**AYLWARD Elves**

The First Lesson ~ ‘*We are an ancient culture, older it seems than time, though much of our nobility and glory has been lost and forgotten. But our traditions remain, those rituals and practices which keep us connected to our Mother and Father, that which makes us guardians of both the spirit and of the earth.*

*Ghee, The Mother, created the Earth (Daearen) and all beings upon it, but these did not live save by her will. This saddened Her greatly, as she had to exert control over her every creature even to pull in breath lest they sicken and die. And so her first creations, pure slaves to her will, vanished forever. Noriban saw the grief of Ghee and gave of himself unto the fleshly beings she thereafter created, gave of his holy spirit, and thus sentient beings were bought into the world. Then how the abundance of Ghee flowed forth and the world was awash with green and blue seas teeming with those who swim, azure skies filled with those fly, and the multi-hued land trampled and made anew by the feet of those who walk and run.*

*Noriban saw how fragile the world was even so, and for him Ghee created 13 children into whom he gave the most part of himself. These were his children and the first sentient children of Ghee, tasked with the ownership and guardianship of the Earth and all things upon it and within it. Ghee created for them islands (Tala), upon which they roamed the vast seas. Noriban created for them great citadels of living stone (Talamos) upon the islands, so that they might have a home. Great shining spires of marble and pearl that reached for the heavens themselves. He taught the 13 of the rites of sacrifice and worship, of the pure deep magic to channel the powers of the Gods all for the good of the Earth and its denizens. He gave them names, thought and speech, a fair form and seeming so that others would trust them, and instilled in them a deep love for the Earth and a reverence for the Gods within it.*

*These guardians, the first Aylward travelled to the lap of Ghee to take charge of those of her children who came after. Nurturing them to independence and setting them forth upon the land to live free. These people were the Lords of The Sea, the Tiarna Cai . Some of the Aylward remained with these lesser children of the Earth as protectors and teachers. These people were the Lords of the Earth, the Tiarna Danaan, and their failure, sealed the doom of all those who came after.’*

**The City of Sca’lan**

 **Due to the Death of King Carvelli at the Battle of Seragol and the young age of his son, Queen Argosha rules the City. The young Prince Uri must wait till he comes of age before he can claim the thrown and be crowned King of Sca’lan and the Aylward of Bara’ghost.

At Seragol, Sca’lan took huge casualties and its army was almost wiped out, only one of its 7 regiments survived to carry their dead king home. In the final stages of the battle the sons and daughters of Seragol banded together and formed a last defence for the retreat to the Still Marshes. 300 of the 5000 strong Sca’lan army and 2000 refugees of Seragol made it to the safety of Harkers Lodge. Sca’lans mourning lasted a year and the Seragol people returned to a long lost dwelling in the Mountain and embraced their ancient heritage, as those that live under the mountains.**

**It is** very rare for Elves to take Kingship and rule and it was not one taken lightly. Argosha and her Sworn Sword, Carvelli arrived a year after the fall of Leomass, the Aylward knew a Third War of Ascension would follow him and emissaries would be needed to decided if more Elves should follow. It was clear after being there only 6 months that something was desperately wrong with new King of the Dane’s, Dirkrim, who had been given the thrown by his father, Luther’dane. King Dirkrim was twisted by greed and glory and slowly lost the support of the rest of the Dane Clans. At the same time, new temples worshipping Goul, a Shepard of Ascension began to flourish all over Garde and supported by the old King, Luther’dane as the head of its order. Argosha immediately dispatch Carvelli back to the west and to return with a fleet of ship and an army. She believed Goul, like Leomass, was a Shepard of Thodan and the ascension and not a God, but if people worshipped him, he could gain god like power. She believed he was in league with Leomass after he was cast from the Hall’s of Thodan and was playing a part in all this treachery.

By the time Carvelli returned, the whole of Garde was in civil war and the Danes where broken. By now, Argosha had travelled to the city of Bara’gon’din and began to advise the Kings that evil was returning to the world. Carvelli had only been granted 12 ships, one for each of the gods and only 300 elves to each ship. They had to fight their way across Garde to reach her in Bara’ghost as it was and they lost hundreds on the way. As the years went on and Garde fell entirely to the Legions forces, Argosha realised they would be stuck here a very long time. The Dwarves had come down from the North and negotiated a deal with the Kings for the City of Seragol and in time, reluctantly, the Aylward accepted the ancient and might temples of the Gods in Sca’lan and became rulers in their own rite. Carvelli reluctantly assumed the role of King and Argosha, the Queen. The Aylward settled and began to have families with the Humans and the Aylward bloodline thinned. The new Elves didn’t live as long as the pure ones and so the High Aylward ruled, whilst their children became their soldiers and their wards.

**History of the Elves**

The Aylward were the first sentient race created by ‘The Mother’ Ghee and ‘The Father’ Noriban. They were tasked with settling the entire earth with the rest of Ghee’s creation, from the mightiest mammal to the smallest lichen. It is not known how many Tala were created by Ghee, to act as havens from the encompassing seas for her creatures, but Noriban raised elegant cities of towers and shining arches for the Aylward to reside in. There they gave names to all Ghee’s creation and travelled the world to find homes for each of them according to their need and ensuring that they could live harmoniously together. The Tala however could not venture too close to the shores for fear of creating great tides and drowning the lands around them. So the Aylward became learned in shipbuilding and took great joy in travelling upon the seas in all manner of craft, from great Fhada (frigates) to Currach (single man racing skiffs). They built dwellings upon the shore, anchorages for their craft while they explored inland. They named these havens An Diadan and their architecture mirrored the great Talamos of the wandering islands. No race has ever been so accomplished as the craft of the first Aylward.

Over time some of the Aylward settled permanently in the An Diadan. So great was their love for Ghee’s creations, and so fierce their need to protect and guide that they wished to remain close and did not return to the Tala and their kin. And greater still was the love of others of the Aylward that they remained with the flora and fauna and began to take on aspects so that they embodied Ghee’s creations, and thus the fae were born.

The changing of the Aylward towards the myriad fae seeming began the first rift in this noble race. There were those who recognised that it was the unbalancing of the Mother flesh and the Father spirit within the Aylward that bought about these changes, and saw this as a willing corruption of their gift of life. The fae changelings disagreed, stating that the unchanged Aylward were afraid of embracing the true meaning of the task that was set before them, that the embodiment of one of Ghee’s creations was the purest form intended. True guardianship could only be obtained by living within and becoming part of creation.

 The Tiarna Danaan, in the innocence and arrogance of their appointed task, for a time had Lordship over the Earth to a greater and lesser extent. Their greatest mastery was over the human races and they were benevolent Masters, if somewhat aloof. They shared all but the greatest secrets of their magic and craft, and became frustrated at the lack of understanding shown by the younger races. They became too immersed in being Tiarna Danaan and lost sight of their true purpose. As the younger races matured they sought mastery over their own fates and wished for land and cities of their own to rule and create each according to their gifts. Strife came then, between the older and the younger children of Ghee, and for a time they were parted.

The fae never hid from the Earth, but remained wholly within it, living in perfect harmony with the creation of their love, dryads within their trees, Satyrs of the plains, sylphs in their shimmering pools. But the anger of a Mother bear in defence of her cub is eclipsed by the wrath of a dryad whose tree has been hewn for firewood, or the sylph whose stream is polluted by industry, and the younger races came to fear and distrust them. Blood was spilt and the fae gradually receded to the uninhabited corners of the world, some growing dark and bitter, twisted with hatred, others growing as aloof as their kin in the An Diadan.

It is not known what danger bought back the Tiarna Danaan and the fae into the world of their fellow humans. It is thought that the Gods were displeased with the relations among their children and set a challenge that forced them together, forced them to work together for the greater good of creation. What is known is that the fae sought their kin in the shining cities, who came forth with the magics needed by the struggling races. There was war, and famine, and pestilence. The dead were unnumbered. But the reuniting of all of the children of Ghee meant their assured survival. There are some who think the Tiarna Danaan, great keepers of histories even back to the days of the great seas, deliberately destroyed the records of that time. What great shame they may be hiding will now never be known.

Whatever the circumstances, it is not a lesson that the Tiarna Danaan have forgotten, to this day although they hold great knowledge they will only share with the younger races when they deem it necessary. They will come forward and fight when they deem the cause just. But they still bear the scars of the past and their aid and counsel is not easily obtained.

**Aylward Society and Culture**

The Aylward can be split into three distinct peoples, the Tiarna Cai, the Tiarna Danaan, and the Fae. The Tiarna Cai live in mighty citadels (Talamos) on large floating islands (Tala) traversing the seas with mysterious purpose. The Tiarna Danaan live in Harbour cities (An Diadan), providing anchorage for their ships. The Tiarna Danaan and the Tiarna Cai were the same people until the seas started to recede under the advance of the dust, and by this force they were sundered. The Tiarna Cai have become legends and it has been many ages since the water lapped the shores of the An Diadan. The Fae are Tiarna Danaan who have become so enmeshed with creation that they have joined it wholly, these are the dryads, sylphs, nymphs, and pixies of folk legend.

The Tiarna Cai and Tiarna Danaan are unique in that they are equal parts of the Mother and the Father, and this makes them speakers to the Gods. They are loosely ruled by a council of theocrats, priests and priestesses, who are themselves the heads of Noble families. There is no unifying authority apart from that derived from religious imperative, and each Noble House is a law absolute unto itself. This gives rise to the impression that the Aylward are capricious, but in actual fact each family live by very different codes as defined internally. Despite this they live relatively peacefully together, although disagreements are common they will never resort to conflict, the lessons of the past remain learned. They will always come together when threatened externally however, and it is a very foolish man who would awaken their wrath, for they do not stop when violently aroused. Punitive action is never taken lightly though, such decisions follow from lengthy councils and rituals seeking signs from the Gods. Even the fae will join with their distant kin against opposing forces. After the mistakes of their past the Tiarna Danaan focus entirely on preserving their meticulous records and knowledge’s, but also acting as arbiters and forces for change in the other kingdoms when they perceive a course of action or circumstances that might lead to disaster. They do not interfere or intervene lightly, but when they do a wise ruler listens and takes advice, for no other race in the world has more fully the ears of the Gods, as clear a view of the past and the future, or magics as powerful as the Aylward. As time has passed this power has waned, and the wounds of world multiply and become scars.

The An Diadan remain the home of the Tiarna Danaan. They no longer edge the great seas but are lofty citadels atop rocky outcroppings surround by deep channels gouged by the ancient waters long since dried up. They do not hold lands other than that which immediately borders the An Diadan and so are not classically a kingdom, but rather independent city states, wielding political, military, and magical might.

There may be many or few An Diadan in the known world, but even the Aylward do now know where they all are. Many of these cities have shut themselves away, hidden by powerful magics, while others remain very active in the affairs of the Earth. One such city is An-Toiseach, led by seven great houses, while its location is not secret it is not widely known and outsiders are seldom invited within its confines. The greatest house within An-Toiseach is not a noble house but an order of brothers and sisters who lead of ecstatic lifestyle, spending many hours in ritual and prayer, some even taking vows of celibacy, silence, or poverty for a time (or until some mysterious purpose has been achieved). They call themselves the Oraideach and among their number are some of the greatest living scholars and priests among the Tiarna Danaan. Dressed in the livery of muted sea greens and blues, they do not confine themselves to the airy rooms of their tall spires in the cities, but are often found in the outer world in pilgrimage. But what their real purpose for leaving their homes is no one really knows, and the Oraideach do not often share their motives even with other Aylward. It is members of the Oraideach who will most often avail themselves as teachers and counsellors to the other races, but they are not the only order or house to do so.

The magic of the Tiarna Danaan is powerful, but also incredibly subtle with the rites and rituals required taking hours, day, months, and even years depending on what is being asked for, for all magic comes to them as benevolence from the myriad deities of the world. They do not worship specific deities over others, apart from The Mother and The Father, for they appreciate the whole of creation. They come together each season to perform rites of worship and sacrifice to their creators, seeking to allow the flow of life across creation. But this magic is slowly failing, and creation is in decline. All the thought of the Tiarna Danaan is bent towards healing these wounds, but they are struggling to find the way.

The society of the Fae is incredibly different to the structured lives led by their distant kin. They have become so entwined with the earthly creations that the balance of their spirit has shifted and they have become more of The Mother than the Father. Although, like most of creation they look up to the Gods and offer prayer to The Father, they also physically embody the Mother. Above all things they are individuals, and are deeply affected by their environment, by the seasons, light and dark, and the scars of their past. Imagine an Oak tree, strong and growing during the summer yet slow and slumbering during the autumn and winter months. Yet there are those who have enduring vitality throughout the day and night and the course of the year, these individuals are more likely to have embodied the animal creations of The Mother such as the fauns with their goat like features, or the winged spirits of hidden glades. Some of these greater spirits may maintain courts and halls hidden away in secret places, others will come together as needed or as whim desires. It is in the Fae that the controlled capriciousness, arrogance, and distrustful nature of the Aylward hold sway. The Fae have lifelong friendships and will hold a grudge forever.

Some of these courts are widely known and are surrounded by legend and myth. It is now known if such creatures as Pan, Herne, and Orion are an individual with many names, individual beings in their own right, or an amalgamation of several entities blending into its own mythology with each telling. But the legends do agree on vast debauched courts full of dancing and the bloodthirsty sports, roaming the land and terrorising the unwary.

The nature of the Fae is in part the nature of the magic that they wield. A Fae’s magic is an exchange of their life force with that of another. A dryad gives of themselves to their trees and plants, and takes an equal measure in return, hence their taking on of plant-like aspects. This allows each party control and persuasion over the other, and this is the nature of geas (agreements) with the Fae. Geas increase in power the greater the life force exchanged, but also the caveats on the agreement increase. For example, a river fisherman may make a geas with a sylph to keep her streams teeming with life in return for which he and his family must forever guard and protect her waters. Almost anything can be accomplished, although just like their kin the effects are subtle and may take some time to manifest, through the power of geas. The consequences of breaking a geas can be annoying at best, for lowly agreements, to devastating, for the more powerful arrangements. The rituals required to create a geas between two individuals or groups vary depending upon the nature of the agreement, for example a sacrifice may be required or the parties simply tattooed.

**Attitudes**

The Tiarna Danaan very much see themselves as superior to the other races in every way. They blame the younger races for the devastation that has been wrought upon creation, for abusing the craft and secrets that were shared with them. They acknowledge that they failed as guardians and teachers, but feel this failure stemmed more from the incapability of their students and their lack of awareness of far reaching consequences. That this failing led to devastating events has caused the Aylward to become more aloof and distrustful of everyone else. They have an over-riding responsibility towards the world and its troubles but now take a more autocratic approach, dealing with individuals and Kingdoms as needed but keeping their motivations and strategies to themselves.

The Tiarna Danaan and the Fae do not agree on what is the best approach to the guardianship of creation. The Tiarna Danaan feel that the Fae have corrupted their gift and failed to maintain an objectivity over their appointed task. The Fae feel that the Tiarna Danaan have failed to understand the true nature of their task and are too timid to take the final step to be closer to creation. Neither side forget their kinship however, and will come to one another’s aid despite these differences.

The Fae tend to be distrustful and hostile towards everyone else unless they can prove they are not going to have a negative effect on their sphere of influence.

**Look and Feel**

The Aylward were first a seafaring people and favour simple practical clothing. High collars, tailored tunics, close fitting sleeves flaring at the wrists, cloaks and hood. They can be highly decorated with geometric patterns and of a variety of cloth depending on the season, linen, leathers, and furs are all prevalent. The colours favoured are the colours of the sea and sky in all her glorious moods, greens, blues, greys, and whites. Jewellery is prized and of particular note are the ear cuffs which result in a pointed appearance, gems are un-faceted and tend to be large and round or oval. Circlets and rings are also common, as are curling geometric patterns.

It should be noted that the Aylward are humans, they come in all shapes and sizes and hues, just like all the human races in the world. It is their culture, craft, and magic which separate them as first born.

The Fae clothing are as varied as the aspects that they take and are highly individual. They will always take from nature, leaves, feather, furs, and leathers abound. The colours are natural and tend to steer away from garish primary colours.

**Glossary of Terms**

An Diadan – The cities and anchorages of the Tiarna Danaan upon the earth

An Toiseach – A prominent An Diadan

Aylward – The Noble (Elf) Guard

Currach – A single sea worthy craft of the Aylward, commonly used for racing

Daearen – The Earth

Fae – Those of the Aylward who became so close to the earth and creatures that they changed form and seeming

Fhada – A large frigate type ship employed by the Aylward

Ghee – The Mother

Noriban – The Father

Oraideach – A religious ruling order found in An Toiseach

Tala – The Floating Islands, the first home of the Aylward

Talamos – The great stone cities on the Tala, created by Noriban for the Aylward

Tiarna Cai – The Lords of the Sea, those of the Aylward that lived in Talamos upon Tala

Tiarna Danaan – The Lords of the Earth, those of the Aylward that left Tala to live upon the earth

**Influences/Inspiration**

World of Darkness, Dark Ages Fae

The Dark Crystal

Labyrinth

Pan’s Labyrinth

Celtic and Gaelic mythology

Tolkien, the Teleri elves

Of all the races, we have made the Elves the hardest to play as we want to make sure the right people step up. No player can play a High Aylward, all will be Aylward half elves but treated as Elves all the same. The elves brief is finished, all you need to do is make sure you look the part, know your part and take part and have fun.

The use of jewellery and prosthetics to make themselves look like the ancient Aylward is used by many of the elves.  Low elves look almost like Men, but for their culture and personality and we’re NOT looking for smooth, thin faces and perfectly straight long hair! But you MUST make an effort to look smart at all times.