



DUN MELEA REGIONAL PACKET

A game resource for the Tales of Valor LARP
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DUN MELEA

*Kingfisher waits in his web of deceit
Herons are searching, not using their feet
Ravens know nothing, of very few things
Magpies bring knowledge with paper clad wings
Cormorants chase you, through blood, pain and strife
Mockingbirds find you, to let out your life*

-Birds of Dun Melea, a children's rhyme

Dun Melea is a land of many contradictions. The inhabitants are some of the most excruciatingly polite people you will ever meet ... to a point. And after that point, they are some of the most foul-tempered, easily slighted, high-strung bastards that ever knifed a boon comrade in the back.

Some say the hereditary quick violence of the Dun Meleans comes from the fact that the finest grapes in Jhoril grow there. Some say that Melea was originally colonized by a washed-ashore group of criminals from a semi-successful prison break. Still others keep quiet ... lest a Dun Melean hear their idle speculation and take offense. Whatever the reason, it is an accepted fact that your average Dun Melean doesn't hold a grudge: he grasps it firmly and squeezes it with both hands until all life has totally fled, and then animates it and starts again.

However, don't get the idea that living in Melea or dealing with its people is a threatening proposition. In fact, the people of the principality are polite and charming, and genuinely friendly and hospitable to all they meet. After all, their people are amongst the best traders in Jhoril, and corpses aren't good customers. Nor are people who are scared to death to talk. SO the legendary Melean temper is mostly let out on other Meleans. No wonder Melea is the home of the Dueling Guild.

LEXICON

Melea's old tongue is a melodic and poetic language, well suited to the fiery nature of her inhabitants. Most conversations tend to sound like arguments, even if the subject is bland. However, few now speak it, since common is so necessary for trade, and its only real impact is in the accent it lends to many of Melea's children. However, some of the old words are still used in political positions, fighting units and styles, and even a few common words and phrases.

- **Coruscu**- A specialized type of duel occasionally practiced by the idle rich of Melea.
- **Condottiere**- A group of highly trained Melea mercenaries typically headed by young nobles.
- **Fattucchiera**- A wizard, specifically one trained at the Secta Artifex
- **Contadino**- One who works the land, or a farmer.
- **Barchetta**- A small boat used to travel the canals of most Melean cities.
- **Scuola Scherma**- A fencing school where arts of the sword are taught.

NOBILITY

Melea is ruled by the Merchant Prince, currently Alfonso D'Este. His advisory council is made up of the heads of the 13 great houses, mostly Marquises, with some Counts among them. Lesser nobility consist of Viscounts and Lords.

There are thirteen houses large enough to be considered 'great houses'; Balaeric, Sforza, Ferrara, Vencini, Adagio, deBer, L'Escobar, Montrose, Rinzoni, (Marquises) Decameron, Barbiano, Kaiba, and Veroche. (Counts) Nine of the thirteen houses are led by a Marquis, four by a Count. The children of a Marquis are Viscounts; the children of Counts are Lords. A Count has higher standing than a Viscount. In addition, either a Count or a Marquis can 'Adopt' children, giving them the same status as their own children. This happens frequently, along with the disowning of the previously adopted, and possibly the disowning of real children. A new prince is 'elected' upon the death of the previous prince in a popular election so full of graft, bribery, and dishonesty that the new prince basically buys his office, and is usually from one of the nine houses with Marquises. Rarely, one of the other great houses wins.

The almost overwhelming dominance of the Marquis-led houses stems from the fact that only a Marquis is allowed to sanction new ventures on his own; a Count requires the backing of a Marquis to do the same. So if a new market opens up, it is almost always a Marquis who has his fingers in the pot first.

Only once in the history of Melea has a non-great house member won the election. He was a mercenary captain who used a combination of his funds from mercenary work, blackmail from the secrets he knew from the same work, and outright threats to lever himself into office. His first act was to open sanctions to all houses, and not just the Marquises. His second act was to be stabbed to death on the council hall floor by his own guards. No one since then has even tried.

EXPLORED

The White City

Dun Melea itself is a (literally) shining example of the stone-crafters art. Each building is sheathed in white marble, and a bright afternoon can be deadly to the sight of unwary travelers. Fortunately, the afternoon is a time of rest and relaxation in Melea, so few are subjected to its dangers. As an unknown quipster once stated; "If you've seen Dun Melea in the sun, you'll never have eyes for anything else." Between the canals and the white marble of the city, it is a sight to behold at sunrise or sunset.

The Isles of Beauty

These idyllic islands are the home to the majority of the populace of Melea. It is said that these islands are the inspiration for much Melean poetry, but in reality the people who populate the islands are more than enough inspiration for Melean poets.

Stormswatch

This sleepy town on the westernmost island of Dun Melea is home to the As Brile, which is the name for the grounds of the Secta Artifex. Second and third children who cannot form a condottiere often travel to As Brile to study at the Collegium Magicas there. The local inhabitants laugh and chide the mages for their 'lazy ways'; but when Tærran galleys were sunk

by magical fires launched by those fattucchiera early in the war the simple fishermen appreciated their presence.

Castelbuzo

This bustling trade hub is the largest Melean city on the mainland. It was quickly overcome by the Legio II Pango Honoratus in 1000. Now rebuilding itself from a quarter century of Tærran occupation it is slowly reclaiming its place as the overland trade hub to the southlands and north from Tærus proper. It is the home of the newly reformed Melean military headed by the Merchant Prince (derisively termed the seashells by professional armies worldwide).

Manchia

Across the river from the Haventhal city of Giroux, this Melean city is well known as one of the more dangerous civilized cities in Jhoril. Duels take place at all hours of the night, and the cities guiltier pleasures often leave bodies floating in the river come dawn. Recently removed of Tærran occupiers the city is attempting to reclaim some of its former standing as a trading hub although a generation of war has left its inhabitants scarred and scornful.

The Palatine Isle

This semi volcanic isle welcomes almost no visitors to its shores. From sea a single dormitory building can be seen and sometimes the shapes of the strange aesthetics that live there can be seen walking around the island. Once a month a single ship lands at the small dock and quickly loads and unloads cargo then leaves. Those who have thought the isles' inhabitants to be easy pickings are disabused of their notions by the strange fauna and flora found near the coast.

HISTORY AND CULTURE

Duelists Guild

The Duelists Guild is probably the best-known thing to come out of Dun Melea. With chapterhouses all over Jhoril, there are few who haven't at least seen some of their silver armband-clad members. The structure of the guild is limited to the adjudicators who judge matches, and all of them are equal in the eyes of the guild except for three Master Judges who decide disputed rulings. There is an informal set of 'rankings' among the fighting members of the guild, but they are used mostly for betting purposes. Membership in the fighting portion of the guild is open to anyone, but the process of admission weeds out the chaff fairly easily. In order to join, you must participate in a duel with a member, and the member must decide to offer you the chance to join the Guild. Simple but effective, it both keeps the guild limited to those who can impress a member, and also cuts down on the deaths of members, since if you want to join, you can't very well kill the member you challenge. Membership as an adjudicator is offered by adjudicators to those they see as worthy to hold the post, and must be approved by three other judging members.

The guild doesn't have a great deal of influence in Dun Melea, let alone Jhoril at large, but being a member commands a great deal of respect. The mystique that goes with the silver armband is much sought after, and each year many are maimed or killed in the pursuit of it. Rumor has it that two of the aspects of Death were once duelists, and perhaps still are.

It is an unspoken rule that no Merchant Prince may remain a duelist upon succeeding to the throne.

Testament Guild

Not much is known about the Testament Guild, despite their heavy involvement in Dun Melean daily life. They keep records of all adoptions and disownments, and the complete family trees of every great and lesser house. In addition, they keep track of the families of the common folk if such records are given to them. However, they only meet with the public through a very heavily guarded and armored grate, and limit their discussions to business. They are reputed to be absolutely incorruptible, which is a rarity in Dun Melea, and they have kept that reputation for hundreds of years. While they obviously hire new staff at regular intervals, the methods of application are unknown. It is assumed that a portion of those who go missing in Dun Melea each year are brought into the guild, but there has never been any report that an unwilling subject was taken by them, so presumably they have some method they just aren't talking about. The Testament Guild holds such sway over the great houses that they forbid anyone to make inquiries regarding the Guild.

The Kingfishers

The kingfishers also hold many secrets. Many citizens outside of Dun Melea have never even heard of them, but they are reputed to operate all over Jhoril. They are the secret police of Dun Melea, and they have a name for sudden and effective violence. While little is known about the organization even amongst Dun Melean society, it is well known to the Great Houses how they are funded. Each candidate for Merchant Prince must pay them an extremely hefty fee for the privilege of running, whether they win or lose. The one who wins must pay an additional fee each year to keep the kingfishers operational. What other sources of income they have, that alone makes them the best-funded intelligence organization outside of Tærus. However, despite the source of their funding, they have no obligation to report to, or even follow orders from, the Merchant Prince. They are totally autonomous, and work only towards the defense of Dun Melea from any threat. Like the Testament Guild, they are reputed to be apolitical and incorruptible, but it is hard to tell, since no one is quite sure who the members of the organization are. They are known to operate in a cell-like structure in which the cells report to loosely organized bureaus that cover different responsibilities of area and knowledge. People who ask too many questions about the Kingfishers tend to disappear.

Condottiere

Back when Dun Melea was still growing as a nation, the Count da Barbiano was possessed of a multitude of sons. It was getting to the point where the land couldn't be divided up much more than it was already and still produce enough for a gentleman to live on, so he was presented with a quandary. Should he divide it up still further, and risk the impoverishment of his children, or should he disown some of them to set aside more for the others? Fortunately for the Count, (who was fond of all of his children) his second-youngest son Alberigo came up with a third option. He prevailed upon the Marquis de Ber (a foul man, but with a good eye for business) to sanction a new venture. The Marquis would provide him with armaments and armor for fifty men to form a Condottiere, the land mercenary's equivalent of a privateer. A contract was drawn up between Alberigo and the Marquis to set down who got what share of what, and the first Condottiere was sent out of Dun Melea to see what they could bring back.

They lived off the land, easier to do in those wild times after the Shadow War, and they made a name for themselves quickly as a tough bunch. They would hire out to budding colonies

or companies as guards, or hire out to attack the same, or even just go raiding on their own. Within a short time they were pure profit for the Marquis de Ber, who started asking around for other discontented younger sons to do the same. The other Marquises also began looking around, and the place of the Condottiere in Dun Melean history was assured.

At times the Condottiere have been everything from raiders to a home defense guard. In recent times they have avoided the former in an attempt to keep Dun Melea on the other nations' good sides. Mostly they are hired to guard areas or as mercenary adjuncts to a military move by one of the other nations.

Condottiere are usually thought of as simple mercenaries by the other nations, but there are several important differences that should be noted. One: Condottiere will not act against Dun Melea, no matter what the pay being offered is. Two: Condottiere are generally better equipped and led than most mercenary companies, and therefore more effective. And, finally, three: Condottiere are much more noted than mercenaries for doing jobs on whim rather than for reasons of financial gain. Because they are led by hot-blooded noble sons of Melea, they have been known to attack or not attack depending on the personal desires of their commanders. Not that they will refuse to follow orders once they take a job, but rather that their selection of jobs and the pay rates they ask for them are far more mutable.

The Realm War and Tærran Occupation

In 10010 the Tærran Legions spearheaded by the Legio Pango Honoratus overran the lightly defended Melean cities on the mainland. Melea itself was never truly threatened since naval superiority was quickly established by Dun Haventhal over the ocean. For 24 years Meleans have known aught but oppression and strife. The beautiful villas above Castlebuzo served as Tærran headquarters while hobnailed Legionnaires maintained order in the city streets. Towards the Haventhal border, things quickly degraded and most of Manchia is a war-torn ruin.

Meleans resisted the Tærran occupation tooth and nail, but they were never seriously capable of threatening the military precision which the legions oversaw the conquered territories. Resistance fighters on the mainland died, while their cousins on the isles tried to figure a way to dislodge the invaders. However the Tærran rule was not overly harsh. Life continued as normal with a few more laws and a lot more soldiers.

The first cracks began to appear when command of the Dun campaign was awarded to Emperor Spurius Lusius Ligur. Troops from the Legion of Imperial Reapers were often found dead in their bunks with throats slit. Legionnaires began to whisper that the ghosts of Meleans whom their fathers had killed were coming to seek the vengeance they were due. Such things occurred until the decisive engagement at Hawk's crossing was fought between the Legio IV Messor and the allied troops of the north.

LEGENDS

Prince Baldassare de Callient

Also known as Prince Baldassare Stolto, his first act as prince was to open sanctions to all houses, and not just the Marquises. His second act was to be stabbed to death on the council hall floor by his own guards. He reigned from 11 Waiting 321 to 12 Waiting 321.

Zatini the Mad

One of the most insightful or insane alchemists currently walking the face of Jhoril. He is known for ranting and raving, and sometimes his words have just enough clarity to be worth listening to. Currently his whereabouts are unknown, although a group of people following around their 'prophet' are searching around Melea for him.

Secta Artifex

The Secta Artifex traces its origins to Taer. Taer once boasted the Secta Imperium a single school dedicated to the study of magic through creating and solidifying formulae. In 248 NE a schism in philosophy split the school and the Secta Formalis and the Secta Artifex were formed. The Secta Formalis stayed in Taer and the Secta Artifex moved to Dun Melea where it took home in As Brile in the town of Stormswatch.

Alfonso D'Este

The current Merchant Prince ascended to the throne in a bloody affair during the summer of 1015. Aberginno Rinzoni died in a food riot in the White City in the early summer, and after a few months of chaos and political back dealing Alfonso D'Este sat atop the throne of Melea. He is a man who is known for his strong beliefs and military astuteness. His supporters say that he is just the man to rebuild Melea into the kingdom that it once was; while his detractors point toward the marks and bodies that led to his coronation.

Kaiba and Decameron Trading Company

During the Realm war only one Melean merchant enterprise flourished: The Kaiba and Decameron Trading Company. The heads of the houses of Kaiba and Decameron forged an enterprise built on their friendship and similar ideals. It is said that together they have the endurance of the Firbolg, the sagacity of the Sidhe and the panache that only a Melean could be possessed of. Others accuse them of war profiteering and running extensive black markets during the occupation, but such detractors quickly become reticent.

OTHER RACES

With the adoption practices of the Dun Melean nobility, it is very easy for other races to fit right in, especially those who are rich. Many a Freilan has bought himself a temporary home from one of the great houses in order to rest from his wandering, and many a Sidhe has been adopted to use their insight in the constant political maneuvering that goes on. All of the great houses have multiple races or regions represented, and most of the lesser are the same. Dun Melea is also interesting in the fact that groups of similar race or nationality have less of a tendency to band together in enclaves away from the main populace. Whether it is a factor of the people who live there or the people who are drawn to move there, Dun Melea is a place where every one has an equal chance at life ... and in many cases, an equal chance at death.