

MEDIEVAL FANTASY MECHS POWERED BY STEAM, MAGIC, OR THE LABOR OF A THOUSAND SLAVES

DRAGONMECH™

2nd Age of WALKERS



SWORD & SORCERY

820
system

DRAGONMECH™

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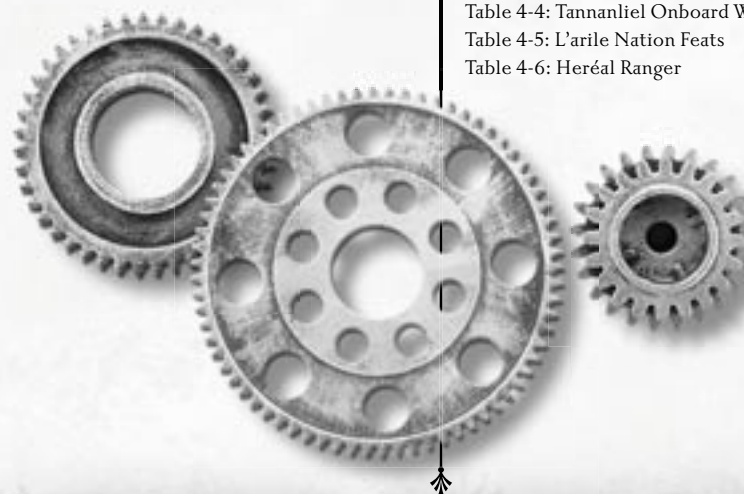
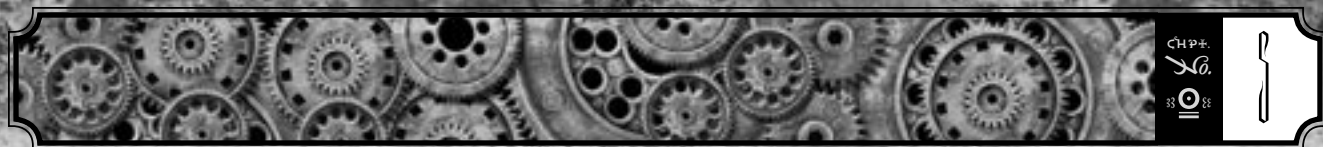




PLATE 1 *Parilus, one of three Master Gearwrights. The strength of his vision changed the world.*



THE SECOND AGE OF WALKERS

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, THE LUNAR RAINS BEGAN. METEORS SCORCHED THE EARTH, LUNAR DRAGONS DEVoured SURFACE DWELLERS, AND CENTURIES OF CIVILIZATION CRUMBLED. YET ONE VOICE MADE ITSELF HEARD IN THIS TIME OF CHAOS, AND THAT VOICE BROUGHT FORTH THE IDEA OF THE MECH. THE VOICE WAS THAT OF PARILUS, ONE OF THREE MASTER GEARWRIGHTS, AND THE STRENGTH OF HIS VISION CHANGED THE WORLD. NOW MECHS WALK THE LAND, AND THE AGE OF WALKERS IS AT HAND.

Yet this is not the first Age of Walkers. The ancient library of the Gearwrights, known as the Master Repository, speaks of an earlier age. Before the lunar rain, before the dawn of the elves, before even the age of magic, mechs walked the land. This first age of walkers ended abruptly, sending the Gearwrights into seclusion, but no one knows for sure what happened.

Now a new age has dawned on Highpoint, and the Gearwrights are active once more. The Second Age of Walkers is at hand! MechS walk the land, sheltering refugees and battling monsters. The dwarven steam-mechs belch black smoke from charred smokestacks, thundering across their rocky domain at a furious pace. The human nomads of the Legion strive to catch up, uniting for the first time in centuries to build their own mechs. The chaotic Irontooth Clans raid where they can and trade where they can't, "acquiring" mechs of all kinds through means both legitimate and not. And the elves of the northern forests watch the antics of the short-lived races and learn from them, developing magically animated walkers whose arcane capabilities make them seemingly unstoppable.

This book is an indispensable guide to the new face of the DragonMech world. For the first time, it takes a detailed look at the four major mechdoms: the ordered Stenian Confederacy, the expansionist Legion, the unpredictable Irontooth Clans, and the arcane L'arile Nation.

The Stenian Confederacy is marked primarily by law, order, and a strong military. Some see its imposition of martial law as too much order; others welcome the security it brings. Every citizen of the Stenian Confederacy is effectively an extension of the armed forces, and no examination of the Confederacy could be complete without a thorough look at its military. The five city-mechs of the Confederacy are also described, including a detailed look at Durgan-lok, the world's first city-mech. Also important is the Gearwrights Guild, which

is so strongly affiliated with the Stenian Confederacy that many consider it a second branch of the government.

The Legion is inseparable from its charismatic leader Shar Thizdic, whose exploits against the lunar dragons are legendary. Shar has managed to unite the disparate human tribes of the endless plains for the first time in memory. Now this growing nation is a virtual extension of his will, its populace worshipping him as a god and obeying his every whim. The old human nomads have seen their cultures reshaped, their values altered, and their gods replaced — and they accept it voluntarily thanks to Shar's wiles. His ambitions to rule Highpoint are no secret, and the other powers fear his growing military might. He has two city-mechs finished already, and shows no sign of stopping. But not all is right within the Legion; at least one of the tribes now united under the Legion has a sinister agenda of its own.

The Irontooth Clans are a motley collection of barbarian-monks who have grown out of the oddest of alliances. Bader Irontooth, a dwarven monk who thought he could do a better job than the Stenian Confederacy, inadvertently founded the Clans a century ago when his efforts attracted the loyalty of scofflaws and criminals. Now the Irontooth Clans have expanded to become a force in their own right. Individually, the Clan members are the most capable mech pilots on the planet. They are also the most varied, as the Irontooth Clans range from bloodthirsty raiders to zenlike protectors. They are wild and free in an era marked by increasingly oppressive governments, and many a Stenian or Legion citizen longs for the freedom of the Irontooth — although if they knew the agenda of the mysterious Lost Clan of the Irontooth, they might scuttle back to their secure autocracies.

L'arile Nation, the largest concentration of elves, is a magical society that has finally embraced mechs — and with a vengeance. After the elven archmage Tannan witnessed

the city-mechs of the dwarves and saw their potential, he led a similar project for the elves. Now rising from the smoking ruins of their once-great forest is Tannanliel, the world's first magically powered city-mech. More than 2,000 feet tall and quite probably the single most powerful force on the planet, it has reclaimed wide swaths of the northern forests from the lunar menace. But Tannan's efforts have come with a price, which will soon become only too obvious.

Each of these four powerful forces has already shaped the world of DragonMech and will continue to do so. They are described in the pages that follow according to what format best suits each faction. The Stenian Confederacy is defined by its military, so the military is the focus of its chapter. The military is also important in the Legion, but primarily from the perspective of its relationship to Shar Thizdic and the wild nomad tribes he's managed to unite, so they receive the bulk of attention in the Legion chapter. The Irontooth Clans, on the other hand, are wild and varied. There are more than 50 clans, all of them different, each of them unique. Ten of the most intriguing clans are presented, along with stats for a wide variety of the unusual NPCs who lead them. Finally, the L'arile Nation is presented through the lenses of its wizards, who are its defining characteristic.

The Stenian Confederacy, the Legion, and the L'arile Nation each have one or more completed city-mechs, which make excellent opportunities for adventure. Each of their chapters includes details on, respectively, Durgan-lok, the very first city-mech; Haven, Shar Thizdic's second city-mech and a clear signal of his expansionist intentions; and Tannanliel, the first magically animated city-mech and indisputably the most powerful in the world. The Irontooth Clans lack a city-mech (though one of their clans is pursuing such a project), so their chapter instead focuses on details of the clans themselves, which present a nearly limitless potential for adventure.

You'll find mechs in these pages, of course, along with characters and spells and feats of every kind. This book will also show you how people live in each mechdom. Highpoint is not your typical fantasy world. If you want to live among the natives, it helps to know their ways.

The Second Age of Walkers is a time of unparalleled adventure. Players will find all the material they need to experience it here. GMs will learn the secrets of each mechdom and statistics for important NPCs like Shar Thizdic and Tannan. So stoke the boiler, weave the runes, and start your mech. It's time to explore!



PLATE 2 *The Stenian Confederacy is
defined by its military.*

THE STENIAN CONFEDERACY

EVERYBODY KNOWS...

IN A WORLD OF CHAOS, SURVIVAL IS ONLY ENSURED BY ORDER. ORDER PROVIDES SOLIDITY, PREDICTABILITY, AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, STRENGTH: THE RAW, UNADULTERATED STRENGTH THAT COMES FROM FOCUSING MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF OTHERWISE DISCORDANT FORCE. FIVE MIGHTY CITY-MECHS HAVE CONCENTRATED THE STRENGTH OF THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF DWARVEN WARRIORS INTO A SINGLE, UNIFIED FORCE THAT IS WITHOUT A DOUBT THE MOST POWERFUL POLITICAL ENTITY ON HIGHPOINT TODAY. THAT FORCE IS THE STENIAN CONFEDERACY.

The Stenian Confederacy is one of the most ordered institutions still functioning in an era marked primarily by chaos and disaster. Born from the lawful dwarven stronghold of Duerok but united by the structure of the Gearwrights Guild, the Stenian Confederacy is a loose alliance of city-mechs that patrol nearly 200,000 square miles of surface territory. It is the only dwarven institution on Highpoint to break with the traditional clan model of rulership, and this fact combined with longstanding behaviors ingrained in the minds of its many dwarven members have created tensions since its earliest days. Nonetheless, these tensions are usually resolved in an orderly fashion, and the result has been a reshaping of Highpoint's surface world.

Before the lunar rains began, the ancient dwarven stronghold of Duerok had a population of more than 600,000 dwarves, housed not only in the halls of Duerok itself but in a sprawling arrangement of protectorates, alliances, and clan territories that extended all across the subsurface of the flatlands and roughlands. The whole arrangement was run fairly efficiently by a hierarchical network of clan relationships, with the most ancient clan elders governing vast swaths of territory while their progeny controlled day-to-day details in progressively smaller zones of the pyramidal government structure.

This system had worked fine for untold generations, but it was not suited to the once-in-a-lifetime stresses exposed by the lunar rain. The best solution to the endless waves of refugees engendered by the lunar rain would have been

for all the dwarves of Duerok to mobilize to its borders, defending the state along its many entry points. But mustering that sort of defense required organizing a huge number of warriors over a vast area. Instead of warriors flowing in an orderly fashion to where they were needed most, the clan system resulted in warriors flowing in a rather disorderly fashion to where their relatives were concentrated most. Some of Duerok's entry points were well defended, while others were left wide open. Moreover, the dwarven love of hearth and home promoted a tendency to defend one's own stronghold first, then that of allies. Far too many dwarf warriors were left defending the centermost territories while the outer borders were woefully undermanned.

All this could have been avoided had a central administrator orchestrated the defense of Duerok, but there was no such person. Instead, there were more than four dozen senior clan elders, whose own descendants had intermarried in a web of allegiances. Some clans were led by multiple elders; other elders singly led multiple clans. When it came down to a crisis situation, they decided to protect their relatives rather than strategize for the good of the whole.

The Stenian Confederacy was founded with fresh memories of the resulting disaster. Duerok was ransacked by successive waves of refugees seeking shelter from the lunar rain. Its population was nearly halved over the course of several decades, and the territory it controlled shrunk by a similar margin. To the Confederacy, this all could have been prevented with order. A

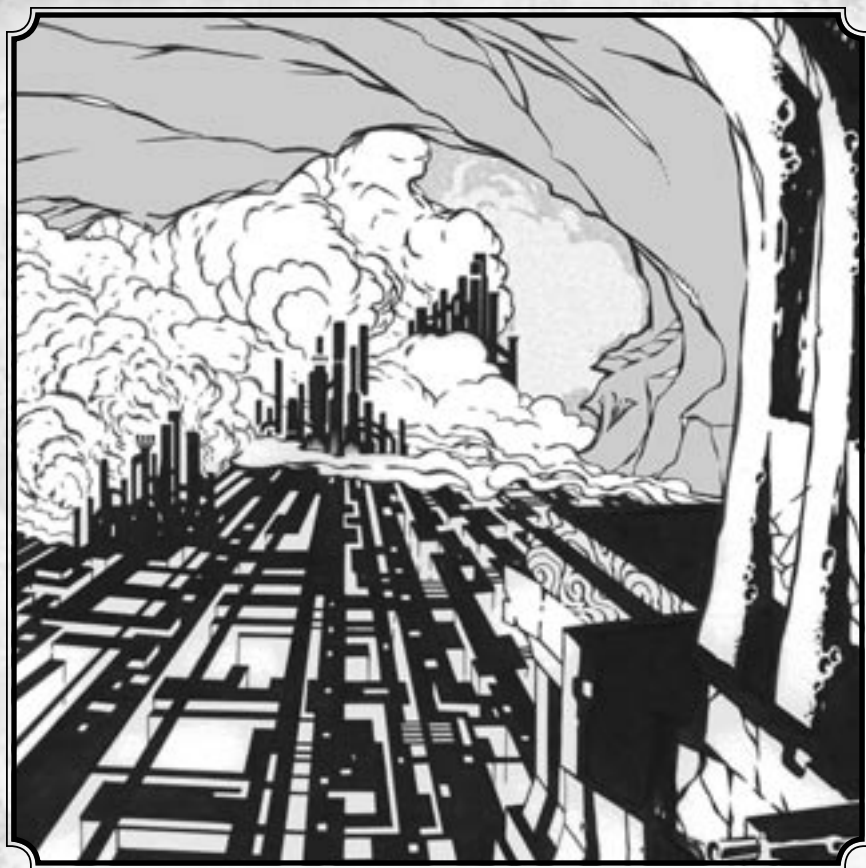
strong, ordered government ruled by objective decision-making, defined authority, and clear lines of communication could have prevented the fate that befell Duerok. And that's what the Stenian Confederacy aims to do.

The Stenian Confederacy is an alliance of five city-mechs, each of which has absolute dominion over its own territory. The city-mechs coordinate their activities in a continuing bid to bring ordered rulership to the surface world. Each city-mech has a clearly defined government, a strict chain of command, and a set territory. They patrol their domains with iron fists, strictly enforcing a body of law necessary to preserve the whole.

At least, they do so in theory. Despite its noble ideas, the Stenian Confederacy has some weaknesses. Most of its dwarven members have lived for a hundred or more years, and still remember the authority of the old clans. The new rule of the abstract governing councils of the Stenians does not yet have a firm legitimacy in the mind of these older dwarves. Furthermore, the politics of the Stenian Confederacy are complicated by the Gearwrights Guild, which owns one of the city-mechs, controls many mechs on its own, and exists as a wild card faction within the Stenians' own government but outside its formal chain of command. Finally, the Stenian Confederacy remains a *confederacy*, not an autocracy, so for all its talk of firm order and clear lines of command, it still has to contend with the fact that it has no ultimate authority, only five allied city-mechs which make up its highest echelon of power.

These five city-mechs are the core of the Stenian Confederacy. They are Durgan-lok, Nedderpik, Lokag, Thuron, and Gorla. Although Durgan-lok was the first city-mech to be constructed, the Confederacy was really born with the construction of Nedderpik. Durgan-lok retains strong ties to the clan leadership model of Duerok, which oversaw its construction. Nedderpik was built by the Gearwrights Guild with the express intent from the beginning that it be outside the control of Duerok. Echoes of the old clan model are strongest on Durgan-lok, but on Nedderpik and subsequent city-mechs, the main loyalty is to the Stenian Confederacy.

The Stenian Confederacy is firmly dedicated to establishing stability in an otherwise chaotic world. It stands as the symbol of order and might to a world that for decades has seen nothing but chaos and destruction. The Stenians believe firmly that order extends outward from within, and the only way to reestablish peace and tranquility is to be stalwart defenders of law. Nebulous concerns of good and evil are



secondary to the virtues of order and stability; to the Stenians, good is a natural consequence of order, and all of Highpoint shall one day reap the benefits.

The Confederacy establishes this order by strict military discipline. Each member has a rank and a place, and clearly knows who is in charge. Orders are not questioned; they are simply obeyed. Rules are the backbone of Stenian command, and without them the whole of the system falls into chaos. Members of the Confederacy have dedicated themselves to not only the philosophy of law, but to its application in everyday life.

Strict militarism bordering on martial law is everyday practice among the Stenian Confederacy. Members must simply adhere to their laws. Almost no other requirements exist. While this sometimes leads to extremes of all sorts, it has also led to a remarkably open society. The old clan model of Duerok was extremely insular, focused almost solely on dwarves as the center of all civilization. The Stenian Confederacy, on the other hand, has quickly recognized the technical talents of gnomes, the magical prowess of elves, and the ambition and wide-ranging minds of humans. The Stenians accept all comers, regardless of

race or background, provided they can prove their worth. In practice, of course, some of the more traditional dwarves grumble about the newcomers, and the physical constraints of older city-mechs like Durgan-lok limit the ability of humans to traverse their pitch-black five-foot-tall corridors, but compared to most other societies on Highpoint, the Stenian Confederacy is open-minded.

Life is hard aboard Stenian mechs — and in their surface-patrolled “safe zones.” There are very few slackers among the Stenians; the hard-working survivors of the halls of Duerok have very little patience for those not willing to fight for their own survival. They maintain the calendar of Duerok, in which there are only six holidays in a 252-day year, and these days there’s so much work that those six holidays are never celebrated. Every citizen must prove his worth and be willing to work constantly. Some city-mechs, such as Nedderpik, were actually built by their crew; others accept petitioners for available crew space, but only if they have useful skills or needed abilities. Still, in recent years the standards have declined as the crisis mentality of the early years has receded. Now it is possible to get a short stay on a Stenian mech if your coin purse is heavy enough to meet the

heavy tax burden (or heavy enough to sway the immigration official, but woe betide that official if he’s caught — or the immigrant, for that matter). Despite the occasional exception, the majority of the Stenian hierarchy is lawful to the core, and theirs is the kind of law enforced with swift, unquestioning justice.

Most of the Stenian government is in fact military in origin. Mech crews are almost always formally commissioned in the military, and they are judge, jury, and executioner when in the field. But the military discipline of the Confederacy extends even beyond those on active duty. In a sense, there is no division between the military and the citizens of the Stenian Confederacy. Pilots’ wives help to maintain their mechs, just as dwarven matrons of old sharpened their husbands’ axes between battles. Children learn to recognize rank insignias at a young age. Every able-bodied youth is trained for war, even if he never actively enlists in the military.

Members of the Confederacy have no tolerance for individuals that live their lives without order. The chaos of the rust riders, the free riding of the Irontooth Clans, the unstructured nature of life in the city of Edge: These are dangerous, even terrifying concepts to the Confederacy. The philosophy of discipline is so firmly entrenched in the minds of Stenian citizens that it ranks alongside such truisms as “a dwarf needs ale to survive.” To the Stenians, order is a prerequisite for survival. Those who do not live with structure, order, and discipline are destined only for death, the same kind of death many Stenians remember witnessing in the bloody halls of Duerok.

HISTORY

Before the lunar rain, the Stenian Confederacy did not exist. Its antecedent, the dwarven stronghold called Duerok, was a powerful force in the subsurface world below the roughlands. Only after the lunar rain created a chain of events that would shatter Duerok, and only after that in turn led to the creation of Durgan-lok, the first city-mech, would the Stenian Confederacy come into existence.

But Duerok did exist before the lunar rain, and had existed for many, many centuries. Duerok is an ancient stronghold with strong ties to dozens of dwarven clans. Strongest of them all is Clan Duerok, of course, but the namesake clan is only one of many. The word Duerok is identified first and foremost with

the physical stronghold that bears its name, not the clan from which it originated hundreds of years ago.

Duerok was (and still is) a major factor in trade through the underdeep. The Endless River, which carries trade goods from one end of Highpoint to the other, flows under the great cliffs and mountains at the center of the continent. As the Endless River flows eastward under the Boundary Peaks, the roughlands, and the flatlands, its major currents drive straight through the heart of Duerok. For centuries, this proximity to such a major trade route has made Duerok a vital stopping point for underdark trading. Merchants would pick up goods all along the western reaches of the Endless River, then bring them to Duerok for exchange. Duerok in turn maintained a strong presence in Edge, where it would bring its goods out to trade with the surface world. For years, Duerok strove to control Edge and thus dominate trade along the Endless River, but each of its attempts to do so inevitably failed.

The best-known of the Duerok clans was not Duerok itself, but Clan Fralief. Fralief was responsible for ferrying goods from Duerok to Edge, and handled many trading transactions in Edge itself. As a result, Fralief was known to outsiders as “the face of Duerok.” Many surface-dwellers still to this day don’t realize that Duerok is also the name of a clan; they think of Fralief as the dominant clan of the stronghold.

The clan system of Duerok was ruled by the elder members of each clan. Each clan had its own system for rulership, but usually the eldest male warrior acted as chancellor of a council of elders. In some cases, matriarchal councils dominated. Regardless of the details, the elder system formed a natural pyramidal structure over what was a vast domain. More than 600,000 dwarves were ruled by a system of progressively younger and more localized representatives of the elders of a few dominant families. Marriages intertwined the families and complicated the relationships at many places, but in a lawful society with strictly obeyed values of family, clan, and tradition, these complications never reached a crisis point.

Until the coming of the lunar rain. The effects were devastating, and led directly to the formation of the Stenian Confederacy. Buried forever in the early period of strife and disaster, now forgotten to many, are the names of the clans that fell, and the names of their leaders who have no one left alive to remember them. But these names are not forgotten by all. Many dwarves in the Stenian Confederacy maintain to this day a personal shrine dedicated to

the warriors who fell defending Duerok. The Stenian rulership is split on the value of these shrines: Obviously, no one objects to venerating fallen warriors, but some worry that the chosen method only perpetuates the legacy of the old clan system. When the administration of city-mech Lokag built a centralized shrine on its main level dedicated to all the fallen warriors of Duerok, the city-mech populace supported its decision. But when Lokag’s rulers subsequently tried to quietly “integrate” personal shrines into the central location — in other words, remove individual loyalties to old, dead clans and replace them with a Stenian-controlled edifice — the backlash was extreme by dwarven standards.

Despite the best efforts of the Stenian Confederacy, historical clan loyalties remain. Dwarves born on the modern city-mechs consider such loyalties anachronistic. Unfortunately for the Stenians, the dwarven lifespan of up to 450 years means there are far more living dwarves to appreciate the clan system than there are to disdain it. Loyalty to the Confederacy is slowly taking hold, particularly among coglayers, mech jockeys, technicians, engineers, and the rest of the technical population, but it is a very slow transition.

The history of the Stenian Confederacy was most shaped by the following clans, who retain the greatest loyalties among its citizens.

CLAN FRALIEF

Fralief still survives as an active clan, though its numbers are greatly reduced from what they once were. Due to its regular contact with the surface world through trading in Edge, its members were most comfortable with leaving their dwarven halls to live on the surface world in a city-mech — so when Durgan-lok first trod on the flatlands, it was with a crew comprised largely of Fralief dwarves. More than a third of Durgan-lok’s population has strong ties to Fralief. Should there ever be a conflict between Stenian and Fralief rulership, it is unclear how this portion of the crew would react.

CLAN KUDEAH

One of the smallest of all the clans, Kudeah had fewer than 3,000 members, almost all of whom were concentrated in a single stronghold on the fringes of the main Duerok-controlled areas. The Kudeah stronghold was

wiped out in a single day during the earliest influxes of refugees, and the few Kudeah dwarves to survive were splintered as they retreated. Nonetheless, the Kudeah were able to find shelter due to one of the greatest assets of their tribe: They were jewelers and gemcrafters, considered some of the most gifted of all dwarven artists, and without a doubt one of the wealthiest of all dwarven tribes. For the same reason, they were also considered effete and weak, and many dwarven warriors thought it no surprise that a clan of artists would fall to invading refugees in a single day.

For several decades, what remained of the Kudeah dwarves was scattered throughout the besieged, decaying halls of Duerok, until the role of mechs began to grow. The Kudeah dwarves, it was discovered, had a fine dexterity unmatched among most dwarven clans. They made great mech pilots. Generations of working in minute detail with tiny gems paid off when the world needed fine motor skills. Now many of the top mech jockeys among the Confederacy are from Clan Kudeah. They are still regarded as weak by the old axe-warriors, but the number of times a Kudeah dwarf has saved the life of an axe-warrior has ameliorated this judgment somewhat. Being a Kudeah dwarf is not a prerequisite to becoming a mech jockey in the Stenian Confederacy, but it is certainly a winning point of entry, and many an aspiring pilot has been known to lie about his clan heritage. Because the Kudeah clan has lost its stronghold and most of its numbers, it is effectively destroyed, so clan loyalty is not a big problem for Stenian administrators, except in the abstract sense that many older Kudeah dwarves hope to someday clear an area for a new stronghold.

CLAN MIGLUD

Miglud was a manufacturing clan, dedicated to refining the earth’s bounty into the finest goods available. Its members were craftsmen trained from their father’s knee in the respected medieval crafts: blacksmithing, weapon forging, leatherworking, fletching, and others. As a result, Miglud dwarves were recruited early on by Parilus for their technical aptitude. Of all the dwarves, they learned mecraft the fastest, and it is they who played the greatest role in building Durgan-lok. It was a Miglud dwarf named Stenius who hammered into place the final bolts on Sereg’s first mech. Clan Miglud mechs have since migrated to all five city-mechs in positions as coglayers and

engineers, and generally show a strong loyalty to the Stenian Confederacy. Nonetheless, they have strong memories of the family forges where many were raised, and maintain personal shrines despite their professed alliance to the Stenians and the god Dotrak.

DUEROK

The stronghold of Duerok still exists. More than 300,000 dwarves make their home over the hundreds of miles of tunnels that comprise Duerok. This population is comparable to the roughly 300,000 surface-dwellers who are protected by the city-mechs of the Stenian Confederacy, though it's vastly larger than the relatively tiny population of just under 30,000 actually living on mechs.

Duerok's relationship with the Stenian Confederacy is both very strong and very weak. It could be best compared to a terribly strained family relationship. The Stenian Confederacy was born from the halls of Duerok, draws most of its population from Duerok, counts among its citizens primarily former citizens of Duerok, and, in a very literal sense, was actually *built* by Duerok, for it was Duerok that contributed the labor and supplies to build Durgan-lok. Nonetheless, the Stenian Confederacy officially doesn't recognize the clan structure of Duerok, eschews belief in the traditional Duerok gods, and has physically abandoned the territory of Duerok. The medieval feudal structure of the remaining clans of Duerok hasn't helped matters; the lack of a central authority in Duerok is what many Stenians believed caused the lunar disaster in the first place, and to this day the Stenian Confederacy still must deal with each clan of Duerok individually.

Of all the other societies on Highpoint, the Stenian Confederacy is most like that of Duerok. When aid is needed, the Stenians and Duerok are quick to provide assistance to each other. Yet they are forever separated by the issues that divide them, and resentment simmers on both sides.

RELIGION

The Stenian Confederacy is officially without a religion. The coming of the lunar rain left many dwarves without faith in their gods, even deep in the traditional bastions of Duerok. The coming of Parilus, with his technical diagrams

and life-saving mechs, raised further questions about how a mortal with a wrench could save Duerok while the gods could not. The final straw was the sporadic appearance of trak-traks and whispered rumors of Vessels of Dotrak walking the earth. Something other than the traditional pantheon was reshaping Highpoint, but whether it was mechs, Dotrak, or the lunar gods was not clear.

Due to the dominant position of the technical arts in the Stenian government, a great many senior Stenian officials believe in the quasi-god Dotrak. Given Dotrak's hands-off philosophy ("he just set the universe in motion, then stepped back and let it run") and the succinct union between Dotrak's ostensible teachings and the facts of mechanical physics, a "belief" in Dotrak often means little more than strong faith in the power of the steam engine and no faith in the old dwarven gods. The preponderance of technical classes on the city-mechs means belief in Dotrak is strongest on board the mechs. However, even among the surface societies that the city-mechs protect, the obvious physical protection of mechs — compared to clerics who are still having trouble receiving their spells — makes it a lot easier to believe in Dotrak than the old gods.

Nonetheless, there are always a few holdouts in any mass movement. Particularly on Durgan-lok, the most traditional of the dwarven mechs, worshippers of the old gods remain. They are ridiculed by some of their more progressive brethren, yet still cling to their ways. Korduk, the Soul Father and god of the dwarves, is particularly popular among these traditionalists, as is Morst, god of strength, and Glorius, god of valor. Details on these gods can be found on page 10 of the **Mech Manual**.

Although the Stenian Confederacy is officially without a religion, there is one pervasive belief that could be called a Stenian religion — and often is by outsiders. This is belief in the Law. The Law, with a capital L, is the original term by which the founders of the Confederacy referred to their system of rules and regulations. These laws became known as "the Law," and now the Law is recognized as the highest ideal of Stenian life.

The Law is not written down anywhere, nor is it recorded by an official keeper. It is understood by those within the Confederacy as the rule of authority for the good of the whole. The Law is when a military superior commands his subordinates. The Law is when a blacksmith must work late into the night, whether he wants to or not, to ensure the city-mech is repaired before it sets off in the morning. The Law is when a scofflaw must be executed for a

minor crime in order to maintain order among restless surface-dwellers, and the Law is when a high-ranking Stenian military commander must be permitted leniency on a major crime because his military talents bring more good to the whole than the bad brought by his crime. The Law governs waking times, meal times, even proper intervals of rest; it governs the military hierarchy, punishments for violations of its decrees, and the chain of command. The Law governs everything.

The Law pervades all aspects of Stenian life, but is often missed by visitors, who don't catch the difference between references to "the law" and "the Law." There *are* written laws on board all city-mechs, which constitute the laws of that city-mech, but they are brief and frequently reference "the Law." More than once, a written law has been overruled by a subjective interpretation of the Law when the situation warrants it.

If anything could be called the religion of the Stenian Confederacy, it is the guiding force of the Law. The Law is never promulgated or stated outright. It is simply the will of the authority acting in the interest of all. The unflinching loyalty to order and discipline evinced by the Stenian crew, combined with the overwhelming lawful alignment and obedience to authority that permeates every Stenian vessel, makes every Stenian citizen acutely aware of all aspects of the Law.

MAGIC

Magic plays a small and regularly diminishing role within the Stenian Confederacy. Arcane magic has never had a strong hold on dwarven culture, but divine magic has been important for generations. Now the gods speak less vocally to their followers, and the steam engine appears to be the solution to the world's problems. Growing faith in Dotrak further erodes the status of clerics and other divine spellcasters. Taken together, these factors have resulted in a steady movement away from magic and toward mechanical solutions.

One exception is the combination of magic and mech. This is an area of intense interest within the Confederacy. Part of the interest lies with coglayers intensely scrutinizing options for using magical or extraplanar elements in steam-powered construction. Another part lies in those who try to cross the boundaries of steam and spell, particularly steam mages and those with similar abilities. Essentially, the



only major research in arcane magic occurring within the boundaries of the Stenian Confederacy concerns its application to mechs.

Members of the spellcasting classes are rare, but they do exist. Even though the cultural zeitgeist is moving toward steam power, there are still holdouts and anachronists. Wizards are less rare than sorcerers, who are now being born with much greater frequency. Many sorcerers subjugate their innate talents to pursue more respected careers as mech jockeys or coglayers, but just as many indulge their abilities. And the churches of the old world, though they have lost many followers, struggle on. New clerics are recruited, although at a drastically reduced rate. Magic-wielding Stenians can still be found, but they're the minority these days.

DIPLOMACY

The Stenian Confederacy seeks to establish order on the surface world so that it can once again be safely inhabited. Since the inception of the Confederacy, both loyalists and opponents have wondered where this will end. It is quite possible that the martial

law imposed by the Confederacy will not end even if the problems of the lunar rain are overcome. Other threats may take their place. And so, once-temporary settlements are becoming permanent military outposts, long-term infrastructure is being developed, and the Confederacy is increasingly suspicious of groups within its boundaries that don't agree to its rule. Military law is the undeniable absolute.

With this in mind, Stenian diplomacy is a rather simple situation: obey or be punished. Overwhelming military might is the solution to most problems. Actions taken in the name of rebuilding the surface world, protecting the citizens of the Confederacy, or defending the city-mechs generally can have no negative repercussions, as far as the Confederacy is concerned. This attitude obviously doesn't endear the Confederacy to its neighbors. There are as many resentful subjugates of the Confederacy as there are willing citizens.

The Irontooth Clans have long been viewed as criminals and outcasts by the Confederacy. Although certain aspects of their society are lawful and even respectable, given their monastic heritage, they remain difficult to rule — thus the Confederacy views them as a potential threat. The clans' outlaw ways and unprecedented piloting skills make them far more dangerous than helpful in Stenian eyes. Dominating them or assimilating them seems to be impossible, so the Confederacy resorts to what it sees as its only option: eliminating them.

In reality, however, this conclusion may not be so stark. Most of the Irontooth Clans don't have nearly as much enmity for the Stenian Confederacy as one would expect. They regard the Stenians just as they regard everyone else they meet: as individual people, not a single united force. There are friendships between some Stenian surface-dwellers and nearby Irontooth clansmen, just as there are open conflicts. Moreover, the Irontooth Clans are many and varied, and even while some dislike the Stenians, others have no quarrel. Many Irontooth respect talent in all things, especially mech piloting, and this has led them to accept Stenian mech jockeys for training and jousting within a clan. Many such mech jockeys eventually return to the Confederacy illegally, never discussing their time spent with the Irontooth Clans. This informal cross-pollination of ideas slowly binds the two factions, and there is a small minority of well-respected mech jockeys

within the Confederacy that proposes some sort of peaceful solution to "the Irontooth problem."

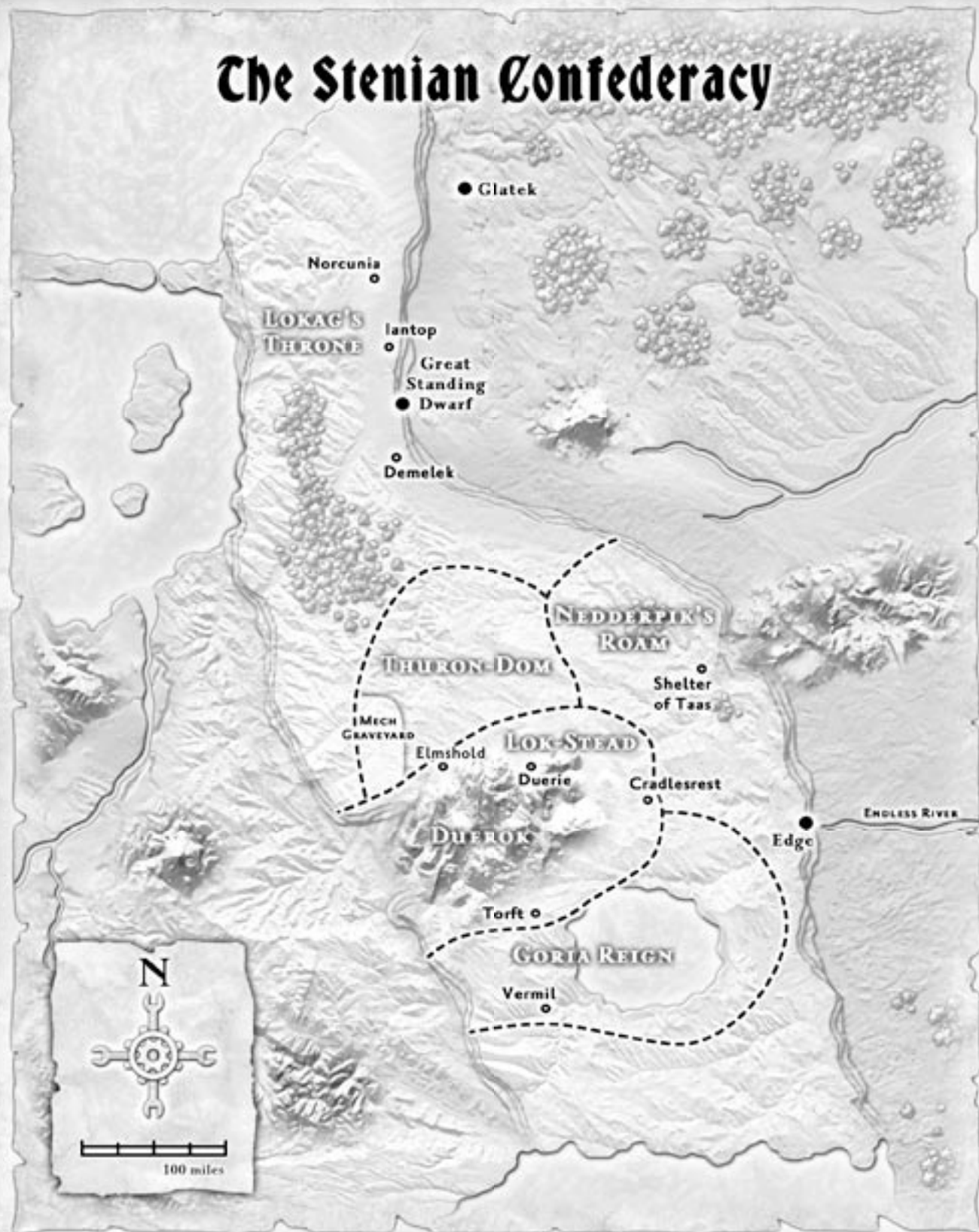
The Stenian Confederacy considers Shar Thizdic's Legion to be an outright threat. Officially, no diplomatic relations exist between the Stenian Confederacy and the Legion. There have been unofficial visitors between both governments, however, as well as some degree of back-channel communication. On the more confrontational side, shots have been fired between the two factions, particularly along the eastern cliffs near the endless plains. Both governments strive to keep these incidents to a minimum, as no one wants a war — yet.

It's clear that the Legion has an expansionist agenda, which worries the leaders of the Confederacy. However, they too eventually wish to extend their ordered view of society to more citizens, and are concerned about Shar Thizdic as much for the fact that he stands in their way as for the fact that his growing base of city-mechs is a threat. From what is publicly known, it seems the Stenian Confederacy is mostly concerned with patrolling its borders against the Legion, while the Legion may be actively sending spies and saboteurs into the Stenian city-mechs.

Some elements within the Stenian Confederacy believe that Shar Thizdic should be attacked now. They view the construction of his City Killer steam cannon (see page 128 of **DragonMech**) as an act of war. Given that the Stenian Confederacy currently has five city-mechs compared to the Legion's two, would it not be better to attack now while the Legion is weak, rather than wait until their forces are matched? These hawks are a vocal minority in Stenian government, and their arguments are seriously considered; no one dismisses them outright. If formalized diplomatic relations between the Confederacy and the Legion ever do occur, they will probably begin with a gun barrel.

The Stenian Confederacy has little contact with the L'arile Nation. Traditionally, both the elves and the dwarves were fairly insular, each content to remain in their locales studying the magic or mining that most interested them. There were some early conflicts as each side was unsure about the interests of the other. But now the Stenian Confederacy recognizes the generally good-aligned interests of the elves, and does not consider them to be an enemy. If anything, they are a loose ally against the Legion. There is occasional contact between the two governments, though not much active cooperation. Some elements within the Confederacy wish to establish a formal alliance with

The Stenian Confederacy



Tannanliel, if only to oppose Shar Thizdic. The slowly growing non-dwarven minority within the Confederacy has helped advance this interest among the traditionally insular dwarven majority. What will happen remains to be seen.

A few special relationships are worth mentioning. The Confederacy's relationship with Duerok is a longstanding and unusual one, as has already been discussed. The Confederacy's relationship with the Gearwrights Guild is also distinctive. The Gearwrights Guild has existed for millennia, but owes its current incarnation to the direct assistance of both Duerok and the Stenian Confederacy. Moreover, the Gearwrights Guild technically owns city-mech Nedderpik, and takes an active role in the government of most city-mechs. The Gearwrights Guild can almost be thought of as an extra branch of Stenian government, concerned exclusively with the gear-driven arts. There are no known public disputes between the Stenians and Gearwrights, and they have extremely close relations in every regard.

GEOGRAPHY

The Stenian Confederacy is a mechdom, or a kingdom ruled by city-mechs. In the case of the Stenian Confederacy, there are five ruling city-mechs. Unlike a traditional medieval kingdom, a mechdom is mobile. Its territory is not defined by physical borders unless the mechs cannot traverse those borders, and its territory is not defined by political borders unless the mechs cannot move around these political borders. In short, the territory of a mechdom is not always clean, as the city-mechs can always move.

That said, given the nearly impassable natural boundaries of the Stenian Confederacy (mountains to the west, and cliffs in both sides), its territory is actually well defined for a mechdom. The Stenian Confederacy is the major political power of the flatland — a swath of rocky, barren terrain that is essentially an enormous cliff-top. It is separated from the endless plains of the east by towering cliff faces, some as high as 3,000 feet. To the west is another impressive range of cliffs bordered by a mountainous area (underneath which is Duerok). Most of the Stenian territory is rocky plains, interspersed by some areas of desert and prairie to the south, and the battered remains of an ancient forest to the north.

Each of the Confederacy's five city-mechs patrol and maintain a fixed territory — the "safe

zones" — further reinforcing the mechdom's boundaries. These five areas are each approximately 40,000 square miles in size, sprawled out irregularly across the flatlands. Since city-mechs can travel great distances in a day, these areas are patrolled regularly by the city-mech itself or by patrols of smaller mechs.

It takes a city-mech about one month to cover its patrol area, while smaller patrols frequent settlements and population zones every few days. Note, however, that although a city-mech moves regularly throughout its safe zone, it's quite possible that its regular movements will never bring it within sight of much of its territory. Just as likely is the fact that the city-mech will be within sight of certain areas on a fairly regular basis, but never visit them directly.

Within the Stenian-patrolled safe zones, hundreds of settlements and way stations have sprung up. Population sizes tend to vary greatly among these settlements, since the lunar rain has destroyed many traditional societies. Some settlements spring up, attract a population, and then are devastated by a bad meteor crash or dragon attack; others form from insular communities that don't welcome outsiders, despite their good locations for settlement. Still others follow the nomadic ways popular before the lunar rain, although this is most common near the endless plains, where most of the nomadic tribes originated.

Natural shelters such as caves, canyons, and rock ledges are obvious places for settlements to evolve. These locations are protected from the lunar rain, and have become crowded havens for refugees seeking to avoid the nightly assault. It is nearly impossible for the Confederacy to keep up with every settlement that springs up under their zones. However, any group of individuals living in the safe zone and obeying the Law is considered part of the Confederacy, and governed accordingly.

Some settlements resist the protection of the Confederacy. Usually these are mech tribes or Irontooth clans that practice a lifestyle of raiding and scavenging. But not always. The yoke of martial law imposed by the Stenian Confederacy rubs many a freedom-lover the wrong way. Whether they're traditional tribes, breakaway splinter groups, family bands, or naturally occurring settlements, these independent communities are a thorn in the side of the Confederacy. Many are well-behaved and lawful, but simply refuse to acknowledge the Confederacy as their ruling government. Dealing with rebellious raiders is easy — shoot-and-destroy is a perfectly serviceable approach — but dealing with law-abiding citizens who simply don't adhere to *the Law* is a much more

delicate problem. In these cases the Confederacy often continues to protect the community, hoping its leaders will come around once they recognize the value of being part of the Confederacy. But not all situations are resolved so peacefully; more than one overzealous mech patrol has done far more damage than it should have to a community that simply wished to be left alone. There are now dozens of underground settlements actively seeking to undermine what they see as the tyrannical rule of the Stenian Confederacy.

Many settlements have seasonal populations that tend to swell with refugees when a city-mech is due to stop by. There is never a shortage of individuals seeking passage or employment on a city-mech. The mechs make regular stops along their route, and refugees tend to follow them from stop to stop in hopes they'll be first in line to replace a disembarking citizen at each stop. The Stenian Confederacy actively discourages these ragtag bands of followers, but only on rare occasions do they have the manpower to focus on the refugees as their first priority. Adventurers often find overwhelming work in these areas, on both sides of the law: policing the refugees, chasing them off, or even smuggling them onto a city-mech.

The mech patrols that keep the safe zones safe are far from stopping trouble entirely. Even though the Stenian-controlled areas are much safer than they would be otherwise, thousands of square miles are still underpatrolled. These are the least-habitable areas where the fewest of the Stenian citizens dwell. In their place are creatures. Monsters living just outside of human boundaries, or smart enough to stay out of sight when a mech patrol sweeps through, have become more of a threat than ever since their natural hunting grounds have been destroyed by years of lunar rain. Ancient crypts and sewers reopened by the lunar rain have become crowded lairs where monsters are forced to share space just as the surface races do above. Tribes of humanoids that have managed to stay together still raid and terrorize when the opportunity arises. Mech patrols often have their hands full, making them more likely to depend on freelance adventurers when unforeseen problems arise.

The five safe zones of the Stenian Confederacy are named after the five city-mechs that patrol them. These are Lok-stead, named for Durgan-lok; Nedderpik's Roam, named for Nedderpik; Thuran-Dom, named for Thuron; Gorla Reign, named for Gorla; and Lokag's Throne, named for Lokag. The southernmost of the zones is Lok-stead, for Durgan-lok was the first city-mech to be built. Lok-stead

encompasses much of the surface world above the underground stronghold of Duerok. South of it is Gorla Reign; north is Nedderpik's Roam, established after the second city-mech was complete. Further north is Lokag's Throne, and west is Thurand-Dom.

LOK-STEAD

Lok-stead is aptly named for the city-mech that secures it. Durgan-lok has the smallest of the safe zones, with the underground stronghold of Duerok nestled near the center. Durgan-lok is the only city-mech to retain a government closely modeled on the old clan structure, and is never further than a day's travel from the edges of Duerok, where most of the clans are housed. Its patrol zone is small by other city-mech standards, leaving much of its territory enforced only by patrols of smaller mechs, but the area near Duerok is by far the safest region of the flatlands. Rumors of this well-secured area have spread very far, which has perversely led to even more refugees flocking toward Duerok. Luckily, many now choose to journey to the surface of Lok-stead rather than the subsurface zones of Duerok. Long-standing settlements and permanent homes are found in this zone, some even founded by Duerok expatriates, since the area's proximity to Duerok ensures that the Confederacy will protect it.

The Stenians would prefer that most of the population migrate to other safe zones. The Confederacy built the city-mechs to ease the overcrowding of their dwarven cities, after all. But since Lok-stead is so close to Duerok, it seems to many outsiders that the zone is merely an extension of the city. The resulting population swell in and above Duerok has created a self-feeding cycle of more refugees requiring a greater military presence to patrol them, but the improved military presence creates a stronger sense of security, which only attracts more refugees and further strains the military.

There is now a massive concentration of Stenian military forces at the heart of Lok-stead. These forces would be far more useful in threatened areas, rather than quelling peasant disputes and enforcing the Law of the Stenians. But from a long-term perspective, these military forces are grooming the citizens of the future.

The urgent danger of the early days has dissipated, and the Stenian Confederacy will soon have to think about political relationships between other nations, not just the best way to

deal with crisis after crisis. To a select group of ambitious, traditionalist dwarves on Durgan-lok, the military concentrations on the surface world are merely the beginning of what will eventually be a Stenian-led army like nothing the world has seen before. Calling themselves by no name but known to a few other powerful administrators as the Expansionists, these would-be dwarven warlords have their sights set on the city of Edge, only a hundred miles eastward. Edge's many fractured domains have remained outside unified dwarven control for as long as anyone can remember, despite a strong Duerok presence there and repeated attempts by the dwarves to control the city. With an army of potential foot soldiers amassing (and being groomed) in Lok-stead, the Expansionists hope to eventually rout the drow once and for all from their bases on the northern side of High Docks, and eventually control all trade through Edge. This would be an enormous economic victory with huge rewards for the winner — but such an unprovoked invasion would run contrary to the mission of the Stenian Confederacy. As such, the Expansionists have kept their views largely hidden, and use their positions high in the Durgan-lok command chain to slowly twist the political situation toward their goals.

The citizens of Lok-stead readily accept the presence of the Stenians and tend to be very compliant with their laws. However, the steady influx of refugees brings with it criminal elements such as thievery and smuggling. The smuggling isn't limited to goods; getting people inside Lok-stead — or even Duerok — is a profitable vocation, as is the forgery of Durgan-lok citizenship medallions. Although Lok-stead may be less dangerous than other safe zones, it is not without its own problems, which tend to be centered around several criminal organizations. Overt threats are dealt with more quickly than in other zones, but it's the subtle threats that are hard to get rid of.

The best known of the criminal organizations is called the Blank Face. It is primarily organized around smuggling well-paying clients into safe zones. Members of the Blank Face are generally rogues, though a few stalkers also participate, using their abilities to distract mechs with technical problems while the rogues smuggle their clients aboard. All members of the Blank Face wear tightly woven mesh facemasks that obscure their features. They require their human cargo to wear such masks as well. Once the clients are on board a safe mech (or snuck into the halls of Duerok, as the case may be), the Blank Face presents them with a false identity, even going so far as

to use *polymorph* spells to permanently alter the client's appearance. Criminals spending stolen gold to escape capture are just as likely to be clients of the Blank Face as are powerful socialites looking for safety.

The most notable settlements within Lok-stead are four incipient cities formed from the storm of immigrants: Cradlesrest, Elmshold, Duerie, and Torft. Durgan-lok makes regular stops here, and residents of these areas save their best wares for the city-mech's arrival, which often brings hundreds of paying passengers.

Elmshold lies in the ruins of what was once one of the larger forests in the areas around Duerok, and has evolved into a gathering place for those who wish to rebuild a surface city in a traditional fashion. The residents of Elmshold use scavenged wood to create shelters and buildings.

Duerie rests directly above Duerok in the shadows of a mountain range that provides natural security against the lunar rain. It's become an important point of contact between Duerok and the Stenian Confederacy.

Torft is nothing more than a sea of hovels and squabbling refugees, but due to a confluence of natural terrain, it's a relatively safe place to gather. It's been nothing but trouble for the Stenian Confederacy, which views it as a troublesome shantytown.

Most notable of the four cities is Cradlesrest, a city of sharp-edged rusting steel. Cradlesrest was built from the shattered remains of nearly a dozen enormous Irontooth mechs destroyed here in a huge mech battle only seven years ago. In any other locale, scavengers would have scrapped the mechs and sold them for materials, but in Lok-stead, the Stenian patrols (and widespread stories of the Irontooth loss in the battle) have deterred raiders. The refugees who flocked to shelter amidst the rubble have now reshaped the raw materials into a loose-knit collection of buildings. Cradlesrest is ruled by a permanent encampment of Stenian soldiers assigned to the area, who make sure the restless population doesn't get out of hand. Many Stenians see Cradlesrest as a test site of sorts: The refugees have amply demonstrated how a collection of wrecked mechs can be used as the building blocks of a city. If it can be done here, why not elsewhere? Housing refugees in the burned-out hulks of enemy mechs could be a good strategy for expanding Stenian civilian and military influence simultaneously.