

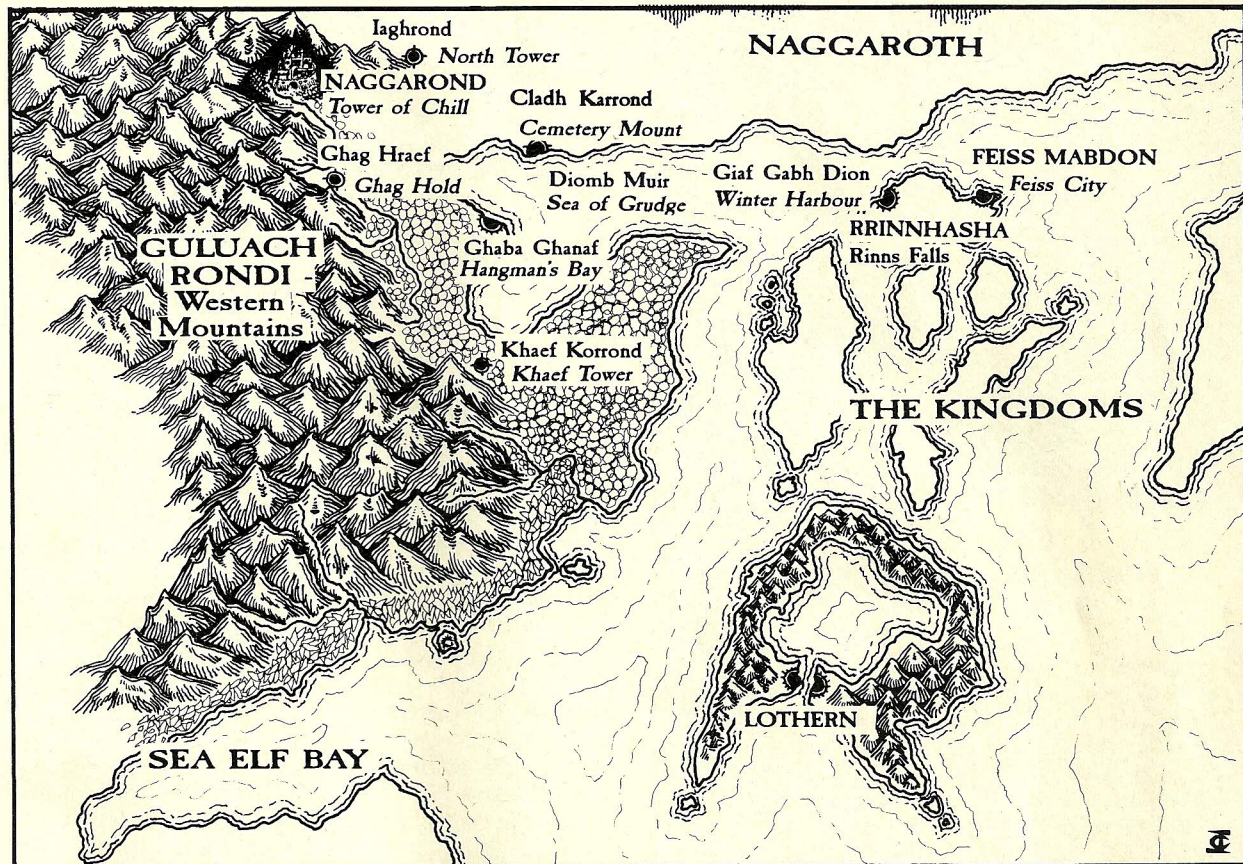
REGIMENTS OF RENOWN

WITCH ELVES

OF NAGGAROTH

BY RICHARD HALLIWELL

Of all the Dark Elf forces, by far the most dreaded and feared are the Witch Elves, the blood-crazed warrior-women sworn to seek death in battle for the glory of their dark god Khaine. Richard Halliwell has unearthed this chilling account of the return of the Witch Elves after millennia of silence in the Battle of Rrinhasha.



With my own eyes I have seen the gruesome spires of Naggarond. I have trodden its streets. I have lived its madness.

NAGGAROTH

THE EXILES

The Elven Kingdoms are scattered through a hundred islands in the Western Ocean and on the eastern edge of the New World. Ulthuan is the largest of the Elven isles, and its capital, Lothorn, is the seat of the Eldar Council. Under the auspices of the King of Lothorn, the most powerful Elven monarch, they rule the disparate kingdoms.

Millennia ago, the *Malteeras*, or People of the Northern Reaches, forsook their old gods and succumbed to the dark seductions of Chaos, turning to Slaanesh, the Lord of Pleasure. They plunged the Elven Kingdoms into a terrible civil war: battle, cruel and bloody, raged across the isles for more than seven hundred years before the Elven

Kingdoms finally vanquished the *Malteeras* at the sea battle of Deloth's Shoals. Defeated and nearly exterminated, the surviving *Malteeras* fled west to the New World, to a country called Naggaroth, Land of Chill, where they took the name Druchii, or Dark Elves.

Weary unto death after seven centuries of war, the Elven Kingdoms allowed the Dark Elves to escape, content to let the inhospitable Land of Naggaroth complete their destruction - it did not.

Though pitifully few in numbers, forced to abandon their homes, families, and most of their worldly possessions and face a dark and violent land with nothing, the Dark Elves survived. For the Druchii have ancient roots in the High Kingdoms. Their High Elven ancestry of magic and arrogance, mated with the vitality of Chaos, gave them the power to conquer Naggaroth.

But they did not emerge from their terrible struggle for survival unchanged. Over the millennia they have grown ever more like the land of their exile: cold-hearted, corrupt and evil. Their kingdom has grown slowly but inexorably, like a hidden cancer, to match its former black strength.



CITIES OF NAGGAROTH

I undertook the journey to Naggaroth alone, at the behest of Ghabhralla, Duke of Rrinhasha. Disturbing tales had reached him, stories of black sails scouting Rrinhasha's shores and fleeing when challenged, unholy tempests of boiling black smoke on the western horizon, and, most frightening of all, settlers on the mainland reported attacks by the most terrible of the Dark Elves - the *Tulluch* Witch Elves, Damned of Khaine, long believed dead from the world. If these stories were true, Rrinhasha - and, indeed, the entire Elven Kingdoms - were in deadly peril.

Putting the scars of old misfortune to good use, I chose to travel as a *Gharbbin*, the Druchii name for leper. (Years ago I had lost the lower part of my left arm to a gangrenous wasting disease in the fetid jungles of Lustria; the same disease had eaten much of my right leg and left hideous scars over my face and neck.) Though tolerated, *Gharbbin* are shunned by the Druchii; I hoped my feigned disease would keep them from examining me too carefully.

The land favoured by the Dark Elves is the wintry north - from the cold forests around the sea of Diomb Muir to the eerie ice plains on the edge of the Chaos Wastes. The Dark Elves have constructed six cities in their inhospitable land, each built where the taint of Chaos is strongest. The capital of their domain is Naggarond, the Tower of Chill, built on the vary slopes of Mount Naggaroth. The other Druchii cities, of which Cladh Karrond (Cemetery Mount) is the largest, are built on the shores of Diomb Muir and in the shadows of the Guluach Mountains to the west.

Between the cities is frozen tundra, a land of utter desolation where a handful of exiles and malcontents eke out a pitiful, brutal existence. A few grim lodges dot the roads connecting the cities, providing vital shelter for weary travellers - for it is death to cross the tundra at night. Further south, the Druchii realm ends at the lush jungles on the coast of the Sea Elf Bay.

THE DARK CRUSADE

I landed on a deserted shore of Diomb Muir. The coast was in the grip of a freezing mist which made my bones ache and turned the ground to mud. Further inland the air was of a much finer humour, but the land was still afflicted by black storms and chill winds. Although two weeks' travel from Mount Naggaroth, I could see it clearly, its grim peaks dominating the mountains to the west.

Over the following days it slowly grew to blot out the sky, seeming to loom over me like some great warbeast of the elder gods. Naggaroth reaches almost a league into the sky, the city of Naggarond clinging precariously to its wind-chiselled lower flank.

Despite the risks of discovery, I moved only by day and lay hidden, shivering and cold, in the winter night, for even I feared to travel once the sun had fled the land.

Though time seemed to stand motionless, frozen in the chill shadow of the mountain, I eventually came to the outskirts of the dread city of Naggarond.

RHUDD CYNHAEAF

Although aware of the increasing activity in the seas to the west and north, the Eldar Council were slow to act. For more than five thousand years, nothing had ventured from Diomb Muir. Naggaroth, malign but silent, was a subject most chose to ignore, hoping that the ancient peace would hold. The Druchii had apparently turned their thoughts from conquest and revenge, absorbed in the dark rites of Slaanesh. The Council would learn too late that the *Dru Perim*, or Black Pilgrims, who had founded and ruled Naggaroth had been overthrown. The Dru Perim, fearing the power of the Eldar Council, had been content to leave the High Elves in peace. But Naggaroth was now ruled by Rhudd Cynhaef, the thousand-year-old High Priestess of *Kryrnaa Khanas*, the Damned of Khaine - the dread Witch Elves.

The Kryrnaa are an ancient order, founded during the early dark days of the building of Naggarond. They had turned from the worship of Slaanesh soon after their exile from the Elven Kingdoms, and, still drawn by the allure of Chaos, took the murderous Khaine as their new Master. For many centuries the Krynaa were a secret order, their name heard only in the whisperings of dark passages, but their numbers slowly grew. And as the Krynaa increased in strength, there came the inevitable conflict with the Dru Perim. For Khaine is that aspect of the Blood God recognised by the Druchii, and the Blood God, known to other races as Khorne, is the sworn enemy of Slaanesh.

There began a long struggle between the two factions, the subtle intrigues and silent murders sometimes breaking into loud and bloody war. Slowly the Witch Elves gained ascendancy, cutting away the power of the Dru Perim. And

now, after five millennia of dark plots and the assassin's long knife, with the final destruction of the Black Pilgrims, the power of Kryrnaa Khanas is undisputed. Cynhaeaf has taken the title of Priestess-Queen and claims to be a true Daughter of Khaine. Few dare dispute her as she preaches Holy War, a Blood Crusade against the Elven Kingdoms.

I dared not approach the gates, for fear of discovery, and chose instead to scale the walls. I later learned that in the Druchii's arrogance, the gates are left unguarded. Would that I had known this before the climb. The walls are of twisted lava and slime-stained, baroque stonework, festooned with thick creeping bushes and vines.

Climbing up a dense mat of thornbrush just below the parapet, there was a small, furtive movement close by. In an instant, a scaly snakelike *thing* shot from the wall, swept a reptilian head towards me, and sank its fangs into my arm. Then it disappeared once more. Struggling to control the pain, the poison already coursing through my veins, I effected a tourniquet and cleansed the wound as best I could. Somehow I made the parapet.

THE WORDS OF CYNAEAF

Cynhaeaf's message is simple: now that the years of rebuilding are over, the Dark Elves will engage in a Blood Crusade against the High Elves in the name of Khaine. The Priestesses have spread the word to an eager following. With mounting frenzy an army is slowly gathering on Diomb Muir, in the city-ports of Cladh Karrond and Ghaba Ghanaf. Old differences are suspended, murder-feuds for the moment forgotten. The cities swell with the Crusaders; the streets are filled with songs of blood.

My time in Naggarond was mercifully short. I worked my way through streets of total silence or constant, crazed laughter. By night, the shrieks of pain, the sounds of beating drums and the keening howls were never distant.

In the flea dens, cellars and abandoned palaces occupied by the poorest in Naggarond I first learned of Rhudd Cynhaeaf and her War of Blood. A large army was assembling, preparing to set sail for the Elven Kingdoms. The city was infected by a fever: rabid with the excitement of murder and contemplation of genocide. Nobody yet knew, or even seemed to care when the force would leave, nor of its intended target. I realised that I must get closer to Cynhaeaf.

THE FALL OF RRINNHASHA

Entry into the palace of Rhudd Cynhaeaf was surprisingly simple. The lower floors of the ancient fortress are the domain of the warped and deranged, and the most deformed are given lodging in Rhudd's own quarters, for what twisted purposes I dared not enquire.

I found many places to eavesdrop on the Priestesses of Kryrnaa. After a week in the loathsome palace, all their talk was of the news: the Blood War would sail to Rrinhasha within the month.

THE LANDING AT GIAF GABH DION

The Druchii's first target was *Giaf Gabh Dion*, most northerly of the Sea Elf ports. Giau lies on the western seaboard of the Isle of Rrinhasha. It is in a natural harbour, accessible only through a narrow channel in a massive and ancient sea wall, the channel guarded by two towers set at either side of the sea gate. On the day the Blood War sailed, the garrison at Giau stood at only a hundred.

Rrinhasha had been in the grip of a hurricane for almost a week, making sailing from the island impossible, and the Elves at Giau Gabh Dion could only huddle fearfully in their homes and wait for the storm to pass. When it did, the Dark Ships followed close behind, sweeping through the channel and into Giau Bay before the dazed and battered guards could shut the sea gates. Surrounded and cut off, horribly outnumbered, the towers were quickly overwhelmed.

While they fought a valiant but wholly vain defence, more Dark Ships crossed the bay to the town itself. The people of Giau Gabh Dion had never seen such a force gathered before. From the Dark Ships along the waterfront swept wave after wave of *Tulluch*, the Witch Elves of Kryrnaa Khanas.

There were a few brave battles as the High Elves struggled against overwhelming numbers. Although many made a good account of their deaths, the *Tulluch* crushed all who stood in their way.



Having learned the time and place of attack, it was time to return to Rrinhasha. Then disaster struck: a host of Witch Elf guards came for me. I fought them, but the long journey had weakened me, and they were many. Finally, a cunning stroke crippled my remaining leg. Mercifully, I fainted, my last thought as the darkness came: *'They know my name! Someone has betrayed me!'*

I awoke at night, lying on the back of a creaking wagon. In the train of the Priestess-Queen Rhudd Cynhaef, I was returning to Rrinhasha.

The train moved slowly. At Cladh Karrond, Rhudd retired for three days to make her pacts and bonds, and fling her sorcery against Rrinhasha. By the time we moved to Gíaf Gabh Dion, the town had fallen. Gíaf was in ruins.

No longer a threat to my captors, I was all but forgotten in the orgy of blood and death which followed the capture of Gíaf. Recovering a little of the use of my left leg, I obtained a makeshift crutch and slipped away, finally joining the few pitiful High Elf survivors hiding in the hills.

Cutting a bloody swath across the island, the Witch Elves faced little opposition. The few High Elf survivors fled to Feiss Mabdon, Rrinhasha's capital and the only remaining place of refuge on the island. Blinded by sorcerous black fog and pursued by marauding packs of deranged, blood-stained Tulluch, few made it to Feiss.

The Witch Elves swept across the island, each victory followed by horrible slaughter of the vanquished. In each conquered village, the townfolk cowered behind shuttered windows awaiting their fate at the hands of the Druchii.

In the center of each town, a vast pyre was built. Our people, both the dead and the living, were thrown into the flames. Others were chained to horses and torn in two. I could tell a hundred other stories far worse than these.

THE BATTLE OF ◀ FEISS MABDON ▶

◀ RRINHASHA BURNS ▶

While the Witch Elves danced their songs of blood in the streets of Gíaf Gabh Dion, boats bearing Dark Elves were sent to sack the smaller towns and the villages dotting Rrinhasha's shores. One by one they suffered the Crusaders' wrath. When the coast was reduced to ruins, the Witch Elves moved inland.

The defenders at Feiss Mabdon were commanded by Ghabhralla, the Duke of Rrinhasha. With the coastline in the grip of another sorcerous hurricane, escape was impossible. Grim, angered by the murder of his people, he vowed to make the Druchii pay dearly. He positioned his army in Chulin meadow, a pasture ground a little inland of Feiss.





A Vanguard of Witch Elves arrived at Chulin well in advance of the Dark Elf host. Heedless with blood and conquest, they foolishly attacked without waiting for the main force to come up; Ghabhralla's Elves slaughtered them to the last Witch. Sobered by the setback, Cynhaeaf halted and gathered her scattered forces in the woods and hills to the west of Chulin. In the next battle, she would bring all her numberless Crusaders into the fray. Ghabhralla was doomed.

Ghabhralla couldn't advance further without leaving Feiss open to attack; there was nowhere to retreat to; he waited at Chulin for the Dark Elf onslaught. On the coast below, he could see the Dark Ships arriving, their bows bedecked with High Elven dead and the banners of the fallen towns.

The battle came the next morning. During the night, vicious skirmishes were fought, the Druchii capturing two low hills to the west of the meadow, where they positioned bolt-throwing *Reapers* with a commanding view of the battlefield.

The Blood Army's centre was formed of a solid mass of Witch Elves, fell, blood-crazed women bearing two weapons each and singing of death. On either side were regiments of Dark Elves, some with crossbows and others carrying swords which dripped smoking black ichor. Flanking the army were units of horse cavalry and Cold One riders.

Under cover of darkness Ghabhralla's small army had prepared some earthworks and a low stockade, behind which stood the High Elven swordsmen, while small units of Elven bowmen provided what flanking protection they could. The High Elves were outnumbered at least ten to one.

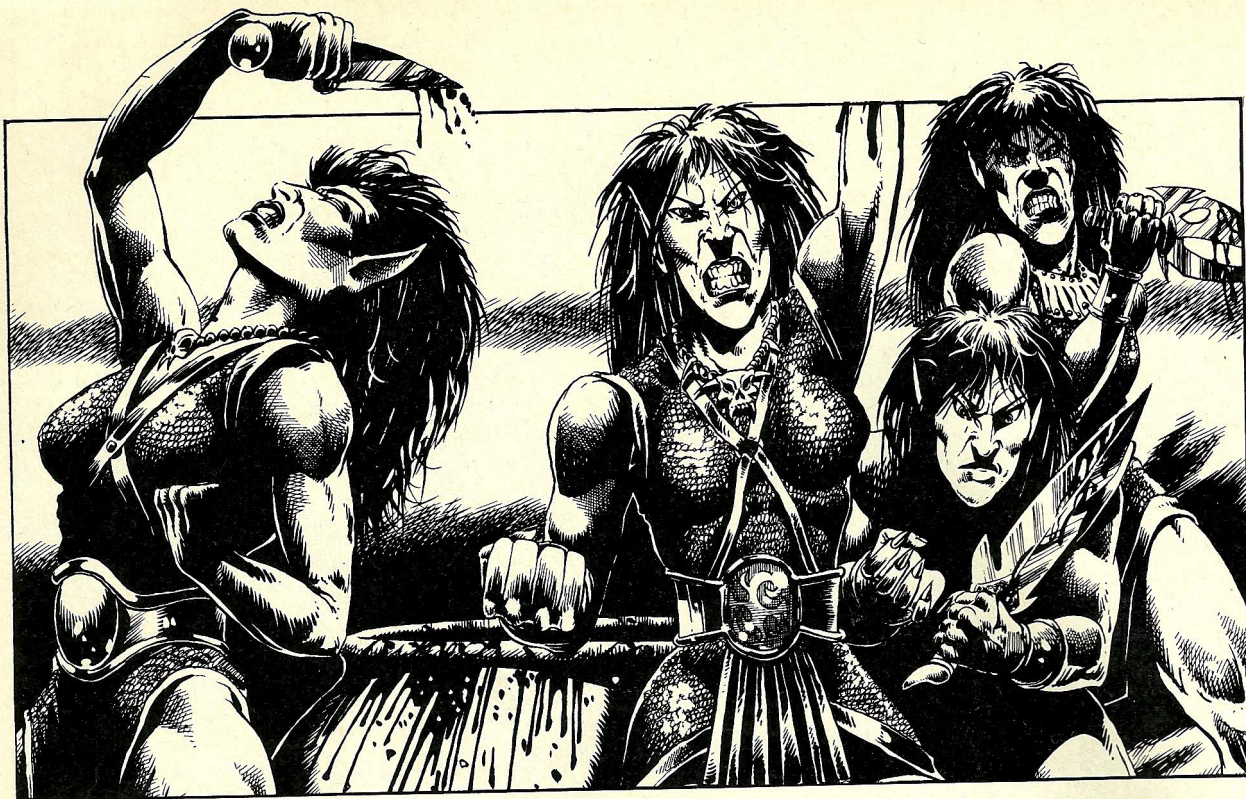
The battle lasted only minutes. The Tulluch, drunk with blood and murder, fought like Daemons. Their shrieking

charge was met with grim determination by Ghabhralla's Elves; the best any of them could hope for was a chance at vengeance and a clean death. As the Witch Elves hit the stockade, a wave of arrows flew from the defenders' bows, wreaking much carnage among the attackers. The Elves at the walls fought with a cold ferocity matching the Witches' bloodlust. It appeared for a moment that the Witches might be repulsed, but then the Dark Elf cavalry and Cold Ones swept around the Elven flanks, cutting through the bowmen like a knife through butter. Sensing victory, the Witch Elves redoubled their efforts and broke the thin High Elven line. The battle was over; the killing was just begun.

Before attempting an escape from Rrinhasha, I endeavoured to discover the fate of Feiss Mabdon. The journey across the island was a woeful one. Choking beneath the cloaking mist, the fells were already dying. Bodies of families lay rotting in their gutted farms. There was no life except the wolf packs and carrion.

Feiss was empty. Though the inhabitants had vanished, there were no heaps of bloodless dead or shrieks of maniacal laughter. The Druchii had abandoned it; even the wolf packs shunned its gates. In an open field near the capital, I found evidence of a battle; beyond that I could learn nothing. It was a sad and eerie end to my odyssey.

It was easy to find a sturdy sailboat in the deserted harbour. I sailed with some difficulty through the storms that still plague the coast, and am now returned to Lothorn, my mission to discover the one who betrayed me to Rhudd Cynhaeaf. It seems certain that Ghabhralla died at Feiss Mabdon; apart from him, only the eleven Eldar Councillors knew of my mission. *Someone will pay.*



KW

◀ THE BLIGHTED ISLE ▶

When the first Witches leaped and shouted their way into Feiss Mabdon, they found an empty city. On Ghabhralla's orders, the entire population had fled, preferring clean death at sea to the horrid tortures of the Blood Crusaders. In hopelessly overcrowded boats sailing into the teeth of the storm, almost all were drowned. Many foundered in sight of the city's lights, but those on board swam out to die at sea rather than face capture at the hands of the Tulluch.

Less than a week after the Blood Crusaders' arrival, Rrinhasha had fallen. High Elven attempts to approach Rrinhasha have failed, the ships flung back by storms

before they even catch sight of the shore. Nothing can be seen except for a pall of black smoke hanging on the horizon.

And that, sir, is my humble report. The long winter is over, but Rrinhasha still lies beneath its black cloud. With all the powers of Ulthuan, we should be safe for a time from the Crusade of the *Krynaa Khanas*. But there is a traitor in our midst, and I still fear for our future. This morning, by the shore, I swear I felt a chill gust blown from the west.

- Banadl Anwesu, High Elven Ranger

REGIMENTS OF RENOWN

Witch Elves of Naggaroth is the second in an occasional series describing Warhammer Regiments of Renown - the first was Bratt's *Boar Boyz* from *White Dwarf* 106. Now you've had a chance to see the sort of article we want in this series, we're inviting you to write in with your own Regiments of Renown for publication in future *White Dwarfs*.

A Regiment of Renown should be based on one of the existing Warhammer races and troop types; we don't want you to invent new creatures or rewrite Warhammer history - we want to read the story of a successful outfit that brings to life one of the many creatures that already inhabit the Warhammer World.

What should you tell us about your army or unit? The article needs to describe the Regiment and its personalities, their origins, famous actions and battle honours, their location in the Known World, their habits, customs, allies, hated enemies, tactics, plans...

The most important thing, of course, is to bring the Regiment to life - we are looking for narratives with

emotive and atmospheric descriptions of the Regiment and its personalities. Think about the characters you are describing: what do they want, why do they act in this fashion, how do they speak? And don't just describe the most dangerous and deadly opponents you can think of - we want to hear about an interesting group, not the ultimate in unbeatable elites.

So, if you think you can write a fascinating and colourful article that captures the spirit of a famous army or unit, possibly taken from your own Warhammer games, then write to us with a brief synopsis and we'll get back to you with more details.

Send your Regiment of Renown outline, with a SSAE, to:

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