

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

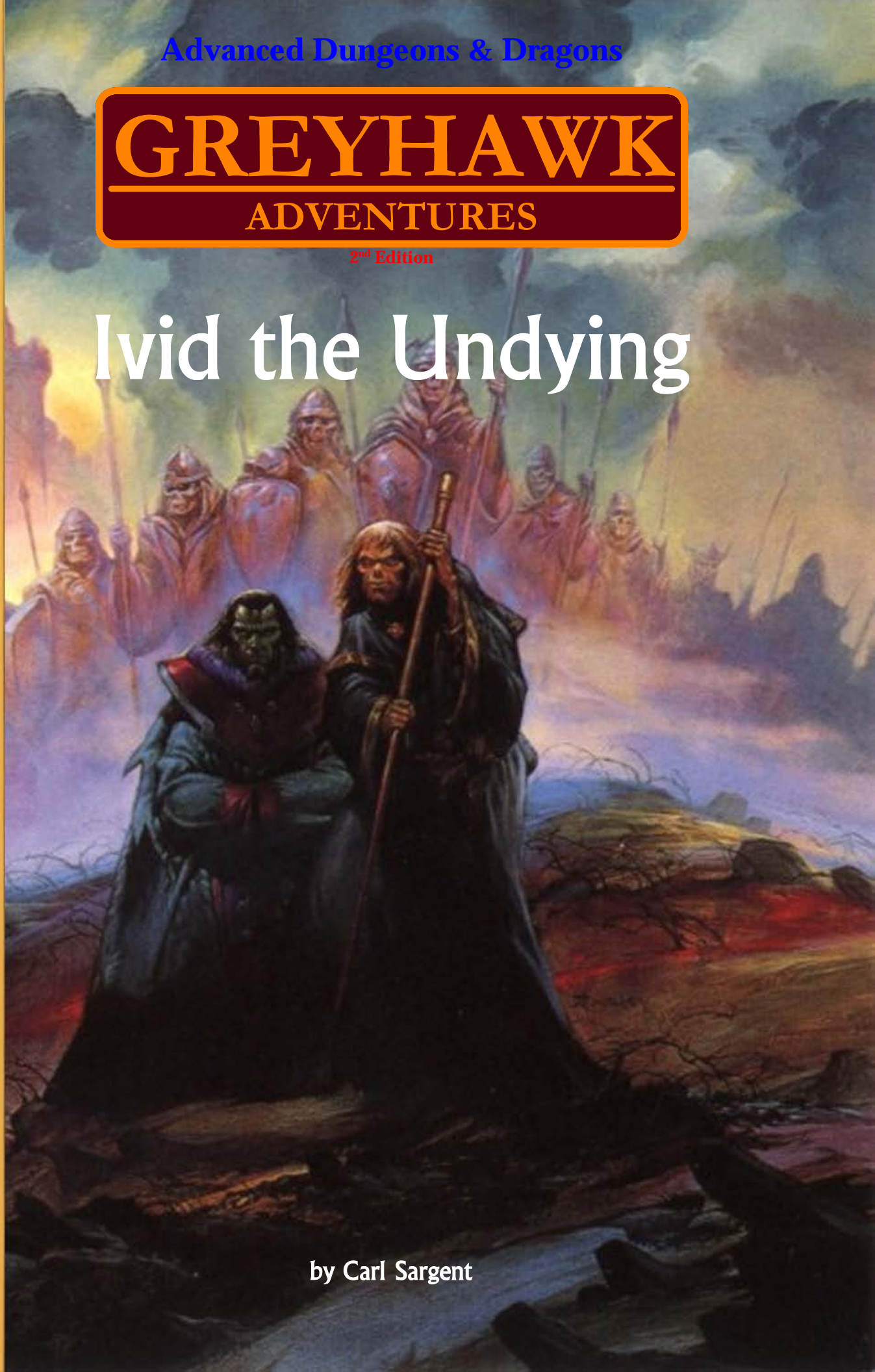
# GREYHAWK

ADVENTURES

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

## Ivid the Undying

by Carl Sargent





# Introduction

The Great Kingdom is sundered, collapsed into chaos after the terrible Greyhawk Wars. An insane overking, advised by a malefic priesthood and conversing with fiends atop his malachite throne, slew and revived many of his local noble rulers as animuses, undead creatures of cold, hateful passions.

Great armies once the envy of the Flanaess wander the lands as freebooting mercenaries and pillagers, stripping the once-abundant treasures of this great nation. More than 300 years of slow degeneration and decline have climaxed in an appalling tragedy. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children have perished, and many more will follow in the years ahead.

In this merciless nightmare of insanity and cruelty, only a few pockets of resistance fighters, good and valiant rebels, can be found. Made up of rangers, druids, bards, and woodsmen of the great forests of Aerdy and the Lone Heath, they struggle against the growing evil and oppression.

*Ivid The Undying* is an extensive guidebook to the Great Kingdom and its many lands, expanding on the information presented in *From The Ashes*. The first chapter summarizes the history of the Great Kingdom of Aerdy. The following chapter details its peoples and rulers, laws,

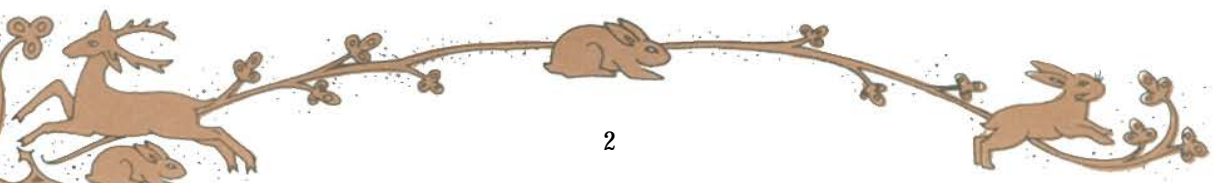
royal houses, merchants and peasants, powerful factions (armies, mercenaries, humanoids, fiends, and others), commerce, trade, and more.

Following these chapters are a number of gazetteer-style sections that describe the fiefdoms within the Great Kingdom. Cities, towns, settlements, mysterious and magical sites, castles, keeps, ruins, natural hazards and many other features are covered, along with profiles and descriptions of major NPCs of the lands. These chapters take up the bulk of *Ivid The Undying* and provide DMs with all the information needed for campaigning in the Great Kingdom.

The chapter, **Whispers and Ventures**, contains rumors, adventure hooks, hints and allusions, suggestions for game masters, and mini-scenario themes for PCs of all levels of experience so the richness of the Great Kingdom as a campaign setting can be fully exploited.

The final chapter lists the major armies of Aerdy and mercenary companies of note.

From the ghastly fiendish magics of Duke Szeffrin's Almorian Lands in the west, to the barbarian-haunted islands and treasures of the Sea Barons to the east, the Great Kingdom awaits!



# The Millenium Empire

The current year is 585 CY (Common Year). It is more than 2,000 years since the original inhabitants of the Flanaess, the Flan tribes, were driven from their lands by Oeridian and Suloise invaders fleeing magical cataclysms far to the west.

Only much later, some 700-800 years ago, the strongest of the Oeridian tribes, the Aerdi, settled the rich lands to the east of the Nyr Dyv and founded the Kingdom of Aerdy. A century and more of growth saw the Great Kingdom expand, with the Flan driven north and the Suloise driven south to the margins of the Densac Gulf. At its height, the kingdom stretched from the lands of the Sea Barons to the borders of modern Perrenland, and from Sunndi to the south to the forbidding Griff-Corusk mountains in the north.

The Aerdy calendar dates from the crowning of the first overking, Nasran of the House of Cranden, in Rauxes in CY 1. Proclaiming universal peace, Nasran saw defeated Suloise and Flan—rebellious humanoid rabbles of no consequence and no threat to the vast might of Aerdy.

The high history of the Aerdi people is a tale very long in the telling. Hundreds of warriors, mages, seers, and others are much more than footnotes to that history. Aerdi history before the founding of the Great Kingdom is a rich, fabulous tapestry; and the lands the Aerdi came upon were hardly bereft of legends, wonders, and luminaries of their own. Those histories, however, would fill books on their own. So it is the Great Kingdom's own history we consider here.

The ruling house of Aerdy became the Rax-Nyrond House after the death of Nasran's grandson, Tenmeris, in CY 75. Tenmeris's Queen, Yalranda, was a formidable diplomat and mediator who had done much to support her husband and was the true power behind the throne. Tenmeris, it was said, had a brain as small as his flatulent belly was vast.

Yalranda was accepted as the only overqueen in Aerdy history because of her prowess in establishing dynastic marriages between the royal houses of Aerdy and her uncanny gift for forging alliances (and because of her strange, magical allure and ability to calm angry or confused nobles). That she died young, at age 40, is one of Aerdy's great tragedies.

Her eldest son, Manshen, broke with tradition and took the name of the Rax-Nyrond Royal House. This house was to rule for nearly 400 years. (Aerdi Royal marriages involved the lesser party taking the familial name of the more elevated partner of the marriage, so that any spouse of the Crandens normally became a Cranden.)

## A Long, Slow Fall

The subsequent inexorable decline of the Great Kingdom can be seen in two stages. The first is the beginning of the many secessions from the Overkingdom, with Furyondy

the first to establish independence in CY 254 and Veluna and Tenh following soon after with Perrenland re-asserting its independence. The decisive blow was the division of this royal house in CY 356 when the Nyrond branch rebelled.

The attempts of the then-overking, Portillan, to reconquer Nyrond were stymied by an assault on the North Province of Aerdy from Flan barbarians which forced Portillan to defend his own lands rather than reconquer Nyrond. With the Urnst states and the Theocracy of the Pale swiftly following Nyrond's path, Aerdy's dominance was broken.

While further secessions would follow, such as Almorian independence and a relatively short-lived attempt to ally the South Province with the Iron League, these would not be of major importance.

However, the second element of the Great Kingdom's decline now came to the fore. While some overkings had been less than masters of warfare or diplomacy, the House of Rax produced a succession of inept rulers. Galren, Portillan's son, was a half-wit. In turn, Galren's son and heir, Sonnend, was a drunkard who left all affairs of state to his advisers. Further ineffectual and weak rulers followed their dismal reigns. Some were said to be insane, but this was mostly untrue—save for feeble-mindedness now and again.

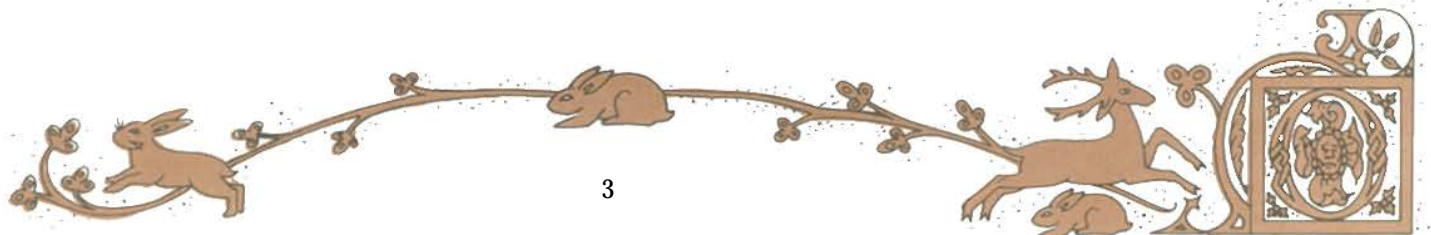
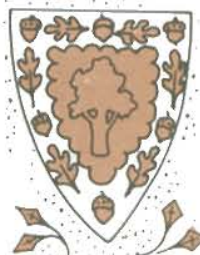
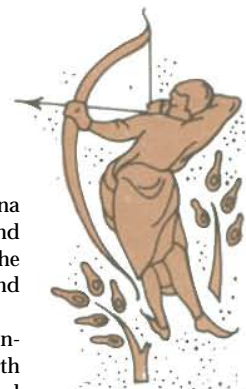
This produced a vital change in Aerdi society. Local rulers who were members of other royal houses began to use their titles of prince rather more aggressively. They began to enact more laws of their own, to administer local taxes increasingly independently of the overking, to build fortifications not only for themselves but for their own liegemen who came less and less to answer to the overking and more and more to obey only their own local lords.

Mercenary armies became more common, and some princes conquered slices of other princes' lands. The drunken, enfeebled, or effete overkings allowed this to happen.

The House of Naelax was the first to use humanoid mercenary troops around the Adri Forest for provisioning raids late in the fourth century. And it was this royal house which came increasingly to the fore.

At this time, the Great Kingdom still had a relative freedom and equality of many priesthoods, although those of Lawful alignments were dominant. In Rauxes itself, the priesthood of Pholtus still played a commanding role as advisers, judges, and mediators. However, Naelax aligned itself firmly with the burgeoning priesthood of Hextor. In a land with increasing strife and struggle, this aggressive evil priesthood became more influential as the decades passed.

Before many years went by, Prince Ivid of Naelax acted decisively to oust the wretched Rax ruler.



# The Millenium Empire

## The Turmoil Between Crowns

This name is given both to the decade of internal schisms under the rule of the last Rax overking, and to the civil war which followed Ivid's ascension.

Overking Nalif was the last of the Rax line descended directly from the overkings. A flock of misbegotten cousins, exiles and ne'er-do-wells of Rax could lay some claim to the title of overking when Ivid had Nalif assassinated, but after a century of hopelessly ineffectual Rax rule all of the royal houses agreed that another Rax overking was simply unacceptable.

Ivid proclaimed himself overking immediately (in 446 CY) and plunged the Great Kingdom into civil war.

With few exceptions, no simple picture of the role of royal houses in the civil war can be given (the houses are detailed in the next chapter). Most of the House of Naelax allied with Prince Ivid. But a few of his cousins—who disliked and distrusted him—did not.

Among the competing houses, the House of Cranden opposed Naelax, as did many elements of the House of Garasteth and the remnants of Rax. But in all houses princes were busy using the civil war as a cover for settling old scores and attacking their in-house rivals. Ivid certainly had some such princes assassinated; the blame would be laid upon their own blood for this, increasing within-house divisions and making opposition to him less organized.

Alliances shifted during the war, but the decisive event was the decree of the House of Darmen in CY 449 to back Ivid's suit wholeheartedly. This wealthy and pragmatic house believed Ivid was coming out ahead, so the house sprang a surprise with the sack of Rel Deven in Harvestere of that year and a series of brilliant lightning strikes aimed at securing provisioning for the coming winter.

Their armies allied with those of Naelax to secure the central lands of the Great Kingdom, and the war was won. In Planting, CY 450, all houses agreed to accept Ivid as overking, and their leading princes paid homage along the Great Way in the Parade of Crowns. The House of Naelax was triumphant.

## Ivid's Legacy

Ivid may have won a kingdom, but he paid a high price. The South and North Provinces, and Medegia, became in effect semi-autonomous provinces of the Great Kingdom.

Ivid had to accept this as part of the bargain for accepting his ascension to the throne. While North Province was ruled by the House of Naelax, Medegia in particular became increasingly independent and often failed to support the more aggressive schemes of later overkings. But the independence of these sub-states could only delay the final fate of the Aerdi.

The House of Naelax changed Aerdy forever. The five

overkings it produced, and most of its noblemen and women, were dangerously insane and "fiend-seeing." Dangerously insane because the typically paranoid form their madness took did not take any toll of their intellect; they were usually smart, piercingly observant, especially with fiendish aid, and utterly ruthless.

The title "fiend-seeing" ascribed so often to them is, nowadays, not such an unusual aspect of Aerdi. Many rulers traffic with fiends, have fiends in their armies, or are themselves undead. However, at the time, the House of Naelax assumed dominance by being very unusual and pre-eminent in such fell dealings, and it gave them a decisive edge.

Ivid V ascended to the Malachite Throne in Rauxes in CY 556 by the traditional manner of murdering his father and others who got in his way. This was accepted practice in many royal houses in Aerdi. The moral degeneracy which the House of Naelax actively encouraged had taken a firm rooting in Aerdi aristocracy.

Ivid was no military genius, but he was a brilliant intriguer and politician, and he knew how to stage a good public execution or, still better, utilize torture to encourage any possible rivals to re-think their plans to oust him. The Screaming Column in Rauxes is one of the most colorful testimonies to Ivid V's innovation in the realm of cowering opposition by fear.

Had he remained content with such masterful acts within his own lands—for Ivid successfully ensured that his kingdom remained intact despite bids for secession by certain provinces—he might have been a highly effective ruler. As it happened, his megalomania got the better of him.

## The Beginning of the End

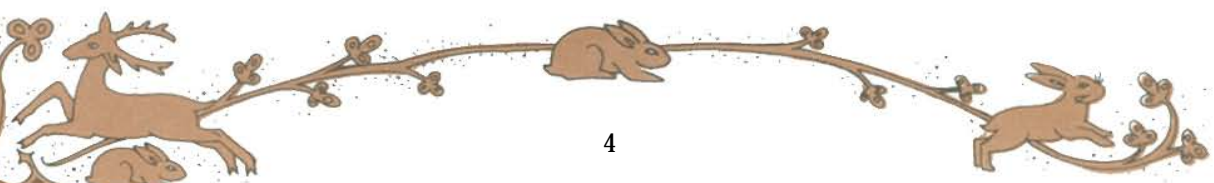
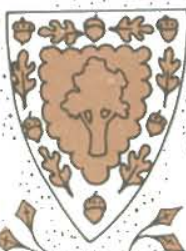
The first major naval skirmishes between the Great Kingdom and the powerful Nyronde navy took place in Relmor Bay in CY 578. Some say the Nyronde engineered these skirmishes, preparing for what they considered to be an inevitable war.

Certainly, Ivid V was making noises at court about reclaiming Aerdy's great imperial heritage, and Nyronde was the first major power heading west.

To be sure, the ruler of South Province coveted Onnwal and Irongate, even Idee—but these were small worries to Ivid.

He did have designs on Nyronde, but it may well be that the Nyronde forced his hand. Both sides actually shied away from a major land war, but when Iuz's puppets in Stonefist swarmed into Tenh with barbarian help in CY 582, something snapped within Ivid.

The reports of war, blood, and great conquests being made by the hated barbarians and barely-civilized Fists of the North excited and enraged the overking. Egged on by the priesthood of Hextor, Ivid entered the fray by storm-



# The Millenium Empire

ing into Nyron and its ally Almor.

However, even before the Great Kingdom went to war, dangerous changes had occurred within its borders. It was an open secret that Ivid V had baatezu within his Companion Guard, and the forbidding figures of the Fiend-Knights of Doom struck fear into all. Their name itself was a flamboyant, excessively-stated mockery as were their uniforms. They wore gold visors to mock knights and warrior-priests of good deities such as Heironeous.

There was worse, of course. Ivid's hateful court wizard, Xaene, creator of the fiend-knights, disappeared. It is believed he turned to lichdom, but his successor, Karoolck, turned out to be an even darker and more dangerous mage than Xaene.

Karoolck is known for his development of the fiend armors worn by elite soldiery within Ivid's Companion Guard. The wizard's rise corresponds closely with Ivid's development of a slowly progressive wasting disease.

Ivid confronted important priesthoods in the Great Kingdom. He proclaimed the worship of "Baalzy," an alleged power of prosperity and wealth. The name was but an alias for a powerful arch-fiend allied with Ivid (and, more importantly, with Karoolck).

Temple taxes were greatly increased, and when priests and worshipers tried to get around them by holding simple services of reverence in private homes, Ivid proclaimed a "worship tax" on such gatherings. Around the Great Kingdom, priests of non-evil deities were harassed, assassinated, and persecuted. An inevitable showdown followed.

The Patriarch of Pholtus in Rauxes, Emasstus Carcosa, pronounced heresy on Ivid, denouncing him openly as being insane and allied with fiends. He called upon the servants of all non-evil powers to ally and oppose the overking.

Perhaps the old patriarch-sage thought that by stopping short of openly inciting insurrection and overthrowing Ivid he might escape with his life—he did not. Ivid had him arrested for treason and subversion and organized the systematic looting of temples of Pholtus in all lands (though in Ahlissa and Medegia he was defied in this matter).

So, when the Greyhawk Wars came, there was foment enough within the Great Kingdom. Perhaps Ivid thought that a war against foreign states might take the heat out of the situation at home.

## War and Aftermath

The history of the ensuing military campaign is well known (see *Greyhawk Wars*, *Adventurer's Book* or *From The Ashes* for more details).

It is a tribute to Ivid's incompetence that a nation with the vast armies and resources that the Great Kingdom

had was fought to a standstill by much smaller Nyron. For all the excellence of the Nyronese armies, and their superb morale and training, Ivid should have been able to crush them.

Instead, such trivial diversions as Osson's raid into Ahlissa and Medegia brought out the very worst in Ivid. He became utterly obsessed about such matters and ordered appalling reprisals, verging on genocide, against the people of those lands. He saw it as punishment for treachery in not dealing with such affronts to His Imperial Majesty.

Convinced of treachery among his nobles, he invoked a unique new form of ensuring their obedience. With Hextor's priests and the aid of fiends, he had the nobles slain and brought back to unlife as powerful undead creatures—animuses. He thought that by eliminating their human weaknesses and he could be certain of the loyalty of wholly acquiescent zombie-leigemen.

What he actually had, however, was a large number of very powerful and embittered monsters who retreated to their own lands and simply defied him.

In response, Ivid began executing as many traitors (the vast majority of them imagined traitors) as he could get his once-elite Companion Guard to lay their hands on. Rauxes was awash with blood; by the end of the wars, its population was barely above half its pre-war total.

The supreme irony is that Ivid himself is an animus now. After an assassin's poisoned and enchanted dagger struck him, only this revivification process was able to prevent his death. Still, the process failed in some crucial respect, as Ivid still has the wasting disease he contracted shortly before the wars. The disease appears to be incurable.

Ivid the Undying is dying by the day.

To return to the history of Aerdry: one must add to Ivid's crimes the decimation of Medegia by troops. This came about because of his rage over the Medegian failure to support him in his military campaigns, the failure to resist Osson's raids, the execution of the ruler of Ahlissa, and the destruction of Almor.

All these have simply added to the tidal wave of hatred against the overking which is awash within the Aerdry lands. Even his Naelax cousin, ruler of North Province, has seceded from the kingdom.

Yet, the sheer terror which Ivid still inspires prevents many of the princes from acting directly against him. The legacy of more than 130 years of Naelax rule through fear cannot be shaken off in a few years.

Ivid signed the Pact of Greyhawk to give himself time to prepare for a final, crushing onslaught of Nyron. Yet, that will almost certainly never come—at least not from Ivid himself.

The mad overking can claim direct control over not much more than a few hundred square miles around Rauxes. And his leigemen find pursuing their own squab-

