

the lords of midnight



the eye of the moon

Mike Singleton and Chris Wild

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History

The Eye of the Moon was first referenced in the Manual for Doomdark's Revenge.

"And when you have finally defeated it, remember that the challenge isn't over yet the third part of the trilogy, possibly the most exciting yet, is still to come, when Mike will send Morkin down to the warmer lands which lie below Midnight itself, to find The Eye of the Moon." - Mike Singleton

The Eye of the Moon is a crystal that was once set in the Moon Ring, the War Ring of the House of the Moon. The first we hear of the Moon Ring is when Rorthron the Wise presents it to Luxor.

"Luxor, this is the Moon Ring, the last of the Great War Rings of Midnight!"

"You, my Lord Luxor, are the Moonprince and this ring is yours by right, to be worn only in circumstances of gravest peril. Once slipped on your finger, it cannot be removed until you are dead or the peril has passed. It will give you the Power of Command and the Power of Vision over those lords and subjects loyal to you, even at great distances. With the Power of Vision you will be able to see through their eyes what they see. With the Power of Command you will be able to urge them to undertake any task they would willingly perform for you. And more than this, it will echo the warmth and strength of your mind and send forth a tide of hope

across the cold lands of Midnight. It is yours. Take it, and use it with care."

"The Moon Ring itself will lend you the power to guide the forces of the Free and under your guidance they will march against Doomdark as one. The Captains of Cold will be blind compared to those whose way is lit by the War Ring of the House of the Moon."

So Luxor is able to use the power of the Moon Ring to aid in his quest against both Doomdark and Shareth the Heartstealer. However, the power of the ring is not complete, because of the missing centrepiece.

"Centuries ago, before Midnight had been sullied by Doomdark and trapped in endless winter, Midnight had a great war-ring to keep it safe. That was the Moon Ring and on it was set the most precious of jewels, the Eye of the Moon." Luxor opened the neck of his tunic. There, against his chest was a golden ring, hanging by a slender golden chain."

The story for the quest for the Eye of the Moon that originated after the release of Doomdark's Revenge tells that the Eye of the Moon is a magical crystal, or jewel, that allows its owner to look into the future. Luxor is dying, it's some years on and he's reached the end of his tether, and he wants to see what is going to happen to Midnight in the future. So Morkin goes off in search of the magical jewel called the Eye of the Moon which enables people to see into the future, so that Luxor can then rest in peace.

The quest for the jewel was to take place in the Bloodmarch, an area around 16 times the size of Midnight and to the South-East of it, some 40 years after the events of the War of the Solstice.

By the beginning of The War of the Blood March, the Eye of the Moon has moved further South to the land of Coromand¹. Luxor hears of the Eye from Derim, a minstrel boy who has travelled from Coromand. He sings the Song of Sherehar

*"...Then he plucked the glittering ring from the sand
And took the Eye of the Moon in his hand.
A ring for his wedding, a wife for his bed,
Sherehar and Asim now could be wed."*

Luxor discusses the Moon Ring and the Eye with Derim, showing Derim the Ring.

*"This is the Moon Ring," he said. "I keep it with me all the time."
"But the Eye of the Moon is gone!" said Derim, grasping the mystery. "And that last verse of Sherehar is a clue to where it might be."
"Exactly. If your song be true, it seems the Eye of the Moon has been found again and set in another ring."
"It's true sir. A ring called the Eye of the Moon still lies in the King's Tower in Coromand. No one but the King himself is allowed to touch it."*

At this stage we hear a little history about the Moon Ring and how the Eye of the Moon was removed from it.

"By foolishness. Rarnor the Unlucky was Moonprince then. The Moon Ring has such power it should only be placed on a finger in times of war and great peril, but Rarnor was unlucky in love. One night, in frustration, he donned the Moon Ring to impress and enchant a pretty maiden. He did

¹ The change of story was due to Mike Singleton signing the deal with Domark for a Midnight game. Mike did not want to tie up the IP rights for Eye of the Moon within Maelstrom and Domark. Thus he re-used elements of any previous designs for Eye, ie: The Bloodmarch and its regions, and moved the Eye south to Coromand.

so with some success, but in the morning, when he woke, the maiden was gone and so was the Eye of the Moon, plucked from the ring on his finger as he slept. Neither maiden nor jewel were ever seen again."

Luxor confirms the aforementioned powers that the Eye holds.

"Will you try to get it back, now you know that it's been found?"

"I must," said Luxor, "I fear that the Eye of the Moon in the wrong hands could be turned against Midnight and put the land in the greatest of peril. And there is another reason too. The Eye gave the Moonprinces of old fleeting glimpses of things to come. I am growing old. Before I die, I would dearly love to know that this is a lasting peace that Midnight enjoys."

Luxor now knows that Eye of the Moon is now a ring which is hidden at the King's Tower in Coromand. Luxor heads south down the River Imilvir travelling through The Bloodmarch on his way to Coromand. The trip takes them out to the Grey Sea, where they plan to continue south to Coromand, however they are forced ashore by storms and find themselves in the Marish where they are captured by Dark Fey warriors and taken to Boroth the Wolfheart. During his journey, Luxor had met with Galahar the Calm, Lord of Immiel, and Galahad tells him of the story of Arithel, Coronoth, and their two sons Careth and Boroth.

During the tale Arithel tells a story to her husband to be, Coronoth. This story confirms the details of Rarnor the Unlucky.

"Their prince desired me but I could find no fondness for him in my heart. I rebuffed all his advances to no avail. One night he used his witching ring to cast an enchantment upon me and took me to his bed. In the dark hours of the

morning, waking from his spell, I fled, realising with loathsome horror what had befallen me. But before I fled, I vowed to repay him for his wickedness. While he slept, I prised from the ring on his finger the stone that gave it power. His warriors and hounds have been hunting me ever since as they would a wild beast. I fear for my life sir."

Arithel and Corinth are married at the Golden Citadel or Maranor, where they go on to have two children Careth and Boroth. When Careth is twelve and Boroth 10, they boys are shooting arrows when Boroth's accidentally stabs Careth with one of his arrows. The First fey attempt to heal Careth, but he is confined to his bed with fever. Boroth stays by his brothers side.

Boroth was idly exploring his mother's jewellery boxes, trying on her rings and bracelets. Then, in one box, he found a large bright stone, sitting alone unadorned by gold or silver. With an unvoiced gasp, Boroth knew that this was the witching stone of which he'd heard, the magical gem that the wicked prince of the north had used to ensnare his mother. His thoughts leapt ahead. If the stone could charm, perhaps it could also heal. His heart racing, Boroth took the witching stone from its wooden box and clenched it tightly in his small hand. "I wish my brother were healed, I wish my brother were healed," he whispered, over and over again.

Thus begins Boroth's descent into darkness. Eventually Boroth starts to understand that the stone is having a bad affect on him and with his brother they concoct a plan to be rid of it.

He feared that wickedness might still remain within the stone despite his command to it. Then he suggested that on the morrow they ask their father's permission to make a journey to the Isle of Storms at the eastern tip of the Delve

and there, secretly, cast the stone away forever into the Great Ocean.

Boroth becomes ill and asks his brother to get rid of the witching stone.

"Car, 'tis the witching stone! I can feel it! It burns me terribly, inside, like hot irons in my head and, and in my guts," said Boroth.

"Hush now, Bo, th'art feverish," said Careth, taking his brother's hand.

"Nay, 'tis no fever, Car, 'tis the witching stone! Please, please believe me," said Boroth, tears welling in his eyes, "Take it and cast it into the Great Ocean as we planned, take it far away from me, 'tis killing me, Car!"

"In truth, I think I do believe thee, Bo," said Careth, squeezing his brother's clammy hand, "Fear no more, before dusk the witching stone will be gone from here. I will not let thee die."

Careth takes the stone and sets sail on the Green Mermaid in order to cast the ring into the Great Ocean. But a storm causes the ship to sink, and Careth and the stone is lost.

A ship had just sailed upriver, coming from the south, with news from Coromand. In a storm, the Green Mermaid had foundered off the coast of Coromand and no survivors had been found. On hearing this news, Boroth grew angry, saying that his brother could not be dead, that he would know if Careth were dead, that he would feel it in his bones if he were dead.

With the two parts of the story to hand, Luxor and Galahar are able to piece together the story of the Eye of the Moon, identifying it as the Witching Stone, and how it came to be in Coromand.

"This is surely the witching stone that was Boroeth's downfall," said Luxor, "And surely, if the goodness within it near killed him once, it can do so again!"

"So Boroeth was right!" exclaimed Galahar, "His brother did not perish in the storm, else the stone would still languish in the ocean deeps! These are fair tidings indeed, Luxor!"

The Eye of the Moon has become unstable after all the years apart from the Moon Ring. And it is this that had and affect on Boroeth, and indeed will play part in any future story.

Present

Many years after the events that take place during The Citadel², Dominykas, the now disgraced Crown Prince of Coromand, has been warned back home by the Prophet that unless the Eye of the Moon is taken to and left on the roof of the world, their world will come to an end. To this end, he has been travelling for many moons from Coromand to Valahar carrying with him the Eye of the Moon, which he stole from his uncle the King's treasure room – his wicked usurping uncle by marriage we should add.

With him travel a small retinue of outlawed companions, the best of which is his faithful bodyguard Mantas. To Mantas and the others, he is simply Domse who seeks the Wilderhorn, the highest peak in the known world, which lies deep in the endless snows of the Horns of Valahar.

Unbeknownst to him, as he gets closer to his goal, the Eye of the Moon senses new potential for evil emanating from Varangor³ and bends its will there. In Varangor, the Daughter of the Seventh Sky⁴, arch priestess of the Goddess⁵ has visions she thinks come from the Goddess but are in fact planted in her mind by the Eye of the Moon and she sends forth all 5 Battle Kings of Varangor.

² The Eye of the Moon references in the Citadel, Chapter One: The Minstrel, were used by Mike to remind players of the original Eye of the Moon idea, and to set up any potential fourth story that Mike would have liked to resist later.

³ Varangor is a harsh land of volcanoes (Eldskjal) , seas of lava (Eldsjo) and snow. The words I have chosen here for volcano and lava sea are not from the virtually unpronounceable tongue of the Varangor themselves but are their Icelandic equivalent, Iceland being the closest environment in our world to the land of Varangor and therefore, I hope, offer the best translation.

⁴ The Daughter of the Sky is nothing of the sort in truth, simply a human being, albeit a deluded one, but the reverence she is paid by the warriors of the Varangor give her tremendous power. She will be standing with them in the last defence of the Goddess. None of the Varangor, including the Daughter of the Sky, are truly evil just completely bonkers. That is their tragedy.

⁵ The Goddess is in fact simply a gigantic, mountain-tall statue, standing astride deep lava flows and from time to time casting massive jets of liquid fire and brimstone from her hands, a clever design of the ancients who fashioned her, a trickery for the amusement of their children. To the Varangor, of course, she is terrifying and real. So, in the game itself, the Goddess appears as another, very unique landscape feature as visible in the distance as a citadel, a tower or a mountain. But this is one landscape feature that is NOT in the manual, It is only to be discovered at the end of the game as the player draws close to victory. And like a citadel, there has to be a battle to capture the Goddess.

The visions tell her the Goddess is unhappy and angered. There has not been enough bloodletting of late and she demands blood sacrifice on an awesome scale. If such slaughter is achieved, the Goddess will be most pleased and promises the Varangor⁶ the gift of immortality. This is the tale the Eye of the Moon spins and weaves.

To achieve such wholesale slaughter, the Daughter of the Sky has ambitious plans not only to seize the Eye of the Moon but also to revive ancient evils. One Battle King is sent to take Ushgarak, there to revive the Doomguard and perhaps the shade of Doomdark himself, another to Lorgrim and the Frozen Gates to revive the Ice Lords and the shade of Shareth the Heartstealer, yet another to Qadim Haraj to revive the Dark Fey and the shade of Boroth the Wolfheart.

The other two Battle Kings are despatched east and west, one to Valahar to hunt down and slaughter Dominykas, seize the Moon Ring and subjugate the land, the other to the heart of Midnight, to Corelay and Xajorkith, to destroy the Moon Prince and lay waste to his lands.

Luxor lies sick, perhaps dying, in Xajorkith, but Rorthron the Wise has had vague premonitions that the Eye of the Moon is no longer in Coromand but on its way to Valahar.

Prince Morkin leads an expedition to Valahar to attempt to recover the Eye. Some of the greatest Lords of Midnight travel with him. And having taken such a mighty army from Midnight Morkin also bears with him the Moon Ring.

As Morkin nears Valahar, he decides one night to don the Moon Ring, to see if it senses any dangers. At the very same time, Domse's curiosity (encouraged by the Eye) for once gets the better of him and he finds himself peering into the Eye of the Moon. Thus it is that Morkin and Domse speak to each other for the first time. They are both astonished but

⁶ The Varangor, just like the Free or the Fey have riders as well as warriors, but they also have air cavalry, the Fire Eagles. These awesome beasts, each ridden by a Varangor air-rider, nest only in an Eldskjal and it is to this volcanic home that they must return after each flight. Only this limits their range and power.

gradually, with growing trust, despite a language barrier, they tell each other their tales. An inkling of what is afoot, the Battle Kings of Varangor marching forth suddenly comes to Morkin as they speak. He pleads with Domse to put away the Eye of the Moon, but Morkin keeps the great War Ring of Midnight on his finger. Danger is indeed at hand.

With the Moon Ring still on his finger, Morkin remains in loose mental contact with Domse, but the ring's power is weak so far from Midnight and he only has power of command over those Lords of Midnight with him. He can only advise Domse intermittently at best, even though he can see through the boy's eyes. And even that power is not worth much, since Morkin has no true idea where Domse is geographically in relation to himself. Both are strangers in a strange land. In faraway Midnight, Morkin can only see and command Rorthron and Luxor, the other lords are in shadow.

Likewise, although sympathetic lords of the lands he is travelling through can be recruited to the coming struggle against the Varangor, the power of command is no longer there. These lords can be given verbal instructions face-to-face, but thereafter they follow their own paths unless led by one of Morkin's lords. Thus there is a strategic reason for him to fragment his army.

Only with restoring the Eye of the Moon to its proper place, set in the Moon Ring, will the true power of command in these distant lands return. Morkin must meet up with Domse and soon. Back in Midnight, both Luxor and Rorthron are able to recruit and within Midnight, Morkin's power of command still holds sway with those recruited, but it is a race against time. Three Battle Kings of Varangor are already within the borders of Midnight and laying waste as they proceed and another is closing rapidly on Dominykas and the Eye.

When set back in place in the Moon Ring the Eye of the Moon lose its evil and become a true force for good again, but that is not the whole finale.

The full power of the Moon Ring can only be wielded by the Moon Prince himself. Morkin must return to Midnight with it. Even that is not the end. The Goddess and the 5 Battle Kings of Varangor must also be destroyed, along with the Daughter of the Sky and the shades of ancient evil if they have answered by then their summons. Only then will a true and lasting peace be found. And then, at last Luxor can lay aside his burdens and sleep the sleep of deep ages until, perhaps, in the unforeseen future Midnight once again faces mortal peril. But the Eye of the Moon has at last revealed to Luxor a thousand year peace or more. Morkin can finally take upon his shoulders the Moon Prince's mantle. And Prince Dominykas returns to Coromand, battle-hardened and wiser, at the head of a mighty army of the Free and the Fey and the Valhazan to regain his birthright. But that is another story.....

Comrades of the Prince

The Marches of Valahar

Time itself was sleeping. There was utter stillness even in the air. The drops of rain hanging from the leaves gleamed but did not sparkle for not even the light trembled. The silence was so deep it made him feel deaf but when he breathed out it seemed like a roar. The storm had passed.

Dominykas turned his eyes to the horizon. Over the forest, misted by distance, the far peaks of Valahar floated in a milky blue haze, sharp white shards cutting at the sky. Then the light subtly changed and one of them, the tallest, suddenly sun-caught, began to glow at the very tip, brighter and brighter until it glowed with golden fire.

The Wilderhorn, he thought, it must be. That's where I must go, to the roof of the world, to the gate of the heavens. The boy couldn't imagine the road that led there. It was impossible. How could he ever reach it? For a moment, black despair rose, seeping into him, but then he wrenched away from it. I'm not a boy any more. I can do it if I must and I must, so I will!

He gazed at the mountain with its golden crown of fire.

It was simple after all. Bright as a beacon, there was the torch that would light his path. However long and twisted the journey, a peak that soared so high would be with him like the sun or the moon, sometimes hidden, sometimes in darkness, but always reappearing as he turned a corner and found the open sky again or as the world turned and darkness fled.

His heart filled with joy. Nearly forty moons had passed since they left Coromand and now their journey's end was at last in sight, blazing with fire. Smiling, he turned to his friends. He flung his arm out to point wildly at the mountains.

'There! The roof of the world! The gate of the heavens! The Horns of Valahar! Look! The Wilderhorn!' he shouted and the fire that touched the far off crest blazed within him. His young comrades looked. They gawped. They gasped. They looked at one another. One by one they grinned. Then at last they cheered.

The Shadows of the Forest

There was something strange whispering and skittering around it tonight, something dark but unseen. It was only a vague sense, nothing truly heard or felt, just an inquietude seeping and slipping through him. Dominykas closed his eyes and tried to ignore it. They were safe. It was safe. Mantas was guarding tonight so all would be well. The heaviness of sleep drifted down on him like soft thick snow.

The casket was nothing special, just a simple wooden box that would fit in your hand, with a brass keyhole where it locked but Asulgar sensed something of power pulsing within the plain casket, something that would surely please his master. There's just five callow boys, he thought, and a dozen of us Hajeen, warriors of Qadim Haraj, the Shadows of the Forest. Four of the boys were sleeping. This would be over swiftly.

He stood slowly. We will honour them, he thought, they have respected the trees, but no one crosses Qasim Haraj unnoticed, no one crosses without rights of passage and still lives, even in times of peace and the times of peace were slipping away swiftly. Already there were rumours of war in the far north in the lands of fire and ice. As Asulgar rose into the thin moonlight, so did eleven other shadows, the rest of his troop. They waited for Asulgar's hand to drop. There would be no voice commands tonight, not until the first screams at least. But Asulgar froze as he felt a sliver of cold steel pressed lightly against his neck.

— *Drop your hand old man and you will be dead before you can blink,* came a whisper, and that was all, no other touch or hold, no glimpse of his opponent, no clue as to which way to turn to meet him or escape him. Asulgar noticed the boy guarding the camp was still standing there at the edge of the clearing, perfectly still, much too perfectly still. He smiled in admiration. A clever trick from one so young, setting a lifeless dummy as camp guard while he watched from an unexpected place.

— *You cannot take all of us like this boy,* whispered Asulgar.

— *You think not? Look at your men again old man,* whispered the boy.

With astonishment, Asulgar glimpsed at he Shadows of the Forest and saw that only seven of the eleven others were still standing, waiting for his

signal. The edge of the knife gently caressed his neck. There was no tremble in the hand that held it.

—*Save us some time and yourselves some blood. We would not harm you unless pressed to it,* said the boy.

There was such quiet assurance in the boy's voice. In a soft calm voice Asulgar spoke aloud.

—*Hold, men of Qadim Haraj, we strike not tonight. Lay down your weapons.*

A hesitation and then movement in the clearing and the sound of knives and heavier things dropping to the ground. Mantas knew that now was the time of greatest danger. All of these men would have at least one hidden weapon and be preparing himself mentally to use it. There would be a sign first, a voice change most likely.

—*Now tell them to move slowly to the centre of the clearing, to gather at the fire,* whispered Mantas.

The knife edge no longer gently stroked Asulgar's neck. Asulgar readied himself, then spoke slowly.

—*Men of Qadim Haraj, slowly, we move to the centre, to the fire...*

The first cautious movements began and Asulgar stepped forward too.

—*Now!* Asulgar added. The Shadows of the Forest heard the subtle change in tone, the shift from calmness to something more ruffled. No one would have called the tone urgent but the utter placidity was lost. It was their sign. But all of the boys heard it too and knew its meaning and each knew his part.

Asulgar turned as swiftly as death but his knife sliced through empty air. Mantas was already five paces away closing on another shadow and the boy's hunting spear was already in flight, a flicker of gold in the glimmer of the campfire, straight to the heart of the shadows. Asulgar dropped like a cloak suddenly cut loose from the shoulders.

.The campfire flared up, blazing like sunlight, and in the harsh white light the shadows became men whirling to face their enemies and slashing, stabbing as they span. Four of them slew their own comrades, bound, blindfolded and gagged and pushed stumbling towards them by the boys

who had captured them but a minute or so earlier. The others, like Asulgar, struck at void.

Save for Mantas, none of the boys was visible but their throwing knives flashed through the air. Four more Hajeen twisted in death agony and fell writhing to the ground, Mantas took his man, killing him cleanly with a single thrust of his knife. The last two Hajeen tried to flee but were caught in a second volley of throwing knives.

It had taken perhaps twenty heartbeats. Mantas smiled to himself. Not bad. We'll be swifter next time.

He walked over to where he had noticed Dominykas sprawl on the ground just before the mayhem began. He was pretending to sleep. Mantas nudged him gently with the toe of his boot.

—*My Lord! Dominykas! Prince Dominykas!*

The other boys gathered round. Dominykas rubbed his eyes sleepily, then opened them.

—*Is it morning already Mantas?* he said

—*Stop pulling my leg Domse! You captured one and killed two. That wasn't sleep walking!*

Domse grinned up at his friend.

—*Well, you pulled my leg first! I thought my toe was being severed!* he said with a gentle laugh. Mantas laughed with him

—*But it worked didn't it? And it was your idea in the first place Domse!*

—*The fishing twine round our toes for silent alarm, yes, but not the amputation! That was just your idea Mantas!*

In the Blink of an Eye⁷

—*How many Mantas?*

—*At least 100 riders Domse, and they have spare horses too. They'll catch us sometime tomorrow for sure.*

Dominykas sighed and turned to gaze at the distant mountains rising from a blue haze. How would they ever reach them now?

⁷ October 2015 - *I found this additional piece, but I don't know where it fits with the other two pieces. Reading them all together doesn't make it clear to me. It wasn't typed up, so I think it was probably written after the others.*

It's that stone Domse? Said Mantas quietly.

— *The Eye of the Moon? Yes, I fear it is. We've been hunted from the forests of Qadim Haraj to where we stand now by different bands of warriors every step of the way. It's as though it calls them, it beckons them to us.*

— *Domse, we can't take a hundred of them. Can we not just cast the thing away here and now?*

Domse turned back to his friend and gazed into his eyes. Even Mantas was afraid now. It was desperate.

— *No we can't. That would be the ruin of all things. We must take it to the roof of the world, we must! Do you think that they will ride in tonight?*

— *No my Lord, the footing is too harsh. They only ride by day and their horses are swift, as though they ride the wind.*

— *The get some rest Mantas, and the others. I'll stand guard tonight. I need to think.*

It was early to stop, dusk was only beginning, but Domse wanted everyone fresh as could be tomorrow. Another mile tonight wouldn't make the difference, the riders of Varangor would still catch them tomorrow regardless.

As the other boys, weary from the long days of chase, lay down to sleep, Domse gazed at the casket which sat on a rock close to him. He wondered at what power lay within that could draw death and danger down upon them from so far away.

For a few moments, Domse eyes closed and he seemed to drift asleep. The dusk thickened around him and he thought he heard music playing far away. He opened his eyes. There was a shimmer around the casket and it seemed to dose now that the faint music was coming from inside the small wooden box.

It was a light and happy melody that swayed and danced and twisted and gently grew louder. Domse was filled now with curiosity. There was a strange air of peacefulness enfolding their small encampment. His comrades slept with smiles on their faces, the campfire blazed merrily, the dusk was full of stillness and soft with the lingering warmth of the day.

Slowly Domse reached forward and opened the box. Inside the Eye of the Moon was glaring and shimmering as though it was dancing through a bright rainbow. The brought the stone closer and peered into its crystalline depths. The feeling of warmth and homeliness filled him.

The shimmering rainbow colours faded and we replaced by a scene, another encampment but far larger than his own, bustling with men, brightly lit tents, cooking fires, lanterns and in the foreground a man. The man turned to face Domse with a look of surprise.

— *By all the gods! The man exclaimed, who are you boy?*

The VOICE was commanding but not harsh. Domse was as surprised as the man, but nevertheless, he answered as best he could.

— *I am Dominykas, Prince of Coromand. I journey with my comrades to Valahar, seeking the roof of the world.*

The man smiled.

— *Well if the roof of the world is anywhere, it surely lies within Valahar. But Valahar is very far from Coromand.*

— *That's true enough sir, we have been travelling for nearly three years now.*

— *Then you are close to Valahar?*

— *We believe so, yes, but we are being hunted.*

— *By who?*

— *Riders of the Varangor this time, but they are not the first to try and catch us.*

— *The Varangor! They're a long way from home! Forgive me for asking young prince, but what have you done to stir up such a hue and cry?*

Now Dominykas needed to fake nothing.

— *I truly don't know. We harmed no one save in our own defence, we have stolen nothing, we have passed as quietly as we could. And sir, now you must forgive me, but who are you?*

— *I am Morkin, Prince of Midnight. We also travel to Valahar, seeking a treasure that is rightfully my fathers. Some fate rides upon it my boy.*

— *Some fate perhaps, but not as grave as the fate that rest on our quest.*

— *Which is?*

— *We take a jewel to the roof of the world, to cast it there into a bottomless chasm and rid the world of its evil forever. So the prophet commanded and so shall it be!*

— *What jewel is this Dominykas?*

— *Men call it the Eye of the Moon. Don't ask me why, I haven't a clue.*

Morkin laughed softly.

— *No wonder you were being hunted young prince. The dark forces of the world have been seeking this stone for many a long year and now it has revealed itself again. You are at the eye of a storm I fear Dominykas.*

— *That's the truth for sure Morkin. We have a hundred or more riders hunting us, and we are five.*

— *Five hardened warriors?*

— *Not really, although we have done our fair share of killing the last few weeks. We are just boys Morkin. I am sixteen and the others are the same, give or take a month or two.*

Morkin turned, perhaps to hide his reaction. When he turned back though, he was smiling.

— *Courage lad! That was my age when I set out to destroy the Ice Crown, he said with a smile.*

— *The Ice Crown! Exclaimed Dominykas. You destroyed the Ice Crown? You loosened the grip of the long winter on the world?*

— *I played my part. It was for others though to defeat the armies of Doomdark, said Morkin.*

The Game

The focus of the new game is a land called Valahar⁸, far to the west of Midnight. There live the Valhazan, a tough but good and peaceable mountain people, enclosed in a ring of great mountains, the Horns of Valahar.

Evil stems this time from a land of fire and ice northwest of Midnight. Varangor, where the Varangor live, a fierce and fundamentally insane warrior race, driven by a divine madness that flows from the Goddess they worship. Varangor has also become a refuge for a few surviving Doomguard and Ice Lords.

To the southwest of Midnight lies Qadim Haraj, a land of deep and ancient forests, which has become the last refuge of the remnants of the Dark Fey. All these refugees from past wars against past evils have a part to play in the coming conflict.

Other more pleasant lands surround Valahar, to the south Aost, to the southwest Isheril, to the east Merineth, but Merineth is destined to be the crossroads of armies marching, its north-south axis linking Varangor to Qadim Haraj, its east-west axis linking Midnight to Valahar.

The Characters

You start with Morkin, approaching the entrance to the Valahar, somewhere in Aost. Rorthron somewhere in Midnight. Luxor in Xajorkith. Dose fairly near Morkin, but only watchable not controllable. Luxor and Rorthron will rally the Lords of Midnight in order to defend Midnight itself. But Luxor is sick and will therefore be hampered in his efforts.

⁸ The heartlands of Valahar is a cul-de-sac in its ring of horns, with the broad way in to the West, which will mean going round it (either north or south) to get into it properly

Morkin is trying to find Domse, making him a travelling quest. Because of the Moonring you can select Domse and look through his eyes, but you cannot control him. You can suggest a direction for him to travel, but there is no guaranty that he will take it.

The Climate

Midnight is transitioning from Winter to Spring. Thawing with the North still much colder as the thaw is slower in that area. The Frozen Wastes are pretty much intact except for some areas to the west that have thawed enough or broken down to give access out of Midnight. The is the same as the conditions that allow travel into the Bloodmarch. As the frozen wastes break down the generate mists which are difficult to penetrate, so some areas are still impassible either because of the mists or the wastes.

New feature requirement

The engine will need to handle water and the sea of Lava. Therefore ships and fire ships will be required.

New landscape features and functions

- **Eldfjall**, a volcano, predominantly found in Varangor. Home to fire eagles, and therefore a stronghold as well. Almost impenetrable.
- **Eldsjó**, a sea of lava only found in Varangor. Basically impenetrable territory, except to the Varangor who are able to cross them in their fire ships, but even they cannot rest there, only cross. The intention is that an Eldsjó extends continuously over more than one cell, so some special cylindrically mapped graphics would be required.
- **Horn**, a great mountain. Visually bigger than a normal mountain and impenetrable to any army, although can be scaled by individual characters.
- **Glades**, magical forests, impenetrable to all but the Fey.
- **Lodge**, or more fully a **dreamlodge**, a place of deep rest which gives long-lasting invigoration and also warnings of nearby enemy. The old snowhalls of Midnight, after the general thaw have become lodges.

- **Wastelands.** There are no more Frozen Wastes around Midnight, but there are wastelands, dangerous, quickly tiring and difficult but not impenetrable.
- **Gate.** Gates no longer lead to tunnels, they are simply linked one-to-one to another Gate, some distance but not too far away and offer a sort of teleportation. They enable penetration of otherwise impenetrable terrain, so strategically act as bridges. They are also strongholds and can be garrisoned.
- **Watchtowers.**, referred to as a Watch, as in “Essiron Watch” for example. Watchtowers in line of sight to each other will pass on news of enemy movements that they can see, eventually to a lord if one happens to be connected, so they are the telegraph system. This implies some ownership, of course, so Watchtowers are also small strongholds which can be garrisoned.
- **Lith.** The magical powers of liths have changed somewhat over the years and now they behave like roads. Travelling directly towards a lith is very much quicker and the closer you are, the quicker it is. Therefore a string of liths in line of sight from each other will act as a highway. If closely spaced, they will be a motorway.
- **Pyre.** A very unusual landscape feature, because a pyre can actually be constructed during the game. They are only built by the Varangor and, for the Varangor, combine the telegraph function of watchtowers with the road function of liths. But there is even more. They are trails that a Varangor army naturally leaves behind and in the AI they attract other Varangor armies. So, enemy activity along a chain of pyres will get magnified over time, giving the player good strategic clues. Pyres can also be destroyed, but only by an army.
- **Forge,** another feature unique to Varangor. Basically where new Varangor armies get equipped, so a steady stream of fresh warriors issue from each forge under Varangor control. Since ownership is important, a forge is also a small stronghold and can be garrisoned. A forge is not a small place but a large solid weapons factory.
- **Caverns.** Caverns nowadays are exclusively the home of dragons. These fierce creatures can be recruited by Farflame, but first he must

visit them! Only a flight of dragons will be able to match a flight of Fire Eagles in battle but poor Farflame must gather his flight one-by-one.

Domains.

It would be good to make Domains significant not just in name but in gameplay too. So, we make them political units, with the main Citadel of each Domain being its capital. Holding the capital brings the whole Domain onside. This enhances garrison growth within the Domain and also brings in intelligence from the local population. News of any enemy army crossing the Domain quickly gets reported to the Citadel and from there to the Lord (ie the player) either along the watchtowers (basically instantaneous) or by homing birds (with time lag). Perhaps we could also give the Domain some intrinsic power of response to enemy activity, in the Lord's absence, rather than the simple passive defence of the original – in other words, bring the AI into play on the player's side. By implication, this would mean the player selecting from a small choice of tactical responses as the standing orders for a Domain. Needs thinking about.

The Wise.

So far Rorthron has been the only one. Now he will be accompanied by other Wise, one per land. They are only recruitable by Rorthron in person. At the same time enhance Rorthron's powers in some way. He isn't, so far, particularly magical in gameplay terms.

Illgadron the Wise - Asel
Caladron the Wise - Beren
Narvron the Wise - Varangor
Lemashron the Wise - Carun
Illeshron the Wise - Shilieth
Ishron the Wise - Valahar

Arevron the Wise - Merioneth
Marevron the Wise - Isheril
Merathron the Wise - Aost
Mittrron the Wise Qadim Haraj
Eludron the Wise - Iriel

The enemy AI.

The original route nodes concept from The Lords of Midnight will be retained, and the weighted binary split works well. Three things to add to this system. First, one of the two next nodes can be back to the node itself – in other words there is a probability of the army simply waiting. Second, synchronisation. If two or more armies are at the same node at the same time, they will all choose the same direction, Third, trail following. The pyres gives a visual indication to the player as to the past movements of enemy armies. But the node system should also be adjusted, basically to make paths already taken more probable for subsequent armies. This requires some history at each node, recording troops numbers taking each of the two paths, but weighting in favour of more recent movements.

Feedback.

We also provide some feedback along unbroken pyre trails, with defeats and victories also influencing the node choices, travelling backwards through the graph. This therefore makes severing enemy communications much more important.

Ambush and attack.

Though the armies of Varangor basically travel by night, there are circumstances in which they will respond actively to player movements. Get too close to an enemy army in visible range and you may find yourself attacked during daytime movement. You cannot assume they will stay put as you blithely saunter past! Enemy armies hidden in places such as forests may give you a nasty shock.

Known Routes

This time the game begins with some of the landscape already known and explored. In particular, all of Midnight is mapped already for the player. Additionally there is Morkin's route to the Valahar and Domse's route. Some of Domse's route may be obscured for gameplay reasons.

Single Use Magic

To enable the wise to case some powerful spells, they will have single use magic. Otherwise they would become too powerful. So the player must use their powers with care and good timing.

Holding Domains

Taking a Citadel gives possession of the domain which brings extra benefits - quicker troop replenishment, full map information, early warning of enemy activity.

Independents

Like Doomdark's Revenge, we have Lords and armies that are not enemies but nor are they friends. None of them progressively pursue war (as in Doomdark's Revenge) but they can and will react to certain things. Some for example will try to stop you crossing their territory, others will simply block certain key points. Some will allow the Varangar passage, some will not.

Restricting the Numbers

There are obviously going to be a lot of characters, given the expanded size of the game, but allowing direct controls of too many characters will spoil the game.

Two solutions -

1. Some characters will only be recruitable as lieutenants - they can tag along with your army or be left as a garrison but cannot be independently controlled on their own.
2. The player is only allowed so many control slots - rather artificial but may be more flexible.

The Map.

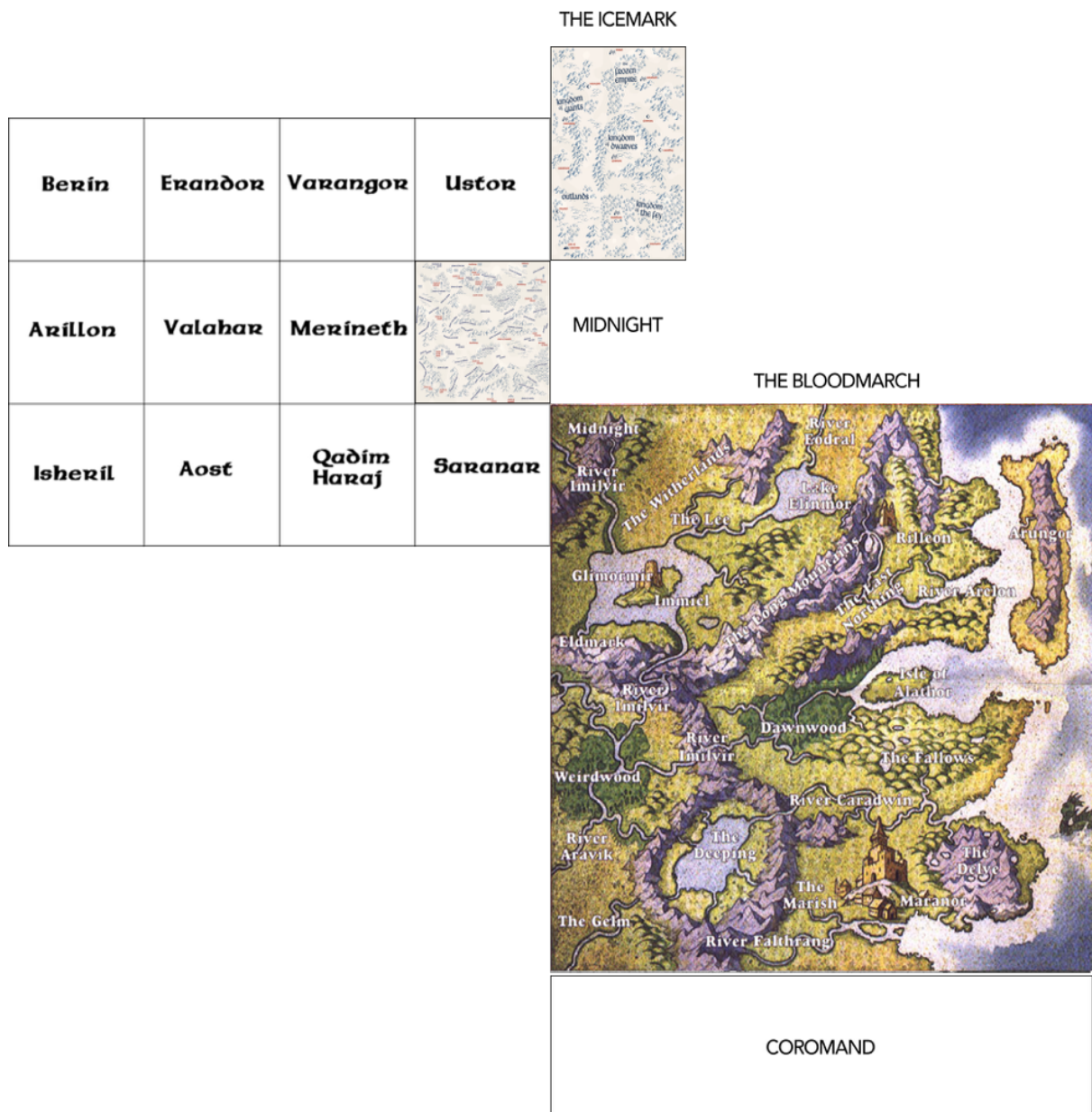
I have deliberately broken up the overall map into Midnight-sized chunks. As much as anything this is to serve as a reminder to myself that each

chunk should be as detailed and varied and hand-crafted as the original Midnight map itself. If this is not done, bigger quickly becomes worse and monotonous rather than better.

Summary

The idea is to make this last game of the series a truly grand finale, with new landscape and gameplay features, new enemies and new friends, but also the potential of Midnight being assaulted by all its old enemies too. And at the same time the land of Midnight itself returns firmly to the gameplay, which is fitting for the end of the saga, not to mention satisfying for old fans.

The Lands of the Midnight Chronicles



This is an approximate map of the Midnight Chronicles, however, it is acknowledge that it could be inaccurate. The information regarding The Bloodmarch size appears to be poor, and the distance and location of The Icemark is questionable. This has been put down to poor information from

the original storytellers of Midnight. Therefore, it would need to be accepted that some revisions of the stories may need to take place.

NOTE: I've found some additional information that puts into question the names of the Eye of the Moon regions. Unfortunately I don't know which of the two maps is the most recent, and thereof which is correct. However, due to some additional information that is with the second map, I can surmise that it is the later.

The changes would be that Berin becomes Asel, Erandor becomes Beren, Ustor becomes Carun, Arillon becomes Shilieth, and Saranor becomes Iriel.

Map of Valahar

