



**Rhordal Kingdom**

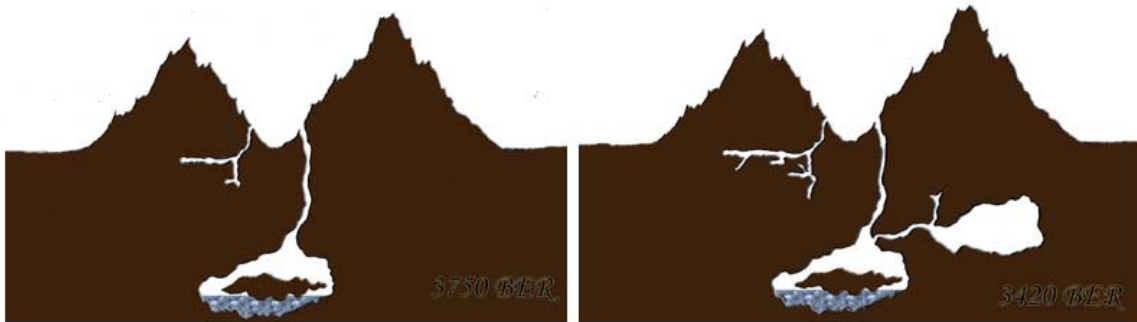
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## Khordal Timeline

3750 BER	Natural caves discovered. First settlement created.
3420 BER	Caelbo Warrens come to existence. Geofel mines are named.
3200 BER	Shard tunnels found. Rivpax starts digging his shaft. Rvisthorn starts expanding the warrens.
3100 BER	New part of the Warrens acknowledged: Rvisthorn Warrens. Rivpax shaft finished. Kingdom is united under the name Khordal.
2900 BER	Hall of Kings created. Start mining Lady's Veil.
2600 BER	Warrens of Gunthras are founded. The throne of Kharolis is baptized.
2300 BER	Bilver Shaft connects warrens. Cairn of the first King created.
2100 BER	All Hollowed Walk started.
1800 –	First Dwarf-Elven War
1720 BER	
1200 BER	Bottom of Lady's Veil reached.
800 BER	Spidered Valleys created.
600 BER	Caves of Madness
350 BER	Second Dwarf-Elven War
170 BER	Deeper Dark found
75 ER	PosterNae sets out with a group of miners to explore new earth.
250 ER	Sluenkax sets out on a mining expedition to find new mining grounds
450 ER	Present Day

## Khordal's Expansion



## **The History of Khordal**

It was in the year 3751 that a group of dwarves from the small village of Manyforge set out to explore the Kharolis Mountains for new layers of ore. Guided by Yurts, a Khordaldrum druid trained to sniff out the indications of mining opportunity, and lead by Geofel Gravelburn, mining expert of Manyforge, the group found the perfect location to start digging. The rocks were of a softer stone, yet strong and eager to be carved out. After a week of cutting and digging, the druid was proven right. They stumbled on an ore-vein with all the features to promise great riches. Geofel sent one of his workers to pass a call for more hands to Manyforge. That same month a deep layer of ore was dug out and transported back to Manyforge. This mine would prove very profitable, and Geofel was pleased.

One day at the end of that same year, while Khords were digging lustroously and hard, a big storm rolled in from the Antarian Reach. At first the dwarves thought nothing of the rain and hail, but soon their newly dug tunnels began to flood, and they were forced from their work. Yurts, the druid, lead them to a cave he had found on Kharolis Peak. It was sheltered from the rain and big enough to support them and their working horses. At first their stay was treated like a necessary break, but Khords are easily bored with nothing to mine. Therefore they started digging with the few tools they had, ready to chip away time piece by piece as they did the rock. Not an hour later, the first chisel was slammed right through the stone wall to reveal an opening on the other side.

A natural tunnel was discovered that lead deep into the foundation of Kharolis Peak. At the end of the tunnel, explorations discovered an enormous cave of such beauty that the Khords could only realize they were given a divine miracle. This cave was a spark of imagination from the God of Creation. So overwhelmed and in awe were they, that they did not dare use the rich rocks of this cave for their own wealth. A cleric of Kharox, maker of this beauty, preached that the storm had been a divine prod in the right way. They were destined to find this cave and make it their home. The other Khords all agreed. None could stand in the presence of such perfection and think otherwise.

When the storm calmed down, Geofel himself rode back to Manyforge to inform the village's Council of their findings, and request permission to start a small settlement to work the rough ore before it was sent to the village. The Council agreed with the miner, and a small band of settlers was sent to Kharolis Peak with him. Amongst them was Caelbo Bronzewood, a young miner with little experience. Soon Caelbo proved to be a Khord of insight and Geofel assigned him the digging of a tunnel, close to the natural cave of Kharox. The tunnel would be their new home and Ore Refinery.

The decades that followed proved Geofel and Caelbo as two inspired Khords that changed the course of Khordaldrum history.

## Khordal as a kingdom

It took some time before Khordal became the kingdom it is now. When Caelbo dug out what would become Khordal's first warrens, the new tunnels were nothing more than a Khordaldrum settlement connected to nearby mines. Soon though, the new settlement grew bigger than Manyforge, and severed into an independent community named Kharolis, after the mountain it existed in.

In its earliest stage Kharolis was governed by Geofel Gravelburn and some of his friends. Since he was also appointed the task to overview the mining, Geofel felt he was losing control of the situation. Especially when Kharolis started growing rapidly. Therefore, he gave life to a council that would rule in his stead. The members of council were picked from different families of Kharolis' society. With all Khords represented, the council worked well, and made sure nobody was neglected in their wishes and ideas.

Centuries went by, and the mines provided great riches and prosperity. Slowly greed crept into the council, and its meetings started to get infrequent, each member preoccupied with their own schemes. Geofel saw this, but no longer possessed the power to stop things. After all, he had created this council to give it full power. The knowledge that he had made the wrong choice in giving his vision away to the wrong hands, and the inability to change it, gnawed on him until he was as shriveled and dry as the dirty, rocky residue that left his mines meaningless. He died in the year 3420 BER, in the company of a few gathered friends and family. Caelbo, his warrens now complete, saw to it that the mines were named after its founder.

Kharolis grew more and more divided as the different families formed clans that started forcing their reign over the city. Falsely documented pacts, power claims and assassinations formed a peak in Kharolis' dark history. The warrens had become an unsafe place for any Khord with a clear alignment to any of the clans. False kings coronated themselves and made new plans to enrich their families with the newly found Shard Tunnels. Looking back, it is considered a good thing that things changed before any of them could annex it as their property.

Somewhere between 3150 and 3130 BER Therassor, God of Righteous Battle, decided to interfere. By then, the nation of Kharolis was rolling like an avalanche of boulders, heading for a certain abyss, torn as it was by internal wars and intrigues. There was no righteousness in this trade of war, and it had angered him for a long time, until he had enough. Disguised as the Khord *Ghardan Aglar* he found a group of Khords of true virtue and belief. Great warriors they already were, but he taught them the ways of his conviction. With his help, this group, named the *Ghardnkuldar*, was able to lead an army that consisted of anybody willing to share the same dream, into a cleansing war that raged for twenty years. Around 3100 BER, all of Kharolis was united under the reign of *Ghardan Aglar*. A new name was given to the first Khordaldrum Kingdom, so that the bloody history of Kharolis could be shrugged off for good.

The Kingdom of Khordal was born. A place where Khords could live together in their own ways, and, in harmony with their beloved stone and themselves. Several decades later, *Ghardan Aglar* died. But it is believed by those few who know his true nature, that Therassor had found the right successor, and knew he was no longer needed.

## Khordal Society

When Khordal began expanding more and more, the need arose for well organized rules. Rules form a big part of Khordaldrum life, and without them Khordal will collapse back into chaos. All the rules, big and seemingly insignificant, are collected in the *Gamulqolfelir*, the Grand Vision of Kharox, god of the Khords. This Vision is carved in the walls of the Hall of Memories, which is a section of the Hall of Whispering Kings. Every khord can come to read the *Gamulqolfelir* on any occasion, and is supposed to do so in times of doubt.

The Grand Vision of Kharox encompasses rules as old as the Khordaldrum race. New rules are not easily accepted. Just like the forming of a smooth pebble, a new rule starts out big and rough, but rolls down a long process, exposed to conditions of question and answer. If it finds its way through several layers of bureaucracy and custom it will be accepted by the Khordal Council. Some rules take years just to get through the earliest stages.

Each new rule is carved in runes to join the others. At the moment of completion of the carving the rule is baptized with a specially brewed Khordaldrum ale. It is then considered official and every khord it concerns is supposed to be acquainted with the rule.

Embedded in the *Gamulqolfelir* is the hierarchical system that describes how Khordal is governed. The ultimate power is given to the King, and in all the years of Khordal's long history there has been no exception to the sex of the city's highest ruler. (Though there is no rule in the *Gamulqolfelir* that states this is mandatory).

Directly below him come the rulers of the different sections that make up the Khordaldrum kingdom. Regents rule over either a warren, a specific mine, Niall Jiun, Oshael Tarn, the shafts, one of the Halls, or the entrances and exits. A total of twelve Regents holds council with the King every week, or when the occasion arises.

Most Regents divide their power over several subordinates. A clear example of that are the Warrens. Each Warren is ruled by a Regent, with several Stadtholders below him. The Stadtholders govern specific districts of a Warren. They function as head of the law there, and anybody violating the *Gamulqolfelir* deals with the district's Stadtholder or one of his guards. A Stadtholder's power ends where his district ends. If a criminal flees to another district the Stadtholder has to deal with his equal, or even with the Warren's Regent from time to time. Contacting a Regent is considered to be an act of incompetence by most Stadtholders, and they only do so when they have no other way out.

Regular citizens that need to contact authorities always speak to Stadtholders. It is possible to get an audience with a Regent or even the King, but their schedules are tight, and there's mostly always a waiting list. For emergencies Stadtholders can refer people to their Regent in a faster process. Regents have the same power towards the King. This privilege is used only under special circumstances.

The Kings of Khordal are chosen from the council of Regents. There is no such thing as a royal family, for it is well known that not every member of a family or clan has as much potential as the other. It is much more practical to see who is the right heir from a council of able Khords. The election of a King is always a very exciting time in the Warrens.

King



Khordad Governmental  
STRUCTURE

Regent



Stadtholder



# **Khordal Locations**

## **The Warrens**

Divided in three sections the Warrens make up the part of Khordal where all the Khords live. Here is where they go home after a long shift of mining, forging or sculpting. Since there's no such thing as night under the surface of Antaron the Warrens are alive 24 hours a day. The entrance to each Warren bears the *Seleta* of their founder. Even though tunnels entwine within each other there is never doubt in which Warren you are.

A Warren consists of wide tunnels. A variety of buildings is embedded in the rock on either side. At times, the tunnels open up to become small caverns with buildings. To other races, the position of the tunnels and caverns may not seem logical, for there is no steady pattern to be found. Khords appreciate the beauty of this unevenness, for they know that it was the rocky earth itself that shaped them. When the founders of the Warrens built them they let themselves be guided by what the stone indicated. This natural, yet artificial effect of unstructured layout can truly bring many khord to tears. Most tunnels have long lost their natural feel, for they have been highly decorated by intricate patterns or beautiful carvings.

Each Warren is a city on its own in wideness and variety. Overall speaking, one cannot find anything in a Warren that could not be found in another. Still, there are differences, which will be detailed below.

### **Warrens of Caelbo (5 districts)**

These Warrens were the first to be created. The way Caelbo has hewn these Warrens has been of great influence on the other two. The oldest families of Khords live in these Warrens, and they keep secrets of weapon creation and smithing long forgotten to the outside world. Powerful items of legend found their origin here.

Time has visibly scraped its fingers over the Warrens of Caelbo. The buildings are old, and though they are kept in great shape and maintained with pride, they bear their past heavily. The Khords that live here find this intriguing and do not strive to change the attitude. A building had a soul, just like a person, and every stone it is made of has its own history. To modernize it would not make it glorify. Appreciating a building is let it develop a big part of itself.

### **The Grand Library**

Some say the old lore and tradition housing in the Warrens of Caelbo is the reason the Runemasters built their Grand Library there.

The Grand Library is built in a huge stalactite that hangs from the ceiling of a big cavern that shelters many Khords. Its wet surface glows in the light of the many smithies surrounding it. The tip of the stalactite barely touches the cavern's ground, and it is there where the two meet that an entrance is created. The stalactite is hollowed out, and contains dozens of stories filled up with books, scrolls, artifacts and secret documents that the Runemasters have collected over the years. No need to say the Warrens of Caelbo still holds many a secret that the Runemasters would like to obtain. Their curiosity and dire need for knowledge stretches out further than that though.

The Grand Library has several layers of security and certain parts of the stalactite are locked



### Stables of Cobbleforge

The Stables of Cobbleforge are one of the oldest stables in Khordal. Though one shall find no horses there, all the necessary equipment for mounts, pets, work animals, and all other kinds of creatures can be purchased. Even cages and carriages are in storage here, or can be custom made for the right price. The shop is enormous, and the only ones capable of understanding the structure of piles of equipment are the members of the Cobbleforge family that run the shop.

(Fun fact: the chains and gear that Khords wear to pull wagons of ore from the mines, all bear the Cobbleforge *Seleta*.)

### The Ungolfad

This fountain is made up from a large basin of stone containing a pool of lava. The glowing surface of this round lava bath is broken by a statue of a humanoid roughly formed from earth. Its arms are stretched out towards the ceiling in despair, and molten tears of lava stream from its eyes into the pool below.

It is whispered that this was once an earth elemental that dwelled under the surface of Kharolis Peak. When the dwarves claimed the mountain as their domain the elemental felt betrayed by Kith-Jora and froze in a cry of emotional agony. Whether this is true or not remains a mystery.

### The Aglar Column

Between several buildings a town square has been created around a stalagmite. This particular one has been discovered soon after Ghardan Aglar united Khordal. Although it is a natural stone, smoothed out and formed by water dripping from above it, one can easily see why Khords enjoy it so much. It resembles a mountain with several figures climbing it, that can easily be interpreted as Khords lead by Aglar to conquer this obstacle.

The water that drips down right above the stalagmite is redirected and caught in vials. It is known that this water will inspire one with courage and righteousness upon drinking it. Sages still debate on whether that is true or not.

Across from the Aglar Column is a small inn that shares the stalagmite's name. It is a simple but homely inn where good meals are served and every night is filled with competitions of all sorts. The innkeeper will gladly tell any interested customer a tale that only he believes is true. According to him, Aglar got his prophetic vision after drinking a particular kind of very strong home brew. After which the customer is expected to buy that brew and pray for anything but a strong headache.

(Drinking the water that falls above Aglar's Column will give anybody a temporary (6 rounds) +2 on all saving throws, during battle only. Drinking the home brewed alcohol will more likely give a temporary -2, and a delayed explosion of pain in the mind.)

### **Warrens of Rvsthorn (7 districts)**

Initially created in a time of turmoil, the Warrens of Rvsthorn host by far the darkest corner of Khordal. These Warrens are two-faced and dangerous. This is a place where not every street is lit with the fires of labor and rune. Its trade is cloaked deliberately, and out of the Stadtholders' reach. Organizations struggle for power here, and obey the laws of the King of Khordal only to a minimum. The *Gamulqolfelir* has no infinite rule and is smirked at by those of high influence.

A simplified vision would split the Warrens of Rvsthorn in an East and a West part. The West part, that connects to the other Warrens, is as welcoming as any other, but the Eastern districts are best to be avoided. Such was not always the case. The Eastern regions of the

Rvisthorn Warrens were once a prosperous and merrier place. This was mostly because of a special magical portal that Khordaldrum priests created in close collaboration with powerful Sentinels of Runes.

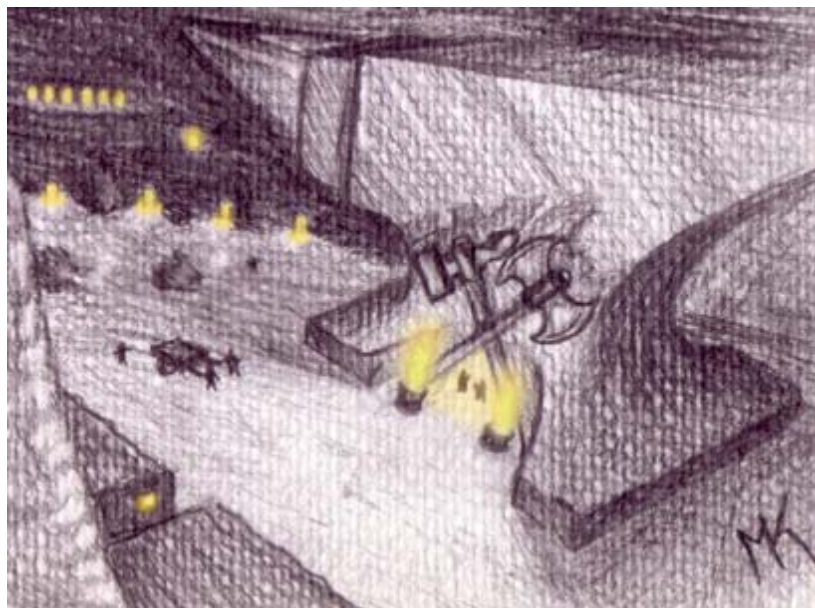
### The Chakran Portal

This portal was built out of strategic and commercial reasons. During the first dwarf-elven war all trade between the Khordaldrum and the Chakrandrum was cut off. Not ready to give up this portion of their income and a possible alliance in war, the Khordaldrum built this portal that lead straight to the Chakran Mountains. After the war, that lasted eighty years, the portal remained open for easy trading ends. It brought much wealth into Khordal, but also destroyed it as well. When the Chakran Kingdom was invaded and destroyed by goblins and trolls, the Khordaldrum had to make a terrible decision. Protecting their own city, they closed the portal, leaving their kin to suffer and die. The portal has been closed shut since then, and with a big part of the income suddenly depleted, many Khords moved their businesses out of the area. Since then, the East part of the Rvisthorn Warrens have pauperized and fallen into darkness.

### The Anvil of Fire and Stone

This temple of Kharox has been built by the god's followers that call themselves *Servants of Fire and Stone*. It resembles a big anvil, and is made of stone with a thin layer of metal smoothed over it. The crossed hammer and axe that make up Kharox's holy symbol make up the front door and only way in. The anvil is as big as any temple but the Servants have dug out many tunnels underneath it to use for their goals.

Regular citizens don't go in the Anvil unless they have some urgent business there. They shun the place because of the constant experimenting that goes on inside it. Truly dedicated to creation and warfare the Anvil hosts an arsenal of the most deadly brains found in Khordal. New devices for all kinds of purposes are designed and tested each day. The thick stone and metal clad exterior of the Anvil is believed to be protecting the ones inside from harm. Outsiders know that it is protecting the Warrens from what's happening inside.



### The Shunned Cathedral

While many Khords follow the ways of Kharox not all share the same beliefs. In the darkest corners of Khordal dark plans are born in dark minds. One of these places is the Shunned Cathedral. It is a vile place in a district closed to all laws. No sane Khord sets foot there. Once, this cathedral was a gift of the Khordal Council to the prosperous district near the Chakran Portal, for its big share in the kingdom's wealth. It was a cathedral to worship Shinara, the god of Luck and Fortune. When things started going downhill the cathedral became a place where hopeful or desperate Khords came to pray for better times. When such times remained absent the Khordaldrum population lost faith and in a revolting uproar destroyed the beauty and divinity of the place. Shinara's holy symbols and illustrations were cast down from their bearings. As the eastern districts fell deeper into sorrow and poverty the cathedral was nothing but a ruin, a place no Khord even looked at. When light no longer shone in the tunnels or the hearts of the Khords that lived there, a new occupant found the cathedral and rebaptised it.

Now it is a temple of D'Hurgen, and a place of Khordaldrum horror stories. Though most of the bedtime tales are made up to scare young Khords, the possibility that they are close to reality is great.

### The Clouded Mug

Where light and darkness meet, a border of transition is a vague misty place where both powers are equally strong and welcome. In the heart of the Warrens of Rvisthorn lies the inn of the Clouded Mug. It is a tavern where deals are closed in safety between people not willing to enter the other's domain. Anyone is welcome there, but questions are never asked. The innkeeper knows most customers by name but will deny all knowledge or involvement. Neither will he ever chose side. Though many sharp arrangements are made inside the bar, there is yet no recollection of a fight ever breaking out in the Clouded Mug. Quarrels are taken and handled outside. The inn is considered the safest place to get a room in all of the Rvisthorn Warrens. Though many, more expensive inns claim the same, one could leave their money on the table, go to the outhouse, and come back to find it untouched.

### **Warrens of Gunthras (6 districts)**

The Warrens of Gunthras are relatively new and more 'modern' than the other two. The forms of the buildings are more square and less elaborate, though only the Khords or people with architectural knowledge can see these minor differences. To a layman these Warrens are no different than others.

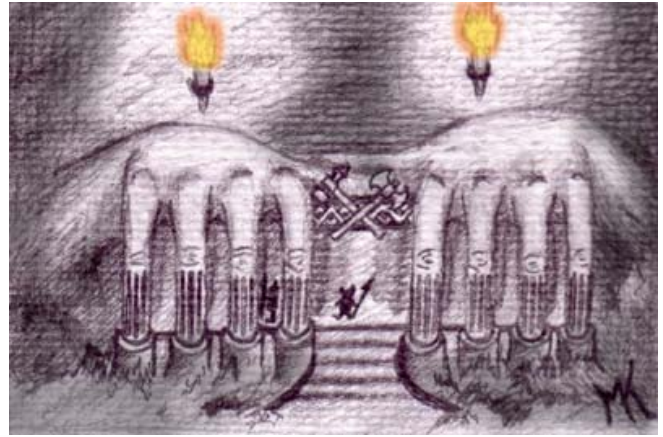
Were other Warrens are noted for the creation of items, or its contrasted face, the Warrens of Gunthras are known for its wide range of temples and other places of worship. All gods of the Audalis Pantheon are resembled here, but common sense placed the temples within proper distance from each other to prevent quarreling.

### The Rock of the Ageless Craftsman

The Rock of the Ageless Craftsman is the largest and most beautiful temple to Kharox the World Carvers have ever created. From a large rocky wall sprout two sculpted hands with the fingers hanging down. The fingers transform into pillars, and the pillars form into the rocky road, to represent the eternal continuity of creation. Between these pillars lies the entrance to the temple, which is embedded in the stone beyond.

This home to the World Carvers is wide and almost a museum of religion. A series of the most wonderful statues depict how Kharox created the rough world and let it for his followers

to perfect. The altar in the center of the largest hall is a hand that comes from beneath the stone tiles, palm upwards so that the Master Mason can stand on it to preach the word of his god. In the walls, large stained-glass windows are created. They envision various wonders of the world created in Kharox' name. Behind them, large cavities have been hollowed out, where torches burn forever, so that a multi colored light shines into the temple.



### The Icicles

The top of Kharolis Peak is covered in snow in winter. It is then that the followers of Khamaruz, lord of frost, go out to meet him. In his freezing presence they carve his teachings upon the mountain. Their true home is in the midst of a blizzard, when a true connection with raw power is found.

When the snow begins to melt some of these *Kings of the Mountains* leave on a pilgrimage to places where ice eternally covers the ground. A portion of the Kings returns to the Warrens of Gunthras where they have built themselves a place where winter resides forever.

Resembling three giant upside down icicles that connect through several bridges, this is the temple of Khamaruz in Khordal where his followers await the departure of the warm seasons. When the first cold arrives the Kings of the Mountains abandon their temple. It is said that this leaving of the temple is done through an old ritual, where the strongest or wisest of all followers of Khamaruz go first, dressed in white and cold blue. Others follow in growing parties, like snowflakes announcing that a change is coming.

The area surrounding the Icicles is chilly and unpleasant. Not many Khords live there, and the ones that do, mostly have some use for the cold radiance.

### The Spores of Itanlok

In the midst of one of the districts lies a forest of toadstools and funguses. They grow in all places: ground, walls and ceilings alike. This is where the *Eyes of Creation*, a group of Kith-Jora followers, have their home. In fact, they created a big portion of the toadstool forest, and built houses in the rocks and earth.

One of their buildings is an inn called the Spores of Itanlok. Its entrance is a flight of stairs that leads into the ground. It brings its visitors underneath the forest of fungus into a dark and stuffy tavern. The roots (or hyphae) of the funguses above reach through the ceiling, and the somber illumination of the place truly creates the atmosphere of a rabbit's hole. But enough Khords seem to like it, for business is good. That might have something to do with the selling of hallucinatory mushrooms. Many Khords have strange visions of Kith-Jora after eating one of those between their pints, and it is considered a true place of worship to the god of Nature. The fact that he is also the patron of the elves seems not important to the customers of 'the Spores'.

## The Shard Tunnels

The history of the Shard Tunnels is closely related to the expanding of the Khordaldrum kingdom. Somewhere around 3200 B.E.R Durangoch Terrasalve, a cleric of Kharox, was wandering in the stone gardens of Niall Jiun, mesmerized by the beauty of the enormous cavern. Unaware of a sudden slope, the cleric slid down the rock and plunged into Oshael Lake below. Struggling to stay above water in his long robes, Durangoch got sucked further from the shore by a sudden current. Cursing Cardista, Goddess of the Sea, he noticed to his terror that he was pulled towards a dark crevice in the cliffs. Panicking and still frantically resisting being pulled under the surface Durangoch whirled into the deep darkness of what appeared to be a tunnel.

A river took him deeper into the mountain than any Khord had ever been. The hellish water ride took forever, but at last he was flung down a small waterfall into a pond with a rocky subterranean beach. Exhausted he crawled to dryness and fell into a comatose sleep.

When he woke up he realized he found himself in a cave filled with shards of emeralds and other gems. He thanked all the gods he could possibly relate to this matter and crawled back into the water, to carefully climb his way up against the stream. Holding on to slippery rocks he managed to get back to Oshael Tarn, after three failed attempts and with arms and hands bloody from scraping and clinging. Bruised and at the end of his strength he was found by a fellow cleric and pulled to safety.

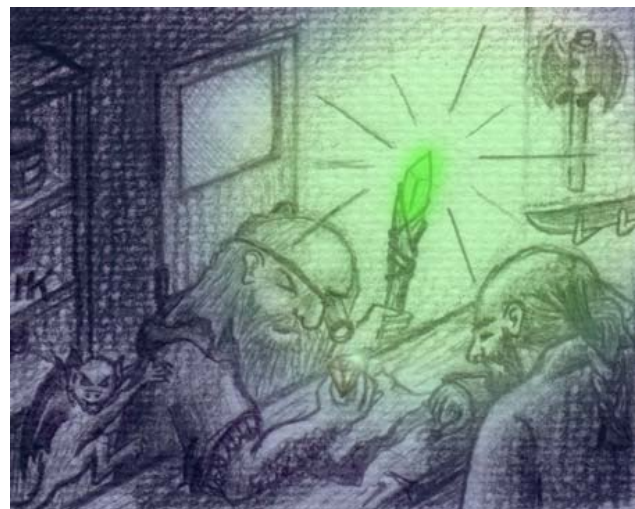
Durangoch's report of a cave of unimaginable beauty and *wealth* was more than enough reason for the Council of that time to order the mining of a special shaft, that would lead straight to the new find. An engineer of high reputation would be appointed the task. Gerolbal Rivpax was the lucky member of a clan with high influence at that time. The Rivpax Shaft now provides easy access to the Shard Tunnels, which is an important source for the Khordaldrum merchants and smithies.

The tunnels are heavily guarded, and all import and export is closely watched. The gems that come out of the Shard Tunnel go to special dealers that distribute them over interested buyers. Some of these buyers are in the service of the kingdom, others are private merchants or craftsmen. Though the carving and distribution are closely watched and guarded, a portion of the diamonds finds its way to the black market, where they are sold for lower prices. The penalty for owning those diamonds is being cast out of Khordal for good. There are plenty of Khords making a living out of unrecognizably fixing the illegal diamonds or tracking them down. These so-called Gemhounds are held in high regard throughout Khordal.

Though a large section of the tunnels is discovered there are still unfound caves behind some of the bigger shards.

Adventure hooks including the Shard Tunnels could be:

- The adventurers are asked to investigate a series of disappearances of miners. They discover a new tunnel with a terrible secret.
- The adventurers aid a Gemhound on her hunt to catch an important link in the embezzling of diamonds.
- A breed of gem eating beetles has invaded the Shard Tunnels. The Regent suspects they were placed there by a third party for some reason. The adventurers discover the origin of the creatures.



## The Shafts

### The Rivpax Shaft

Once Gerolbal Rivpax started digging the tunnel that would lead towards the Shard Tunnels, he shut the project off of the turmoil that was going on in the rest of Kharolis. Food and water were supplied once every week, as was news of what was going on. There were several reasons for this hermit mining, and one of them was that Rivpax did not want his miners distracted by the latest uproar in power struggles. He wanted his Shaft completed.

After decades of drilling and shipping rock the Shard Tunnels were reached. Finally the amazing sight was no longer what some believed was Durangoch's hallucination. The chaos in the rest of Khordal had died down by then, and the new King

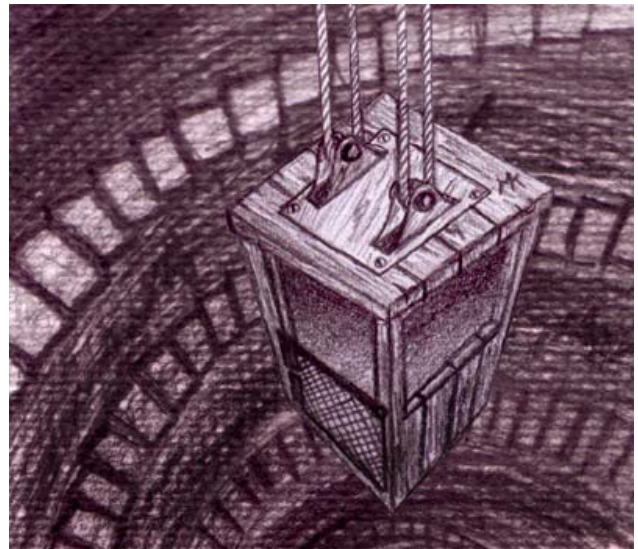
The Rivpax Shaft is a wide hole in the earth, as if an enormous lavaworm crawled straight down through the stone. The walls are lined with a spiraling staircase that circles from the very top to the very bottom. There is also a wooden construction that levels a cage up and down the Shaft. This lift does not nearly reach deep enough and travelers need to change several times in order to reach the bottom.

What at first was a point of connection between the Rivpax Shaft and the Shard Tunnels has now expanded and become the Hall of Whispering Kings.

### The Bilver Shaft

In many ways does the Bilver Shaft resemble the descent Rivpax made. It is a vast hole in the earth where two lifts go down into the darkness, or ascend towards the surface.

Initially, this Shaft was created purely to connect the Warrens in an external way. It proved to give more possibilities, and Bilver was ordered to dig further to perhaps expand Khordal. Though he monitored it for a long time Bilver eventually had to hand the project down to younger Khords. He died before his Shaft was anywhere near the state it is in now.



After 1000 B.E.R the Khords started expanding their Kingdom fast and eagerly. The order came to create a new Warren at the bottom of the Bilver Shaft at that time. A highly talented young Khord named Ibereon was sent down the lift to inspect the rock. Rumors said he had big plans for the infrastructure, but they were very secret. Ibereon's fate is included in the description of the Spidered Valleys, but it was far from pleasant.

The Bilver Shaft lay silent for a while, but could not be left alone. It was too appealing to the Khords to keep digging. And so they did.

The Shaft was expanded, but soon subterranean druids, readers of the rock, could hear hollow echoes through the stone. They knew by indications in the layers and roughness that slightly deeper, another cave system could be found. This time the Khords were prepared, and when the first hollow appeared beyond the cut rock a group of scouts was sent in. Only one of them came back, speaking of terrors unknown before. The Khords had stumbled upon the Deeper Dark and knew not to dig any further.

## The Path of PosterNae

It was 75 years after the introduction of the Ethrynian Reckoning that new plans included the Bilver Shaft. In the center of the Shaft a small alcove was dug, where a new team of miners started to explore underland regions to the east. Lead by an adventurous Khordaldrum engineer called PosterNae the miners widened the hole in the Shaft and turned it into an actual tunnel. They dug fast and invigorated, for their leader believed that if mining deep didn't work, mining wide would be the best option. He praised his men constantly and made them share his dream: a new Warrens named after him and his workers. The fate of PosterNae and his ambition was forced to join the other plans for expansion: they remained a dream.

Years they worked. They mined only straight, for PosterNae believed that it would lead them somewhere, a destiny he had seen in some kind of vision. So they bored through the toughest of rock and the hardest of stone, a time consuming process. People back in Khordal started to believe PosterNae had dug himself in, deprived of sanity. Their fears were not far from reality, for one day the guards at the beginning of the tunnel were startled by sudden movement. No rations or supplies had been brought into the tunnel for a long time. Nobody had felt the need to investigate yet either. But now it sounded like something was coming out of the tunnel towards the Bilver Shaft. The guards were speechless when they realized that some monstrosity protruded from the darkness. Its head and torso were definitely Khordaldrum, but the arms looked like tentacles with hooks and the creature seemed to move itself by dragging itself forward. There were no legs, but in their place were two limb tentacles that seemed burnt. The guards killed the creature without too much effort, but a repulsion and fear had struck their hearts.

Later, the creature was identified as one of PosterNae's workers, but what had caused the body to deform is yet unknown.

DM information: The fact of the matter is: PosterNae and his group of miners stumbled upon ancient elemental entities buried deep in the earth. These creatures resemble a hybrid form of rock and fungus. They shed spores that, if inhaled, deform the body and mind into a state that's best compared to undeath, though a conscious still remains. (Anyone effected by the spores turns into an aberration-type creature)

## The Hall of Whispering Kings

When Rivpax dug his shaft towards the Shard Tunnels he dug too deep on accident. It was very difficult to locate the exact place of the caves. The lowest section of his Shaft was then used for storage of old material, and a small base for military units guarding the Shard Tunnels. Times changed, and the city of Kharolis became the Kingdom of Khordal. When Ghardan Aglar died, the Khordaldrum council ruled there should be a special place of honor where Khords of great importance should be buried. To prevent new quarreling between the Warrens the bottom of the Rivpax Shaft was expanded. Most Khordaldrum considered this the perfect place for a true homage to greatness. It was the deepest point then, in the earth that had given birth to them. The cycle was completed and the Khordaldum council was very pleased with itself for thinking of this.

Nowadays the Hall of Whispering Kings has been widened far beyond the small dark tunnel it started as. It stretches as long as a full Warren, and its walls are high as towers. The Hall is close to a cubists dream, for there are no flaws to the straight perfection of this architecture. No bent lines exist in this place, except for the ones in the ornaments of tombs and carved illustrations on the wall. The columns that hold up the mountain are thick as houses and depict important events in Khordal history. The top and bottom of each column hold a phrase that reveals which historical occurrence is displayed and to which King or ruler it appeals.

On either side of the vast Hall lie the tombs of the Kings of old. The stone graves are very well kept and honored. Protruding from the wall above each tomb is a face that resembles its occupant. The line of faces on the wall is believed to guard over Khordal, as if the spirits of the dead still reside in the stone. Ancient manuscripts and stories told from father to son speak of these statues whispering amongst themselves, just before times of turbulence. According to these tales gusts of incomprehensible words floated the Hall of Kings right before the wars with the elves and the foundation of the Caves of Madness as well as the Deeper Dark. The stone faces are spread out through the Hall of Whispering Kings. New tombs are created in between existing ones.

### The Invigorating Hall

The Walls closest to the Lady's Veil do not bear tombs, and never shall they be used to house them. This section of the Hall of Whispering Kings is reserved for a special purpose: the display of the *Gamulqolfelir*. Although it is a part of the Hall of Whispering Kings it is not devoted to any specific person. It is a place where the Kingdom itself is the center of attention. This 'Invigorating Hall' is a well visited area of Khordal. The *Gamulqolfelir* is the most important thing in Khordaldrum life and must be known and worshipped as such. The rules of life are carved into the walls, as well as a big version of the map of Khordal. This map is said to be so detailed that every single house can be found on it. Certain sections are old and not updated any longer, specifically the dark districts of the Warrens of Rvisthorn. The Invigorating Hall is named thus because many a lost Khord finds new clarity here.

Another feature of the Hall of Whispering Kings is the place where it connects with the Shard Tunnels and the Rivpax Shaft. Nothing can pass from one to the other without visiting the enormous Hall. Other races often ridicule the Khords for letting a place of worship and remembrance be disturbed by commerce. The Khordaldrum do not appreciate such remarks. They believe that the Whispering Kings watch over the merchandise that passes through and the people who deal with it. A thief thinks twice before taking his loot under the stone faces of greater good.



## The Throne of Kharolis

Where the Invigorating Hall flatters the Hall of Whispering Kings on one end, the Throne of Kharolis crowns its other. This is where the true governing of Khordal happens. The location for the throne was an obvious one, once the Hall of Whispering Kings was created. What could be more inspiring than ruling under the view of generations of predecessors. One would think the name of the throne is false, since the kingdom was renamed centuries before. The explanation for this contradiction lies in the fact that these halls are not viewed as a throne to the city, but more to the mountain it resides in.

The Throne of Kharolis is not just another section of the Hall of Whispering Kings. It is a group of chambers on its own, accessible through the Hall and the All Hollowed Walk. Both entrances lead into a main area, best compared to a town square. From here the other chambers can be entered. The main area houses several offices where all kinds of matters can be discussed that exceed policies in districts or Warrens. When a Khord has such a problem he reports at one of the offices in the main area of the Throne of Kharolis, where he is redirected to one of the chambers. There a minister will deal with the problem, always judging according to the *Gamulqolfelir*.

There are several chambers that stand out above the rest. The most important of those is the King's Audience, but others include the Bearded Ballroom and Kharox' Hammer.

### The King's Audience

This is the room where the King of Khordal welcomes his subjects, on set hours and only through proper appointment. Two big wooden doors, that are strongly fortified with beautiful metal crafting, open up into a chamber with a shiny marble floor. Part of the floor is covered with a long brown-red carpet that seems to fade into the marble floor like veins of ore. The carpet leads up to a big throne: a stone chair, carved from black rock like a chess-piece on the white underground. The throne seems to be formed straight out of a bigger column of stone that flows from the otherwise smooth wall.

Although the throne draws immediate attention upon entering the chamber, there is more furniture here. On the throne's left stands a table big enough to host a fair amount of people. It is there that the council sits when in deliberation with the king. Each chair around the table is carved to resemble the part of Khordal its owner governs. The largest chair bears the symbol of Khordal itself, just like the throne: a mine with a gemmed crown. This is the seat of the king.

At least twelve guards are present in the King's Audience at all times. They stand in pairs at each corner of the room, plus one on either side of the throne and either side of the doors. They only change position when relieved by another guard or on command of the king. Should the king ever get under attack they will form a living shield around him and defend him with their lives.

### The Bearded Ballroom

The Throne of Kharolis is also a place for royal festivities. Though most Khords believe that festivity is drowning in pounds of ale in a dark tavern while numbed by loud music and barfights, the higher social classes realize that feasts are a must to form new acquaintances, business partners and political help.

The name of this chamber is of course a representation of the nature of Khords. They know that a Ballroom is an essential part of a royal residence, but they feel no need for it. When a

party is organized, the room will be filled with beards, not the graceful 'beauty' of elven gowns or human shaved skin. Therefore, the Bearded Ballroom was named as a sneer to other races. Who said the Khords don't have a sense of humor?

The Bearded Ballroom is very much similar to the King's Audience. It is a plain ballroom with the same marble floor, only polished so much that it almost reflects like a mirror. The walls are rough stone, but with fake columns hewn from it. Long tables shield them from the crowd, bearing all kinds of Khordaldrum delicacies while the party is going. There is a stage, suitable for a band, a spokesman desiring attention, or any other form of entertainment. In the center of the room hangs a iron construction that holds several bowls with flaming oil. The light of the bowls shines upwards and never hits the crowd directly. It gives the place the subterranean feel, even more then the other tunnels since the party-goers have the experience to be under the light (of course a representation of hardly being in contact with the sun). What's remarkable about the ceiling is that it is false. The iron light-construction does not end where the ceiling does. It goes upwards through the place where it comes out of the ceiling to connect to a hidden space between the false ceiling and the actual stone roof of this chamber. There lies a big basin containing the oil that feeds the bowls of light. Tiny tubes are built in the construction in an invisible way. A single Khord is appointed the task to check the basin and refill if necessary. He is one of the few who knows that the ceiling in the Bearded Ballroom is not real.

#### Kharox' Hammer

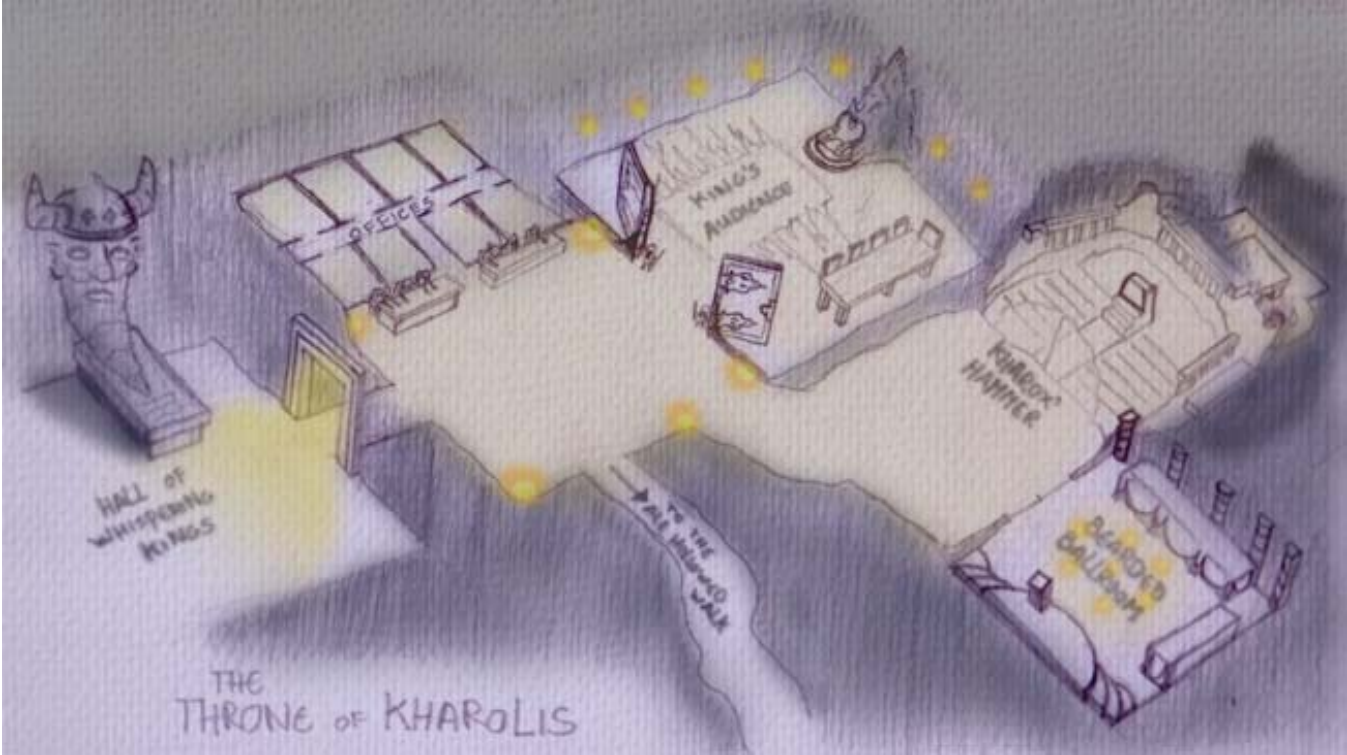
While most justice is carried out in the Warrens and districts where the trouble originated, some cases are beyond the justice system there. Difficult cases, or ones that concern several Warrens or other regions in Khordal, are brought before a group of high judges that house in the Throne of Kharolis. This courthouse is named Kharox' Hammer, for it is the justice of the God of Khordaldrum that will decide whether the accused is guilty. The judges working in Kharox' Hammer are representatives of their divine leader, and know every word in the *Gamulqolfelir* backwards.

The chamber that houses this courtroom is dull and gray, without ornaments and frills that could be a distraction to the acts of law. The entrance is made of two heavy stone doors that open smoothly but can be sealed as if they're solid wall. Should a judged one try to escape he would find them impermeably shut. The Khordaldrum clerics even went as far as laying a magical barrier there that prevent use of spells like: gaseous form and other ways of escape. The room is inescapable.

An short isle leads up to a high cubistic pedestal that should be climbed by anybody speaking to the judges. It is highly common that the accused forms his own defense. On both sides of the isle are benches, fit for an audience. These are hardly ever used though. The judges prefer their trials to be without a crowd.

Opposing the pedestal stands a rough, stone balcony behind which the judges take place. Two similar balconies are situated on both flanks of the pedestal. This strange division of the judges has to do with the way this 'supreme court' makes up their judgement. Each of the three balconies will be occupied by a group of judges from different followers of Kharox. In front of the pedestal sit the judges of the World Carvers. On the right house the Kings of the Mountains, and on the left sit Runemaster judges. After the trial, a representative from each group of judges will take the group's conclusions in a final conclave. Then, in turn, each of the three judges that deliberated the matter will read a part of the outcome of the trial.

There is a tale of a Khordaldrum rogue that talked his way out of a series of acts against the Gamulqolfelir, by turning the different groups of judges against each other. His slick use of words proved so well chosen that the judges dismissed him in their fight. It is whispered that the rogue was in fact the god of trickery and mischief, Thirkell, in disguise. There is no record of such a trial, as there is no record of the judges ever fighting amongst themselves. Of course, it is not unimaginable.



## **All Hollowed Walk**

Beneath the Hall of Whispering Kings and the Throne of Kharolis lies a system of caves. Some of these caves were made, others were formed naturally. The Khords found them when they were digging the Hall of Whispering Kings. Rock druids could tell there were hollows beneath the Halls in creation. Curious, and of course searching for new riches the Khordaldrum dug their tunnels to reach these caves. These days, the All Hollowed Walk bears the following wonders:

### The Hall of Memories (by Alacrity)

Deep within the All Hollowed Walk of Khordal, there is a vast hall surrounded by 736 small caves. This cavern system is called The Hall of Memories (D: Minnas Dephnu-dum) and is considered to be one of the Great Wonders of the Antaron World. The dark cavern is deep below the city, and is cared for by the Runemasters and clerics of Kharox. Access to these caves is restricted only to those who have received the permission of three elders and three of the Hall Keepers (D: Navmaryn). The series of small caves are called the Ears of Time (D: Aretakten). They all branch off a natural cavern called The Grand Hall of Listening (D: Tyga-Velir), that is three hundred feet long, two hundred deep and one hundred feet wide, filled with many crystal formations. The hall has a mystical quality that any sound, once made in the Ears of Time, becomes trapped within the Grand Hall of Listening, echoing for all of eternity. The echoes are very specific in nature, and can only be heard at a specific location in the Grand Hall. These echoes can not be heard while in the Ears of Time, and sound made in the Hall of Listening does not echo. Why the echoes do not fade over time is a secret that the Hall Keepers hold very close to their hearts. Many great Khordaldrum Kings, Leaders, Warriors and Elders have left their thoughts and musing within the Hall of Memories for the future generations of Khords to listen.

If a Khord wishes to listen to the voices of time, then he must wander though the Grand Hall of Listening to the spot designated as the spot for the particular voice he wished to hear. The Runemasters have very complete maps and records of who has spoken to the Ears of Time and where to stand to hear them. As one walks through the Grand Hall, the voices sound like the wind until a specific voice-spot (D: Rostalla) is reached, then the voice will become clear and the wind noise vanishes. The Hall-Keepers know that there are 736 caves and each one has only three spots where a voice can be added to the hall. So far there are 568 voices left for the future to hear. If someone were to speak in a Voice-spot that was taken, the voices would blur together and become undecipherable. Only one memory is so destroyed, unfortunately it was the voice of the first Khordaldrum king, now mixed with the voice of the second. Only Khords are allowed to enter the Halls of Memories, and so far no exception has been made.

Over the course of generations of care, the Grand Hall of Listening has trapped some unexpected voices. There is an area marked carefully on all maps where an elder Runemaster can be heard admonishing his apprentice with a "be quiet!" (D: Halla Luga!) Another corner of the hall holds the sound of an ancient Cleric falling down and cursing rudely. This is probably the source of the rather odd (to anyone but a Khord) expression "As funny as a priest in the dark." (D: Komis garacu jargh thudul nanan) which will always make a Khord laugh.

### The Passage of Bowed Heads

Close to the exit to the Throne of Kharolis lies a system of caves that is used in funerals of important Khords. A cortege of relatives, friends and other invited people will pass through these caves, following the deceased who is placed in an open coffin. This procession is a last

homage to life, and the rock from which it came. The entry of these caves bears a big symbol of Kharox, for it is with this god that Khordaldrum life begins. The sides of this opening have been reshaped into pillars that show long lines of Khords, shuffling forward in grief. Upon entering the cave, a specially appointed pair of priests will take out a prepared rock of rough texture. Throughout the procession they will sand and polish it while walking in front of the coffin, until the rock is smooth and perfect. This represents the life of the deceased, rough and edgy at first, but smoothed out by time in the end. Before the coffin passes under the exit of these caves, crowned by another big symbol of Kharox (for life also ends in his hands), the smoothed rock is placed on the ground, and crushed by a blessed hammer. The remains of the rock are strewn over the mountain top of Kharolis Peak.

### The Fields where Iron Clashes

Deep in the All Hollowed Walk lies an area restricted to the general public. Khords that go in there are always in groups, and as groups they leave again. Although this area is called fields, it is more like a cave with several chambers that connect in all sorts of ways. There are wide smooth areas, rough slopes that are easily climbable, and narrow creases through which lone warriors crawl. These fields are reserved for battle-training.

To compare it with an arena would be unjust. The Fields are a place where Khords test their skills, though never till death, and never for a crowd. The battles that take place here are mostly arranged by the Khordal army, to keep its soldiers sharp and in shape, in between their turns to guard a mine or shaft.

On occasion, the Fields are the pedestal of great collision of forces. Warriors and clerics, sometimes even mages, are grouped together by Khordaldrum generals, to carry out wicked games of tactics, representing battlefields of war. Many a Khord comes out with more than bruises, but they know it hardens them for when the time comes that battle is no longer a game.

The Fields where Iron Clashes is not the property of the Khordal government. A group of clerics holds control over its use, shape and schedule. Sometimes groups of citizens will hire the place for their own goals, whether it concerns tournaments, business trips (there's nothing more bonding than sharing blood), or matters of darker intent. The clerics will ask their questions, sometimes even reshape a part of the caves for special intentions. Always will the caves be restored in their original form after a battle, though old bloodstains from previous fights are still visible on the rock.

### Cairn of the First King

Though the Hall of Whispering Kings is a homage to all the Kings that ruled Khordal in its long history, there is a special section in the All Hollowed Walk devoted to the very first one in this line. Ghardan Aglar is buried in the Hall of Whispering Kings. The Stalwart Warriors, followers of Aglar from the very beginning, built this Cairn in his remembrance.

The Cairn of the first King is a tomb without a body. In the middle of this cave lies a big pile of rocks, a beacon that symbolizes the mark of a new starting point. The plaque in front of the cairn reads:

*A great spirit was laid down here to rest  
His powerful wisdom in us all will manifest  
Ghardan Aglar, for your righteousness we delve  
Until earthmother comes, to reclaim us for herself*

There is no bright light in this cave. No torches line the walls. Small, white crystals are placed on the ceiling in the shape of Therassor's constellation. They shine a pale light on the cairn and the smaller piles of rock around it. These smaller piles do contain bodies. Around the Cairn of the First King, his most dedicated followers are buried. It is an honor of the highest form for a Stalwart Warrior to be buried in this chamber of the All Hollowed Walk.

### The Rocking Rumble

People don't often use the words "song" and "Khord" in the same sentence, unless it is in a negative way. There is no actual fundament for this fact, since Khords do have a musical ear. It is just shaped in a different way.

One of the places this is shown is a cave in the All Hollowed Walk, that is not named, but known for its wideness and its high roof. Every year, large hordes of Khords come together here under the supervision of themselves and each other. This is no organized event, it is more of an inner call. People will start whispering through the tunnels that a *Rumble* is coming up. Soon groups of Khords start gathering towards the All Hollowed Walk. The floor of the cave eventually fills with bearded folk in tight anticipation of what's coming.

Then, somebody starts humming; a low tone, earthy and stretched to spread into the hearts of the gathered. Others pick up, join in and the sound swells, so loud it seems the mountain itself has started humming along. Eventually, all sound blends into a strange tone that is as well high as low, guided by the many vocal cords and unique shape of the cave. Khords that describe this experience speak of becoming one with the people and the rock. They feel strengthened, united and strangely euphoric—not a feeling common amongst the matter of fact Khordaldrum.

The ending of this humming choir is as spontaneous as its beginning. Slowly Khords will unhook and find their way home until nobody is left.

The humming can last for hours, though never over half a day. It is important to understand that the Rocking Rumble is no compulsive happening for all Khords. Some Khords choose not to go, most never even feel the need to, but in a vast city like Khordal there are plenty of souls drawn towards this happening. The Rumble never consists of less than a thousand Khords.

Nobody knows how this event ever started to take place. It is whispered that it was an idea by Telamor, the god of artistry, but maybe that whisper in itself is created by him.

## **Niall Jiun (Temples to the Gods)**

This gargantuan cave is what drew the Khords into Kharolis Peak, and possibly the only part in the whole city of Khordal that is not hammered, chiseled or otherwise altered by Khordaldrum hands. The citizens of Khordal are under the assumption that Kharox himself created this cave. Even a stranger to rock formations sees the beauty in this cave. Its high ceiling is covered in clusters of gems, like moss on a tree. The many colors, mostly green and yellow are spotted with sparkles of silver and gold. The richness of the stone, and its form and direction are so perfect it seems soft and welcoming to the eyes.

In the center of this cave lies a big platform of rock. Beneath this platform sleeps the underground Oshael Lake. This platform connects to the walls of the cave at several points. Otherwise, it hovers in the air above the lake and beneath the wondrous ceiling. Visitors should be careful not to join the fate of Durangoch Terrasalve (discoverer of the Shard Tunnels), and fall from the edge.

The platform houses a small settlement of temples. Followers of Kharox deemed this the ideal place to be close to the god they so loved. Surely Kharox would look back upon this beautiful cavern he created. His attention would be drawn towards them too, if they remained close to it. And so they named the platform Niall Jiun, Temples to the Gods in the common tongue. Nowadays, after centuries of work and rebuilding, the Khordaldrum clerics have built their temples, not only to Kharox, but to many other gods, in harmony with the rock. These temples are not carved into the platform, or roughly slammed into position. They seem to form from the stone naturally, as if they were meant to be there. Their presence only enhances the beauty of the place.

At one point in Khordal's long history, clerics and mages collaborated and put a spell on the cavern so it appears to be drenched in soft daylight. This way the marvelous ceiling can be witnessed at all times, from any angle. A magical effect of this spell is that it follows the sun's natural course. At night it is dark, and the ceiling shines like stars. This spell has had another effect on the cave, unwanted but accepted now. Plants grow on Niall Jiun, and the caretakers of the platform have created beautiful gardens where plant and stone merge. Although Khords do not care much for plants, they appreciate the uniqueness of this place, and the fresh air these plants bring. It is not hard to assume that without the plants on Niall Jiun, the air in Khordal would be much more stuffy.

## **Oshael Tarn**

In the shadow of the platform of Niall Jiun lies a lake that most Khords shun. The Khordaldrum race doesn't like large quantities of water. Only a select group has decided to live on the eastern bank of Oshael Lake. Some of these Khords even use boats to collect special mushrooms that grow on the cavern walls. Fish does live in these waters, but it is a strange, blind species; tough to catch and hard to chew. Most Khords don't bother trying to catch them.

Adventure hooks and ideas:

-The stone gardens of Niall Jiun are a perfect place for a secret meeting. IF the players can evade the temple clerics at night.

-An object of great importance has fallen or been thrown off the platform into Oshael Tarn.

-One day the clerics of Niall Jiun find out that their light spell is warring off. Why is this happening and who is blocking the spell's effects?

## Geofel Mines

The mines of Geofel Gravelburn were the first feature of what was to become the city of Khordal, capital and living heart of all Khordaldrum life. They were what brought the earthbound race to this place in the Kharolis Mountains. So far, the mines have fulfilled their promises of great richness, though they have given them with a certain amount of danger.

Nowadays there are several entrances to the Geofel Mines. The three most notable are these:

1 The entrance on the side of the mountain, outside on the earth's surface. This entrance is not used often, since most cargo is transported straight into Khordal via other ways. On occasion, other races will purchase ore from the Khordaldrum. Most of these deals happen on the side of Kharolis Peak's little brother.

2 The underground entrance that comes from the Warrens of Caelbo and Niall Jiun. Big loads of rocks and ore come through this entrance, mostly in rough form to be worked and reshaped in the Warrens.

3 The entrance through the Lady's Veil. The traffic that goes through this entrance is mostly one-way. The silver and gold harvested in the Lady's Veil is shipped through the Geofel Mines mostly. The material dug up in the mines does not pass through this passage.

Through the years the mines of Geofel have grown to a size out-spanning any of the Warrens or other areas in Khordal. A typical tunnel in these mines is carved neatly, the sharp points and rough texture smoothed out to prevent accidents. The floors are rougher for better grip, and in some areas they are paved with rails, so that wagons with delved goods can be easily rolled to their destination. These wagons are pushed and pulled by Khords. Not using animals is more than a matter of principle. Most Khords aren't very good with animals. Besides, Khords are just as affective and tough as any mammal fit for pulling. Khordaldrum miners take great pride in working the wagons. It is an important job, essential to the process. All the mines are strengthened with wooden beams supporting the roofs. The constructions are sturdy and well engineered, after Geofel's own design. There are hardly any reports about tunnels collapsing. Special teams of workers are assigned to inspect and renew the supporting beams at all time. Neglect is not an option here.

Most of the tunnels in the Geofel mines are average, as described above. There are a few exceptions to this rule.

### The Chasm

Deep in the Geofel mines, a team of workers was hacking their way to what should be another layer of ore. They opened a natural hollow that widened to reveal a very deep chasm. With the help of a rail engineer they created a way over this chasm to continue digging on the other side. Though a wooden platform exists for light travelers, there is a special railway attached to the roof of the chasm that can carry loaded wagons on chains. This special feat of inventive engineering was thought out by one of the Servants of Fire and Stone. The unfortunate cleric of Kharox fell down the chasm while testing out the speed limit of the wagon while sitting in it.

The chasm has never been investigated. So far there has been no need to. In fact, most Khordaldrum miners tend to talk a little lower and walk a little slower when crossing it. The chasm is a regular visitor in the scary stories miners tell each other.



### Benco Devunhol's Trophyroom

In the year 2264 BER the Geofel Mines were discovered by a behir. The dragonlike creature deemed it worthy to be its new lair and nested deep into the mines after eating several miners. A brave cleric of Kharox named Benco Devunhol, heard about the attack. He quickly developed a plan to trap the creature and hurried into the mines. He found the behir asleep, but knew that it would wake up hungry for meat. Benco waited until the monster started to stir. He then transformed part of the mine's rocky wall into flesh using some *Stone to flesh* spells. The monster awoke, hungry as anticipated. Smelling the flesh, good as an appetizer, the monster dug in, feasting on the juiciness. Just when the it buried its head in once more, Benco sent his countering *Flesh to stone* spell upon the meat. The behir's head was stuck in newly formed rock and the monster was infuriated. Another spell was sent and the last of the meat surrounding the monster was returned to stone. After a long struggle the monster gave up and died eventually.

Nowadays this part of the tunnel is dedicated to Benco's victory. The body of the behir, turned to skeletal form, still lies there, the skull still embedded in the rock. Benco has performed the same trick in other parts of Antaron. The trapped bodies of several monsters have been shipped to his Trophyroom and put up for display.

### The Danger Zone

A very small section of the Geofel Mines is blocked off for general miners and other public. This dead end tunnel has been donated to the Servants of Fire and Stone to practice and try the inventions and machineries they create that are supposed to aid miners in their jobs. The Mine Supervisors have long ago discovered that most of these machinations cause more trouble than they help out. To not hold endless discussions with the Servants they gave them their very own place in the mines, far from where the actual digging takes place.

When one enters the Danger Zone, which is obviously a mocking name, the sounds of drilling and steel-on-steel rush ahead of the actual scene. The light of hot forges shines like lava in the tunnels. Entering the working place is like entering a beehive. Clerics run back and forth, prod the walls with weird equipment, long scrolls with incomprehensible calculations block the path, tables with foul smelling brews on them fog the area, and rotating wooden structures that are not meant to rotate move forever without anyone knowing why. People that don't belong here are yelled out of the way. Very few of the ideas that go into the Danger Zone ever come out alive.

### Adventure hooks and ideas:

- Several miners are missing after working around the Chasm. The adventurers need to descend down the Chasm to investigate what is housing in the deep.
- A part of the mines has been forcefully claimed by a family of umber hulks. A cat and mouse game with these creatures follows.
- The skeletal remains of Benco's trophies come to life and haunt the mines. They need to be stopped before they reach the Warrens. The question is: what caused them to rise?

## **The Lady's Veil (Azbad Lisel)**

Around 2900 BER the miners of the Geofel Mines stumbled upon a layer of silver. Eagerly they started exploiting this incredible find. The layer proved to reach deeper into the earth than anticipated, and after long years of mining the structure of the mines became messy. It was then that the mine was turned over to a supervisor with strong connections to the Sentinels of Runes.

A special plan was set up by the Sentinels. They saw this layer of silver as a work of art, seeing how it basically spread vertically instead of horizontally. And just mining it until all silver was depleted would not honor such beautiful anomaly. The Sentinels pictured the layer as a veil; covering the riches of the ground with beauty, but hinting at more to be discovered. Their plan was to create a big hollow in the earth, all rock and silver stripped from it, but its walls still rich and promising. At the bottom of this hollow, long mines would go deep into the ground, like the beard of a Khordaldrum woman, springing from under her veil.

It was a plan created for centuries of work, but dedication and proper planning made it happen. Now several tunnels spring from the Geofel mines, descending into the earth. They all reach the big hollow, like braids of hair reaching a woman's head. Some of these strands connect the Lady's Veil to the Hall of Whispering Kings. Some of the strands reach nowhere, created for the original purpose of mining silver.

The big hollow is a broad artificial cave, where miners still dig out silver. These miners follow specific patterns in which they cut and carve. The big hollow, heart of the Lady's Veil, can still be expanded, but may never reach its outer layer. At all times should there be a thin skin of silver on the rock in this part of the Veil. The patterns etched on this skin enhance the beauty of this place. It is a true wonder, and a marvelous sight to anyone who enters it.

On the bottom of the hollow, tunnels stretch further down into the silver layer. Somewhere in the 1200 BER the bottom of the silver layer was reached. Efforts to dig deeper resulted in the Caves of Madness.

### The Path of SluenKax

When PosterNae didn't succeed in his search for new grounds to the east, the Khordal Council decided not to search for a while. They had been disappointed many times. Digging deeper into the earth proved disastrous. Their explorations to the east were unsuccessful too. But the Lady's Veil had reached its bottom long ago, and new mining grounds were needed badly. After enough courage was gathered for another try Drio'an SluenKax was sent out with a team of miners and an earth druid to investigate the grounds towards the west.

So far reports have come in about richer grounds, but SluenKax and his team are still mapping and mining. They aim for a possible connection to the Geofel Mines, since transportation through the Lady's Veil will be difficult. A very small amount of ore and silver comes from the tunnels of SluenKax, but it is not notable enough to be labeled as a mine.

## **The Caves of Madness (Caurak Qosirki)**

When the Khords reached the bottom of the layer of silver, several tunnels stumbled upon hollows in the earth, where strange mosses grew. The birds that the Khords carried with them, to detect noxious gaseous, went crazy in their cages when the diggers entered the hollows. The mosses spread a strong but scentless gas that struck the miners' brain and corrupted it instantly. The Khords took up their tools again and started digging out the hollows, forgetting their instructions, whatever they were. When more miners came searching for their mates, they too got poisoned and started on a mining frenzy.

The mad mining went on for weeks. Many miners died of exhaustion, so obsessed were they with their work. But whenever a body would fall, another poisoned Khord would take up the tools and continue. Eventually the Khordaldrum leaders realized their kin was disappearing rapidly at the bottom of the Lady's Veil. They sealed off the area after the last surviving, but now insane miners were rescued.

Thus, the Caves of Madness were created. It is now a labyrinth that no sane Khord dares enter. The bones of the unlucky miners that died there still lie scattered in the tunnels. Also, the gas spreading moss has grown over big parts of the Caves of Madness. The gas still roams freely in the tunnels and touches anybody foolish enough to come close.

### The Dark Wrist

A special and unpopular group of Khords made the tunnels of the Caves of Madness their home. They are members of the Dark Hand, a group of followers of the God D'hurgen. They have mapped the tunnels and learned how to evade the mosses. The Caves form a perfect hide out for this group of assassins, for they can retreat there, and have no fear of anybody following them.

Their base of operations is called the Dark Wrist, for a wrist is what makes a hand flexible and keeps it attached to the rest of the body. The Dark Wrist is located in one of the frenzied mines. Here several unfinished side tunnels form chambers that are used for several purposes. There are sleeping areas, more private for those higher in rank, but mostly shared. There is an office, where files are kept with contracts. Each contract is stored safely and for eternity. They will never be undone or unfulfilled. There is a main room that functions as a tavern, and finally there is a prison. This is mostly used for torturing, since the Dark Hand doesn't eagerly captivate people. But sometimes one of their own needs a little reminder of his faith.

Contact with the Dark Hand always happens in the Warrens. Although it is no secret where the Dark Hand resides, no Khord is allowed near the Dark Wrist. Even if one would be foolish enough to enter the Caves of Madness, the Dark Hand would kill on sight. Only members are safe, and members are few. One time in Khordal' history did the authorities try to catch the Dark Hand. But when the guards found the location of the Dark Wrist, the assassins had already left. Further pursuit through the caves would be giving in to the madness that named the place. The Dark Hand found a new headquarter and hasn't been bothered since.

## Credits

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