

# **Oberon's Land**

## **by John S. Graham**

### **Oberon's Land**

Oberon's Land is named after its discoverer, Oberon the Wanderer. Oberon was a famed explorer and a founder of the influential League of Geographers long before the fateful trip around Rafe's Horn which led to his establishing Oberon's Pride. After exploring much of the interior of the land, Oberon decided to stay behind with many of his crew and establish a trading base while his ship went back under the command of his Hobgoblin navigator and first mate, Rafe.

### **Oberon's Pride**

Population: 22,000+, 50% Human, 35% Hobgoblin, 10% Goblin, 5% Misc

When Oberon the Wanderer first sighted the site that would become Oberon's pride he knew he had found one of the finest natural ports in the world. Oberon's Pride is perfectly situated to be sheltered during rough weather, has a large river to allow for easy and rapid transit to the interior, and abundant natural resources close at hand for trade and sustenance.

Oberon's Pride is, first and foremost, a mercantile city. The most important and powerful forces in the city are the various trade guilds, such as the Brewer's Guild, the Mason's Union, the Shipwright and Cooper's Collective, and the Guild of Tailors. These guilds each send a representative to the city's "government," the Trades Council. Member's of the council elect a spokesman, known as the Guildboss, who is the closest thing the city has to a leader. Positions on the council are hotly contested within the various guilds, with campaigns of bribery and slander occasionally erupting into assassinations and even open warfare. Even more sought after is the position of Guildboss, with each guild using its full resources to get its chosen member elected, for the guild who pulls the strings of the Boss has an enormous advantage in all its financial dealings. The Trades Council meets in the Hall of Unions, a large citadel like structure near the harbor. City laws and ordinances are decided through votes of the entire council, with the Guildboss deciding what is put up for a vote at any given meeting and acting as a tiebreaker should one be needed.

Currently the Guildboss is Rion Hammar, Smith's Union representative. Hammar is a large, flush faced man who many believe to be of partial ogre stock. It is widely rumored that more than one opponent was silenced forever by his legendary strength. What few know is that his huge frame hides a keen intellect and a ruthless efficiency which sees his current rank as only a stepping stone to bigger and greater things. Already some are beginning to wonder why the city's armada and guard units are training so hard and recruiting so many, but those that wonder aloud tend to suddenly disappear or end up arrested and pulling an oar on a galley ship if they aren't careful...

While the city's head could be said to be the guilds, its heart is without a doubt the harbor. Ships pour in and out of the city every day, with crews of every race and nationality imaginable. One can frequently even spot members of unidentified races rubbing elbows with the Goblin ship's cooks and cabinboys off of a spice ship. Tradehouses for collecting, sorting, buying, selling, and storing goods surround the waterfront, while further inland is devoted to a sailor's needs. Inns, taverns, burlesque shows, bordellos, bars, gambling hells, hashish dens, tattoo parlors, bearpits, pawnshops, and churches fill the narrow streets and alleys of the area. It is said that anything can be bought here, or at least rented for the night, and the Council turns a blind eye as long as money is exchanging hands. It's a rare morning indeed when the city guard don't end up chucking at least one or two bodies into the ocean.

The loose and eclectic ruling of the council combined with the strong influence of the city's large population of Hobgoblins and Goblins gives the city a chaotic, anything-may-happen air that is lacking in most other cities. Criminals and adventurers often come here just for that, and many a callow youth has

headed to Oberon's Pride with dreams of making it big (and usually fallen victim to a Pirate press-gang, no doubt).

Items of Note:

**Ambrosious Brewery:** The Ambrosious Brewery is a bit of a mystery. It sprang up overnight a few years back from a vacant lot. The locals had no idea what it was, all they knew was that a pack of Dwarves were seen coming in and out of it at all hours, and they could hear crashing and building noises from inside. One morning the local collection of barflys and professional girls stumbled outside to see a gleaming sign proclaiming that the Ambrosious Brewery was open for business. That night they were treated to some of the finest ales and stouts that anyone had ever tasted. Ambrosious Cobble, the owner and head brewer, has since become somewhat of a legend in the waterfront area. His loud easy laugh and ready jokes make him a popular addition to any social event. He claims to be a Beer Dwarf and some of the tales he's told as to how he produces his wares are best left untold in the presence of ladies. The one week a year that he serves his famed Chocolate Ale is eagerly awaited by virtually the entire city. The truth is, however, that no outsider has ever been inside the brewery. Ambrosious gladly mingles with his neighbors, hands out free samples at the drop of a hat, and pays his dues to the Brewer's Guild, but refuses to divulge any info on his recipes or processes. His Dwarven employees are all equally closemouthed. The reason for this secrecy is hardly sinister. The fact is that Ambrosious is an alchemist of no small ability. His chosen life work is to brew the perfect beer, one that will grant it's imbiber with perfect health and immortality. So far this perfect brew has eluded him, but he still makes a damned fine lager. Unfortunately, his experimentation occassionaly has unforeseen results. There was the time that Old Scutty drank an Ambrosious Mushroom Mead and talked backwards for a week, and when Sally the Midwife thought she was a cow for a full fortnight after one too many Ambrosious Hair of the Dog Stouts. These happenings are few and far between, and Ambrosious is very scrupulous about always trying new batches on himself first, but accidents happen. This also explains why every once in awhile he drops out of sight for a week or two, as he waits out the results of an experiment gone bad. So far no one has connected the occassional side effect with Ambrosious or his beers, but he dreads the day he is confronted by an angry mob at the gates to his brewery.

**Beer Dwarf-** The only known Beer Dwarf is Ambrosius. Beer Dwarves can cast confusion a number of times per day equal to their level and possess an alcohol tolerance about five times greater than normal. They can also wring out the equivalent of a pitcher of beer per day from their beards and are lots of fun at parties.

**The War for the Hearts and Minds:** For centuries dogs and cats have been bitter enemies. They vie for the affection of the same people, eat the same food, and generally just don't get along. Nowhere is this more so than in Oberon's Pride. In this lone city out of the entire cosmos the King of Dogs and the Emir of Felines have decided to play out their immortal war. The innocent housepets and strays of the city have been drafted to fight in this battle for urban supremacy.

*So the door bangs open and who was it but her husband! "Sod this." I says and I'm outta the window for you can say Willie Blinkeye. I'm ducking down alleys left and right, right and left until I can't hear the great bastard no more. So's I'm leaning against th' wall, poughing and panting, when I sees all these animals. Hundreds of dogs and cats, all going at it. And in the center, the biggest damned dog I ever seen's tryin' to rip the head offa a tabby the size of a horse! I felt something tugging at my pants, look down, and two dogs are trying to pull me out of the alley. I look up again and there're like twelve cats eyeing me like I'm a plate o' mackrel, lickin' their lips and stalcking towards me. Doggies didn't have to urge me no more, nope.*

*-Quig Fargone, Hobgoblin Swashbuckler and Rake*

The war is acted out in the backalleys of the city. The King and the Emir lead their forces into battle where the prying eyes of Humans and other races won't see. This is part of an ages old compact between the various members of animal royalty, to keep the "intelligent" races out of their business. Troops of dogs and cats struggle to win the right to dominate the role of domesticated animal, a battle which is beneath the contempt of most other animals. The King has forbidden his subjects from harming anyone caught up in this struggle, seeing anything else as being unacceptable. Dogs bear a genuine affection for their owners and the King naturally shares in this. The Emir, on the other hand, is in it only for the comfort and security that

dwelling in a humans house brings. His people harbor no goodwill towards the humanoid races, seeing them as marks to be used and tossed aside as needed. He is therefore willing to take a more pragmatic approach, and any interloper who falls into his hands will be swiftly and brutally disposed of. This cavalier attitude only serves to intensify the hatred of the dogs and their commitment to fighting on. The depths that the Emir will sink to are only deepening as the dogs gradually gain the upper hand in the secret war. There is one other ruler who is taking an interest in the conflict. The Queen of Rats realizes that the outcome of this war could have an enormous impact on her minions. She watches and silently roots for the King, as the cats are her bitterest enemies. Contrary to what many may think, she actually likes the humanoids and goes out of her way to spare them harm when she can. It's not her fault that they can't make enough grain to easily feed her people and theirs, and how was she to know that those fleas would make everybody sick?

**The Tower of the Prince of Thieves:** Looming over the surrounding buildings in one of the more disreputable parts of the city is the Tower of Arax, Prince of Thieves. This famed bandit and rogue has established himself as the head of the town underworld through his charismatic manipulations of other criminal mastermind types. His past exploits are the stuff of legends, including the looting of a god's baby shower gifts and stealing the throne from right under the Merking. The Prince is constantly seeking new challenges, ever trying to get his trickery to a new level. His goal is to become the God of Thieves, which he believes he can achieve through ever more impressive adventures. He is, of course, correct in this. As he slowly becomes a paragon of the Roguish virtues, he gets closer to being invited into the realm of the dieties. Arax is being aided in this quest by Ygly, a Goblin seer and shaman. He has been advising Arax on his quest and casting omens to guide him. Ygly's ulterior motive is the desire to be the founder of a new religion, a High-Priest. Dreams of limitless wealth and power drive him to urge Arax to greater and greater adventures. This will almost inevitably lead Arax into biting off more than he can chew, with possible grave consequences for the city. Imagine a vengeful demon razing the town looking for Arax.

## **The Great Road**

This road links Oberon's Pride to the Dire Pass and beyond. It also has side paths leading to the Seelie and Unseelie Courts, Uzuk, and Quill. It parallels the Old River for most of its route until it reaches the river's source, the Deepblue Sea. This road is fairly safe due to the number of travellers and the occasional patrol from one of the local cities. Recently a Goblin highwayman calling himself the Dragoon has been accosting wealthy travelers on the road. There is a large price on his head, but the area peasants seem to be very fond of him for some reason.

## **Ruffians' Rest**

Population: 6,000+, mixed bag of races.

Around 50 years ago the Pirate captain Blackgums grew tired of the excessive taxes that the merchants of Oberon's Pride charged buccaneers. He sought about for an alternate port and finally settled on a small island to the south of Oberon's Pride. He and his crew sailed into the island's natural harbor and chased off the island's native inhabitants, an indigneous race of small rat-like beings commonly called, originally enough, Ratlings. The pirates built a few crude shacks to keep off the rain and a couple of buildings to store goods in. Gradually a few elderly corsairs settled down on the island and set up businesses and more permanent dwellings. As more people came to dwell on the isle, it grew into a major settlement. Today the island is the center of maritime banditry for all the surrounding waters.

The main inhabitants of Ruffians' Rest are, of course, pirates and their families. These families almost exclusively live in the town proper. Blackgums still reigns over his fellow pirates and terrorizes area merchant shippers. There is also a small population of Ratlings left on the island. A few of these poor creatures live in the town, begging for coin and drinking the leftover swill outside of bars. Most Ratlings continue to live in the jungles like their ancestors did, living off the land. An increasing number of them are beginning to chafe under the constant abuse of the pirates. Small warbands of Ratlings have taken to patrolling the areas near the town, attacking lone travellers. Wardrums can be heard on clear nights and the occasional warcanoë

even makes a sortie into the harbor. There is rumor of a shadowy leader who is rallying the discontent natives into a viable fighting force.

**The Seaspine Tribe:** In addition to the Ratling guerrillas, there is another threat to the pirate stronghold. The once peaceful Seaspine Tribe of merfolk is growing increasingly hostile to the buccaneers. The trouble started when a local fisherman accidentally snared two mermaid sisters in his net. Rather than setting them loose as any decent person would, the enterprising lad sold them to the owner of one of the largest taverns in the town. This unscrupulous barkeep, Phineous Drex, imprisoned the beautiful mermaids in a clear water filled cell in the center of his bar and used them as entertainment, showing off the poor maidens bodies for the titillation of his patrons. An envoy from the leader of the Seaspine Tribe requested the release of the mermaids, but the overconfident pirates drove them out of the town. In desperation the tribe raided the town and rescued the girls, but many merwarriors were killed in the fight. To make matters worse, pirate bands started actively hunting the merfolk as revenge for the raid. The conflict between the two groups is growing ever hotter.

The tribe has a medium sized settlement immediately to the east of the island. It is led by Chief Bluegill, a noted warrior and hunter. There are around 300 merfolk at present, with an additional 50-60 dolphins living with them. The seafolk live in harmony with the creatures of the ocean, treating them as equals and partners. The exception to this rule are the sharks. The merfolk see these creatures as the embodiment of evil and hunt them down every chance they get. The evil god in merfolk myths is a shark. With most other people the tribe is friendly, conducting amiable trade with merchants from Oberon's Pride and more distant lands.

## **Rumble**

Population: 7,000+, mostly human.

Rumble is a bustling little city revolving around trade in Luckstones coming out of the nearby Druzla's Mire. It also serves as an alternate port for those who don't want to use Oberon's Pride and are too timid for Ruffians' Rest. Despite the city's small size, it maintains a sizable guard force to fight off raiding pirates and Druzla's creations.

## **Druzla's Mire**

As you travel inland from Rumble, you will soon run into a foul, noxious swamp. If you keep traveling westward you will eventually come across a spire of the blackest of black rocks. On top of this is the abode of Druzla the witch. Druzla has terrorized the area around the swamp for centuries. She is not only powerful in the various witching magics, like curses and hexes, but she has also mastered a unique form of magic. Through an unknown means Druzla has developed the ability to create her amphibious troopers. Druzla has an army of humanoid Frog Soldiers and hordes of Toad Assassins. Her Frog Soldiers can be seen all over the swamp, dressed in their colonial uniforms and armed with their pikes. Her Toad Assassins are usually not seen at all. She uses these minions to control the surrounding area and its population, even going so far as to attack Rumble on occasion. Poor inhabitants of Druzla's Mire must live in constant fear of her creatures. The only reason there are still people in the swamp are the Luckstones. These rare and wonderful gems are only found in the swamp and are highly sought after. A single stone can fetch a veritable King's ransom and set up it's seller for a life of luxury. There are a wide variety of magical powers ascribed to these beautiful gemstones, but the one universal attribute is the extraordinary good fortune they can bring their possessor. Knowing of these powers, Druzla will stop at nothing to chase the seekers out of the marsh and keep all the stones for herself.

## **Dark Woods**

These woods are the dark forest of fairy tales. Witches have lonely huts in them where they try to lure children into their ovens, talking wolves stalk wandering damsels, and there are rings of rocks that transport

unwary travelers into other dimensions. Not really a good place for picnics. The greatest peril in the woods is a rogue Faerie element, the Wildhunt. This offshoot of the Unseelie Court is led by a powerful Faerie warrior and his huntsmen. It also includes dozens of faerie animals, mostly large dogs and wolves. The wildhunt will hunt anything it comes across, ultimately tearing their prey to pieces. While they concentrate their efforts on the Dark Woods and its surrounding areas, they frequently travel up to several hundred miles outside of this. Those rare individuals who manage to elude the hunt are usually scarred for life and refuse to ever enter a forest again.

## Quill

Quill is a little village on the outskirts of the Dark Woods. It is the frequent victim of Wildhunts. Many rangers make this hamlet their home, using it as a base for their operations in the forest. It is also known for the quality of its woodworkers and bowyers. Some of the best bows from Quill are valued at prices that would bankrupt small city-states, but are generally considered worth it. Quill is also under the protection of a minor Wood-demon known as Pan. This creature looks like a large satyr and possesses powers over plant and animal life. Why he protects the town is unknown.

## Faerie Courts

Oberon's Land is home to one of the rarest of the intelligent races, the Faerie. The Faerie-folk are a dimension traveling race who are powerful magicians. They have also mastered a rare form of magic revolving around the scholarly study of tomes, each one holding a unique bit of lore that with sufficient practice can grant the mage a special power or spell. These tomes are jealously guarded by their possessors, for the more people who know the secret of a tome, the weaker the magic becomes. The witch Druzla managed to steal a tome and gained the ability to create her amphibious servants. The Faerie are by nature changelings, capable of transforming their shapes several times a day. In fact, some of the oldest and most powerful Faerie have ceased to have a permanent shape, changing their form at the slightest whim. They stand between 5 and 6 feet and possess an unearthly quality that tends to unsettle those who aren't used to their presence.

**Seelie Court:** The Faerie are divided into two factions, the Seelie and Unseelie. Each group revolves around a court. They are totally opposed to each other, being engaged in a war that surges between hot and cold as the seasons change. The Seelie Faerie are devotees of the noble ideals, believing in fair play, lightness, and good. They maintain diplomatic relations with the Guildboss of Oberon's Pride and engage in very limited trade. Ambassador Lopaz is a great favorite among the elite of the city, and the many mistresses he's taken have created numerous mini scandals.

Seelie warriors are notoriously good fencers, in addition to their prowess with magic. They are the vanguard in the Seelie war with the Unseelie. The best of the Seelie warriors are organized into a unit known as the Queen's Own Cavaliers. Entry into this elite group is a great honor for a young Faerie, and comes with the appropriate rise in court rank.

**Unseelie Court:** Just as the Seelie value all that is good, the Unseelie cherish chaos and darkness. They follow the paths of the assassin and raider, discouraging all but the bravest of travellers from entering their territory. Seeing little value in the "lesser" races, the Unseelie court doesn't maintain diplomatic relations, preferring instead to interact through the sword, taking what they want. Brownie assassins and the hordes of Redcap raiders are the only ambassadors most will ever encounter.

**Faerie:** Faerie can be treated as humans with a +1 int, +2 cha, and -1 con. They can shapeshift a number of times per day equal to their level. They can use the following abilities at will: levitate, faerie fire, tongues, minor illusions. All faerie are mages first, but many also study the ways of the warrior or cleric. They are either immortal or extremely longlived. Their word is their bond, and any faerie who doesn't fulfill a promise will suffer 1d10 damage per day which will not heal until the promise is kept. They can, however, fulfill the word of the promise while making a mockery of the spirit, so anyone who tries to coerce a faerie through a trick promise is playing a dangerous game indeed.

## **Uzuk**

Population 2500+, lots of ogres and humans. Uzuk is the only sizable settlement of Ogres in Oberon's lands. Most of them make a living on the Deepblue Sea, hunting the mighty Aquaserpents and Kraken or manning the giant fishing ships engaged in catching the extremely dangerous Giant Grouper and other game fish. This reliance on a treacherous sea and hazardous occupations has made Uzuk into a very rough and tumble town, even more so than most Ogre strongholds. Outsiders may be dismayed by the number of brawls they see, and if they look even remotely interesting will soon find themselves the target of local tough guys. The Uzukiian thirst for action has found an outlet in a game called Ironball. This game involves 2 teams of 6 players each. The teams try to get a 20 lb ball of iron into the other teams endzone. The usual method is to knock out everyone on the opposing team, with fatalities not being a rare occurrence. This sport has gained immense popularity, with pickup games happening on most nights and several professional teams of elite players who are often bet on with huge fortunes. Some other cities are attempting to get teams together to challenge Uzuk, but so far the game only has widespread support in this city.

## **Deepblue Sea**

The Deepblue Sea is a very dangerous body of water. All the fears of mariners in other lands have found a home here. These waters teem with seaserpents and giant sea creatures of all types. Many of these monsters are hunted for valuable body parts, while Giant Grouper and other dangerous fish are regarded as delicacies in many lands. A very good living can be made off of these waters, but many a fisherman hasn't lived long enough to enjoy his earnings.

This is also the site of the Palace of the SeaKing. This enigmatic being goes by numerous names, including Poseidon, Triton, Bluegills, and others. He is an immense creature, standing 12 feet tall, with the upper body of a powerful blue man and the tail of a fish. His beard appears to be made of seafoam and coral and he has visible gills on his neck. His court is composed of various sea creatures and water nymphs, and he acts as a protector of all underwater dwellers. This makes the Deepblue Sea even more dangerous. On the other hand, there are numerous tales of unfortunate travelers saved from drowning by the SeaKing or his subjects. Many of these people report being invited to stay in a castle made of coral and decorated with gemstones and precious metals and strange but beautiful artworks. These tales only serve to arouse the greed in some adventurers, leading to the occasional expedition to loot the palace. None of these parties have ever been heard from again.

## **Trollbones Mts**

These mountains block off the sub-continent from other lands. The only place where they may be crossed with even a semblance of ease and safety is Dire Pass. Various bandit groups often try to set up toll booths here and extort huge sums from travelers, so even this is not totally safe. The rest of the mountain range is home to many tribes of trolls, all with a hankering for the flesh of travelers. A popular recipe book comes out of this range detailing how to prepare the various races, translated from the troll tongue. It has been banned in most civilized areas but still finds an audience with jaded sophisticates and dark cults.

## **The Black Temple**

Located deep within the Trollbones Mts is a dark monastery. It's name is only whispered by the most daring of souls. The monks of the Black Temple only leave their Fortress occasionally, but when they do they leave death and suffering behind them. Every year or so the monks descend from their mountain, killing or enslaving everyone they come across. It is widely accepted that those they kill are the lucky ones, as any who enter the temple are never seen again, victims of gruesome sacrifices and rites. The goal of the monks is yet another mystery. No one even knows what race they are, all that is ever seen of them are their black robes. What is known is that they possess great skill with the darkest of magics and will kill anything they

come across without a seconds hesitation. Columns of Black Monks can be seen running through the sky about 20 feet above the ground, escorting the palanquin containing their living diety, a pure black woman with blood red eyes and a snake for a tongue.