleischshriver, not the camps.

Groucester

Orc: -	E. Orc: -	Orog: -	E. Orog: -
Hobgob: 170	Goblin: 50	Other: -	Gt. Type: -
Warrior: 270	Priest: 12	Shaman: -	Wiz: 8
M Undd: 210	G. Undd: 40	Fiends: 55	

Kinemeet

Orc: 550	E. Orc: 45	Orog: 35	E. Orog: 12
Hobgob: -	Goblin: 120	Other: -	Gt. Type: 15
Warrior: 120	Priest: 8	Shaman: 11	Wiz: 6
M Undd: 40	G. Undd: -	Fiends: -	

Riftcrag

Orc: 350	E. Orc: 40	Orog: 40	E. Orog: 16
Hobgob: -	Goblin: 120	Other: -	Gt. Type: 40
Warrior: 450	Priest: 10	Shaman: 18	Wiz: 14
M Undd: 120	G. Undd: 30	Fiends: few	

Rookroost

Orc: 400	E. Orc: 100	Orog: 100	E. Orog: 250
Hobgob: 250	Goblin: 300	Other: 80	Gt. Type: 40
Warrior: 400	Priest: 11	Shaman: 15	Wiz: 10
M Undd: 220	G. Undd: 80	Fiends: 95	

Stoink

Orc: -	E. Orc: -	Orog: -	E. Orog: -
Hobgob: 250	Goblin: 150	Other: 50	Gt. Type: 30
Warrior: 700	Priest: 24	Shaman: 5	Wiz: 11
M Undd: 220	G. Undd: 80	Fiends: 50	

Wraithkeep

Orc: -	E. Orc: -	Orog: -	E. Orog: 30
Hobgob: -	Goblin: 50	Other: -	Gt. Type: 24
Warrior: 180	Priest: 5	Shaman: -	Wiz: 5
M Undd: 290	G. Undd: 100	Fiends: 40	

Notes: Priests are of levels 4-10, 60% of warriors are veterans, all Greater undead are wraiths (75%) or spectres.

Villains and Heroes

Cranzer of Riftcrag (14th-level Mage)

AC -1 (*ghastrobe*, *ring of protection* +3); MV 12; hp 34; THACO 16; *AT 1; Dmg 1d4+3 (*dagger* +3); Str 8, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 12; AL NE (CE). Spells (wizard) 5 each of 1st through 3rd-levels, 4 4th-level, 4 5th-level, 2 6th-level, 1 7th-level.

Cranzer is a small, 5'4" tall balding grey-eyed man who wears very dark blue robes and garments, with blood-red and gold edging and patterning. He is a perpetually hassled man, having to placate Iuz, Null and Jumper by keeping the Rift Canyon relatively problem-free and silver flowing into Iuz's coffers, while finding his technically-junior rulers at Stoink and Rookroost far from helpful, and the commanders at Balmund hopelessly inefficient. Cranzer has actually done a fair job, eliminating trouble in the Tangles so far and closing off most escape routes from the Rift Canyon. His system of Leering Keeps makes the Plar's bandits prefer raiding into the Shield Lands, so things fare reasonably well for Cranzer at the present time.

Cranzer doesn't like, and doesn't trust, the priesthood of Iuz and may well be stacking up trouble for himself on this score, even within Riftcrag. His own personal bodyguard of orog fighters is charmed to the hilt and he doesn't let them leave his sight most of the time. Cranzer's long-term goal is to become a member of the Greater Boneheart, and to this end he has been known to go adventuring with large warbands, acquiring the extra experience needed for level advancement and the development of more magical powers.

Cranzer takes his pick of magical items from the raids of his troops into Rift Canyon and beyond, should they find anything he can use. He is known to have a *boneward*, a *wand of fire* (35 charges), *rings of free action* and *invisibility*, and a *brazier of commanding fire elementals*. He is a skilled alchemist, knowing the recipes for many potions. His bodyguards have *potions of giant strength*, and he uses these as a reward and a

The Bandit Lands

loyalty bribe for powerful evil human warriors in his garrison.

Cranzer is a controlled, careful man, with considerable patience despite his alignment, and he is a good organizer to boot. The one quality he lacks is a steel will. He tends to take easy options, and is as likely as not to back down from confrontation with a mage or priest of equal or even slightly lower rank if that individual is forceful.

(Baron) Kerzinen of Rookroost: Baron Cambion (Str 19, Dex 18, Con 19, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 19); AC -6 (*plate mail* +2, *shield* +2); HD 6; hp 57; SA hide in shadows 80%, move silently 80%; *charm person*, *detect*, *magic*, *fear* at will, spell abilities of 6th-level mage; SD 30% magic resistance, climb walls 95%; *levitate* 7/day, *polymorph self* 3/day, never surprised; AL CE. Kerzinen is a son of one of Graz'zt's own balors and, as such, regards himself as noble indeed. Graz'zt has commissioned him into Iuz's service for twenty years and twenty days, and Kerzinen now poses as Baron Pernevi, ruler of Rookroost. Given his charisma, charm, and fine mental faculties, Kerzinen is enjoying life duping bandits, watching Tenh, and having all the slaves and troops he could want. He quietly amasses treasurers which can be used to bribe yugoloths for the Blood War and grooms his young alufiends for the same purpose. By doing this, Kerzinen becoming a favored, adopted son of Graz'zt, and his position in the hierarchy of the Abyss has benefited accordingly. While he serves Iuz, he does so "creatively." If he doesn't like orders coming from Cranzer in Riftcrag, he ensures that they didn't arrive in the form in which they were dispatched or implements the spirit of orders in ways he chooses.

When posing as a human, Kerzinen is cool and collected, well-mannered and even capable of being gracious, though no more than a bandit should be, of course. He is forceful with bandits and human underlings, with a repertoire of yells, stamps, and his fist-pounding the people of Rookroost expect. Lastly, he has a particular interest in Tenh, seeing it awash with slaves and souls who could be swept into the forces of the Abyss to great effect. He is eager to occupy Tenh, which causes friction with Iuz's more conservative priests.

Skannar Hendricks: 13th-level fighter (Str 18/36, Con 16, Int 15, Cha 16); AC -2 (*chain mail* +3, *shield* +3); hp 85; AL CN; Skannar is a wily, charismatic man of 44. His left eye is

useless, opaque and ruined by a smashing mace strike and this give him a -2 to ranged attacks. However, he is still handsome in a gruff, ruffian-like way, with his thick tousled brown hair, long hands, and graceful mannerisms. Skannar is an unusual bandit; he drinks wine rather than ale, prefers the cool beauty of silver to opulent gold, and needs time to himself to ponder and reflect by a woodland stream in his new Fellreev home. Perhaps the elves have responded to the surprising pleasantness of this man. Skannar claims he has never slain an innocent or defenseless man in his life, and he is furious at any man who lifts hand or weapon to strike at a woman or child. Woe betide any such villain, and woe betide any of his men who try to cheat or strike down the wood elves they share the land with.

Skannar is very thoughtful. He thinks the Fellreev is large enough to be defensible for years to come, but in the long run, he suspects Iuz will overwhelm it, remorselessly. The wood elves do not take this view, so Skannar hasn't anyone to discuss this anxiety with. He really doesn't know what to do in the longer term, so he throws his energies into the short-term fray with the eastern orcs.

Skannar owns a dozen applications of *dust of invisibility* and this, together with his *carpet of flying* (four person capacity) gives the bandits useful information about large warbands headed for the Fellreev. Skannar's *wand of enemy detection* has a 180' range, but with only 22 charges remaining, it is a valuable resource to be used sparingly.

Xavendra: 10th-level priestess of Iuz (Dex 17, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 16); AC -4 (*bracers of defense* AC4, *cloak of displacement*, *ring of protection* +3); hp 56; AL CE. Xavendra is a beautiful woman indeed. She stands a proud 60 in height, is slim and lithe of build, and her ivory skin is enhanced by her thick, raven-black hair and full red lips. Her grey eyes cannot conceal her coldness and hateful nature, however. Xavendra is happy with her lot. She rules in one of the farthest-flung regions of Iuz's empire and there she can debauch herself as she pleases. She has a *bonewand* (44 charges), a *ghastrobe* (rarely word; she hates the smell) and a *staff of withering*, together with a *ring of human influence* and a *chime of hunger* with 38 charges. She herself is immune to its effects, but she enjoys using it at the grossly self-indulgent feasts she holds in honor of exalted visitors.

The Bandit Lands

Xavendra is dangerous. She has plans to ally with Kerzinen of Rookroost to establish the lands north of the Artonsamay as her own fief. She is a cruel and coldly sadistic woman, enjoying suffering for its own sake as a spectacle, and she delights in the company of succubi and alu-fiends. She has megalomaniacal dreams of allying with an Abyssal Lord in her own right, commanding her own loyal legions of such monsters, overwhelming the Bluff Hills and the ineffectual rulers of Tenh and the north-western Bandit Lands. To that end, Xavendra might ally with anyone powerful enough to be able to support her dreams of domination. Those seeking to exploit this personality weakness of hers should beware of her intelligence.

The Bandit Lands

