

contemplating sending additional Knights to Talabheim to bolster their small numbers and to help him monitor developments within the city.

THE KNIGHTS OF THE STAG

Proud and regal, the Knights of the Stag are a relatively new order. Shunning the open guerrilla-style of warfare best known by most Talabeclanders, the Knights of the Stag pride themselves on fighting in dense, highly disciplined units. Some accuse them of being more concerned with parade drills rather than fighting ability, though they have proven themselves time and time again when they take to the field of battle.

The Knights Stag are highly disdainful of the other Knightly Orders and consider themselves the true sons of Talabheim. With the recent disappearance of the Count, the ranks of the Knights of the Stag are in deep debate as to whom to show their loyalty. Whilst the Countess seems to be emerging as the successor, there are those that feel Count Feuerbach is alive and to divide attention would be harmful to both the order and the city as a whole.

TAAL'S CHOSEN

Taal's Chosen are an exclusive group of elite woodsmen that patrol the interior of the Taalbaston, particularly the Taalgrunhaar. They are vigilant in protecting pilgrims from the predations of bandits and hunt down the rare Mutant or dangerous beast that finds its way inside the interior of the crater. On rare occasions, they span outside the Taalbaston and patrol the Old Dwarf Road to the south.

In war, Taal's Chosen serve as scouts and commandos for the main army, though a detachment is left behind to ensure the safety of the sacred woods. They are masters of hit-and-run tactics, trap setting, and tracking. The members of Taal's Chosen disdain any sort of uniform but wear a stag hide draped over their shoulders to indicate their status.

The current leader of Taal's Chosen is Joerg Hafner, a fearsome warrior and tracker without peer. He prefers the trackless wilds to city living, but his duties as commander for both Taal's Chosen and the city militia keep him embroiled in politics more than he likes. Hafner maintains good relations with the Knights Stag and considers them true brothers in arms.

THE PRIESTHOOD

The Priests of Taal are easily the largest contingent in Talabheim. Indeed, the city boasts a higher number of Priests per capita than most other cities. The clergy claims this is because of the large number of faithful present—critics claim it's because the Priests are exempt from paying the exorbitant taxes on alcoholic beverages that form an important part of their rites. The Priests of Taal split their time between the city and the Taalwelt to the east, where the true Temple of Taal sits. Their rites are conducted in secret, except for the occasional practitioner of Taal's creed.

The Temple of Verena, located in the heart of the Law Quarter, is the second largest in the city. They help manage Talabheim's immense legal bureaucracy and ensure the laws are just. So far, they are fighting an uphill battle.

Much to the dismay of the Emperor, the Cult of Sigmar does not have a strong hold within Talabheim. Its temple is relatively small

NEW CAREER: HORNED HUNTER

The rites of Taal demand great physical, emotional, and mental fortitude for its practitioners. Some see the trappings of civilization—cities, courts, and the like—as a failing in the interpretation of Taal's will. The Horned Hunters are deeply zealous and shun the city. Unlike Taal's Chosen, the Horned Hunters give up much in the way of a material life. They shun normal clothing and armour and wear animal skins, loincloths, or less. Part of their initiation into this group is to undergo extensive tattooing, covering their chest and face. Horned Hunters prowl the woods both within the Taalbaston and throughout Talabecland and claim allegiance only to Taal. While they lack the fiery rhetoric of most zealots, they are still fervent in their beliefs and believe that conversion comes from actions, rather than words.

—Horned Hunters Advance Scheme—

Main Profile

WS	BS	S	T	Ag	Int	WP	Fel
+5	+5	+10	—	+5	—	+10	—

Secondary Profile

A	W	SB	TB	M	Mag	IP	FP
—	+3	—	—	—	—	—	—

Skills: Concealment, Follow Trail or Set Trap, Perception, Scale Sheer Surface, Secret Language (Ranger Tongue), Secret Signs (Ranger), Silent Move

Talents: Frenzy, Hardy, Fleet Footed or Very Resilient

Armour: Light Armour (Leather Jack)

Armour Points: Head 0, Arms 0, Body 1, Legs 0

Weapons: Great Weapon (Two-handed axe)

Trappings: Anti-toxin kit

Career Entries: Initiate (of Taal), Scribe

Career Exits: Hunter, Militiaman, Outlaw, Scout, Vagabond

and tucked away in an obscure corner within the God's Row. However, those that follow its tenants are known for their utter devotion and fervent behaviour. In order to bolster their numbers, the Priests of Sigmar from Middenheim and Altdorf send more proselytisers to gain more converts.

THE WIZARDS

The Jade Order is easily the most powerful magical faction in Talabheim, and unlike most cities, it works closely with the Priesthood. An appointed Magister Lord advises the Countess and Parliament and preserves the abundant wilderness within the Taalbaston from over development. In times of war, the Magister Lord coordinates Magister reinforcements for the militia to shore up defences, though the currently appointed Magister Lord, Dieter Vogt, dislikes getting too involved in the machinations of the Hunters' Council.

The Amber Order runs a close second in representation of Magisters in Talabheim. Few spend time within the city proper, instead practicing their arts in the Taalwelt where wild beasts still run free. A tale persists of an elderly, and crazed, Amber Magister that commands the rats of the city with a flute.

During the Storm of Chaos, many of the city's Magisters left to help stem the tide. Like the soldiers, they are slowly trickling back into the city. Among those who have returned, the scars of the invasion are quite pronounced, and more than a few have retreated into the Taalgrunhaar for treatment and solace by their fellow Magisters.

THE BOATSMEN'S LEAGUE

The Talabec River is a vital part of Talabheim. The broad, slow streams of this mighty river bring pilgrims, trade, and food in and out of the city. The Boatsmen's League is a powerful lobbying group that represents various captains, ship owners, and businesses that ply the waters of the Talabec. They fight for the reduction of tariffs and taxes imposed on cargo. They establish new sources of trade with settlements up and down river and settle disputes between boat captains and land-based middlemen.

— TALABHEIM'S BIZARRE TAXES —

The nobles and statesmen of Talabheim want to keep their coffers full, regardless of the state of things in the world outside the Taalbaston. One way they keep the Schillings flowing is by taxing almost every conceivable thing. In a city famous for its adherence to law, the overabundance of taxes is not particularly surprising. Most common transactions see some manner of taxation, much as they do in other cities throughout the Empire; yet, that is where the similarities between the tax codes of the rest of the Empire and Talabheim end.

A good many of the city's taxes seem frivolous to outsiders, and they make trade and travel within Talabheim especially expensive for merchants. Despite this, the Talabheimers have grown used to the way things are done, and they rarely make a fuss—even when their precious alcohol is taxed. The majority of the most expensive taxes affect outsiders, or such is the general consensus in the city. This, of course, is untrue; the manner and mode of taxation on imported trade goods means they are likely to be much more expensive than they would be otherwise.

The Talabheimers, especially the wealthiest burghers, have grown adept at exploiting loopholes in the local tax code. Even the lowliest farmer knows the ins and outs of some of the city's more esoteric fees, and so they are paid less often than would normally be the case. Outright tax evasion, though uncommon, is still known to happen. Those caught depriving the city of its coin, however, are subject to brutal penalties. To the lords of Talabheim, failing to pay taxes is akin to sedition.

THE HAT TAX

In the year 2468, Talabheim passed a tax on entertainers. At the time, it was felt entertainers, from street corner minstrels to stage actors, were layabouts who failed to contribute anything of worth to the city. As such, entertainers were expected to contribute a separate tax on any income they made through the practice of their craft. Any income based on the charity of others, such as donations dropped into a fiddler's hat, were also subject to this taxation.

Most merchants, however, consider the League to be nothing more than a front for criminals. The League has been accused of everything from piracy to extortion—a League strike could bring traffic and the flow of goods into the city to a near grinding halt. The current leader of the Boatsmen's League, an enormous Ostlander named Jens Leonhard, is known to rule his organisation with an iron fist. Lieutenants and business rivals that displease him are often found roped to the bottom of a random flatboat.

THE JUDGES

Talabheim is mired in thousands of laws, some of which are ancient beyond compare. Although the city swarms with litigants that help interpret these laws, it is up to the judges to enforce them. Talabheim boasts a large number of roving judges, the kind commonly found wandering the wilds of the Empire. These city judges patrol the streets and are empowered with making rulings and punishments on the spot. The general populace rightly fears them. Though every citizen is allowed a chance to argue their case before the courts, most lack the political clout to convince the roving judges of this right.

Though several decades have passed since the tax was imposed, it remains on the books to the present day. Many of Talabheim's councilmen have put forth motions to expand the tax to include revenue from pit fights, and action is expected on this matter in the coming months. There have also been arguments that taverns and gambling dens are places of entertainment and that their profits should also be subject to the tax. Such a levy would be in addition to the many taxes already imposed on establishments in relation to the libations they serve to customers, making them very unpopular with tavern owners and carousers alike.

LIGHTHOOF LEVY

Visitors who enter Talabheim through the Wizard's Way can expect to pay extra coin for mounts that are not being ridden. For each extra mount past the first, travellers must pay a Penny. The official reasoning for this is that grazing land within the crater is limited, though most folk view the tax as an excuse to gouge visitors for more money. Draft animals are exempt from the tax, as are pack animals.

ORPHAN TAX

In order to subsidise Talabheim's three public orphanages, the city has continued to levy a small tax on poultry that is bought or sold within the city or in outlying Taalagad. The tax only applies to the sale of living animals, and most merchants get around it by twisting the neck of the fowl in question just prior to making a sale (often while uttering, "For the orphans!").

THE SHORT SHRIFT

Halfings are not particularly welcome in Talabheim, nor are imports from the craftsmen of the Moot. Halfings are considered to be indolent, gluttonous, and crooked, and Talabheim's citizens have always viewed shipments from the Moot with suspicion. The Short Shrift was established during Pie Week of 2504, making this a relatively recent addition to the city-state's tax code. It establishes that