

BARSAIVE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!

Since the end of the Theran War, Barsaive has remained stable and at peace. But those peaceful days are ending, as events unfold that promise change and danger for Barsaive's people.

- The arrival of a city-sized stone airship marks the long-dreaded return of the Theran Empire to Barsaive, the first step in the Therans' scheme to reconquer the province they once ruled....
- The brutal assassination of King Varulus III brings Crown Prince Neden to the throne of Throal—an untried, hotheaded youth who begins his reign as king with a military assault against Theran forces in Barsaive
- A Theran magician's search for a young girl with mysterious powers draws the attention of Barsaive's great dragons, who want her for their own....
- A new ork nation slowly forms in southwest Barsaive, as orks from all across the province migrate to their new homeland. Once enslaved and long disregarded, the orks mean to claim power and respect at last

Prelude to War is a campaign supplement for Earthdawn. It describes four significant events occurring in Barsaive, each of which can form the core of a mini-campaign. Together, these four events create an Earthdawn epic that spells irrevocable change for Barsaive—and for the entire Earthdawn universe. Prelude to War is intended for characters of Fourth Circle and above, of any Discipline.



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PRELUDE TO WAR™

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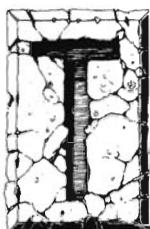
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INTRODUCTION



housands of years ago there existed an age of magic and high adventure—the age of **Earthdawn**. The power of magic flowed freely through the world, and people could draw on magic to perform both wondrous feats and everyday tasks. But the dawn of magic also brought Horrors to Earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, the people of Earth hid from the Horrors that devastated their land during the time that came to be called the Scourge. Now, the people of Barsaive have re-emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels to reclaim their world from the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire. From all across Barsaive, bold heroes arise to explore the world, search for magical treasure and slay the Horrors that still exist. Magicians spin the magical energies of the universe into powerful spells, and adepts use the magic to enhance their natural talents. Armed with magic, courage, skill and daring, Barsaive's heroes strive to heal the world of the scars left by the Scourge and to build their own legends.

Prelude to War is a campaign supplement that introduces four significant events that will change the face of Barsaive forever. Though each event's story line can be used on its own, the combined story lines form an epic-style **Earthdawn** campaign that places player characters in the forefront of Barsauvian history. The player characters' actions in these adventures shape the future direction of Barsaive. The story lines of **Prelude to War** designed to let players take a starring role in an epic tale of heroism and adventure, a tale in which the player characters themselves can forge the future of Barsaive.

Each of the four major-event story lines in **Prelude to War** is described briefly in the following paragraphs. More information is provided in separate sections of this book devoted to each story line.

The first story line, **The Theran Behemoth**, features the long-feared return of the Theran Empire to Barsaive. Spurred on by a number of recent events in Barsaive, the First Governor has initiated a plan to more firmly establish the Therans' position in the province and undertake a number of operations within Barsaive's borders. The plan involves landing a behemoth, the largest of the Theran airships, in central Barsaive and thereby instantly creating a fortified city.

The Therans land their behemoth atop the Hill of Ayodhya at the juncture of the Serpent and Coil Rivers, near Lake Ban. Upon their arrival, they announce the re-establishment of their historical alliance with the t'skrang House K'tenshin and immediately begin conducting slave raids, elemental-mining expeditions, and other offensive operations with the help of their t'skrang allies. The new Theran presence emboldens the K'tenshin, and soon the region's traditional opponents of the Therans and the K'tenshin are reeling under K'tenshin/Theran attacks. Eventually, a network of anti-Theran and anti-K'tenshin forces begin to stage an ongoing war against the Therans and their t'skrang allies.

Shortly after the landing of the behemoth, Throal's King Varulus dies at the hands of an assassin. This major development triggers a number of events described **The King Is Dead!**—Amid tension and turmoil in the Kingdom of Throal, Prince Neden assumes the throne and launches a near-disastrous assault against the Theran behemoth-fortress to avenge his father's death. The player characters, however, can expose Varulus's true killers—the dreaded Denairastas clan of Ipos, which is attempting to trigger a Theran-Throalic war as part of its own bid for power. At the request of King Neden, the characters track down the Denairastas assassin and finally confront the killer on a House Ishkarat riverboat at the Ishkaratan stronghold of Lake Vors.

In **The Dragons' Daughter**, Barsaive's great dragons contact the player characters. A Theran magician based at the new Theran stronghold has captured a young girl who is actually a unique drake-human hybrid; this child represents the best chance for the continued survival of dragonkind. The kidnapping threatens to escalate an ancient feud between the Therans and the great dragons, which could erupt into a major magical conflict at any time. Rather than risk such a conflagration, however, the dragons enlist the characters to recover the girl and capture the Theran magician.

In the final major story line, **Rise of the Ork Nation**, a charismatic ork travels the land issuing a call for a new ork homeland. In reply, orks from all across Barsaive begin migrating to the site of Cara Fahd, the ancient ork kingdom, in southwest Barsaive. Despite Theran treachery and their own internal divisions, the contentious groups of orks manage to forge a new ork nation—with the vital help of the player characters, of course.

Sample file





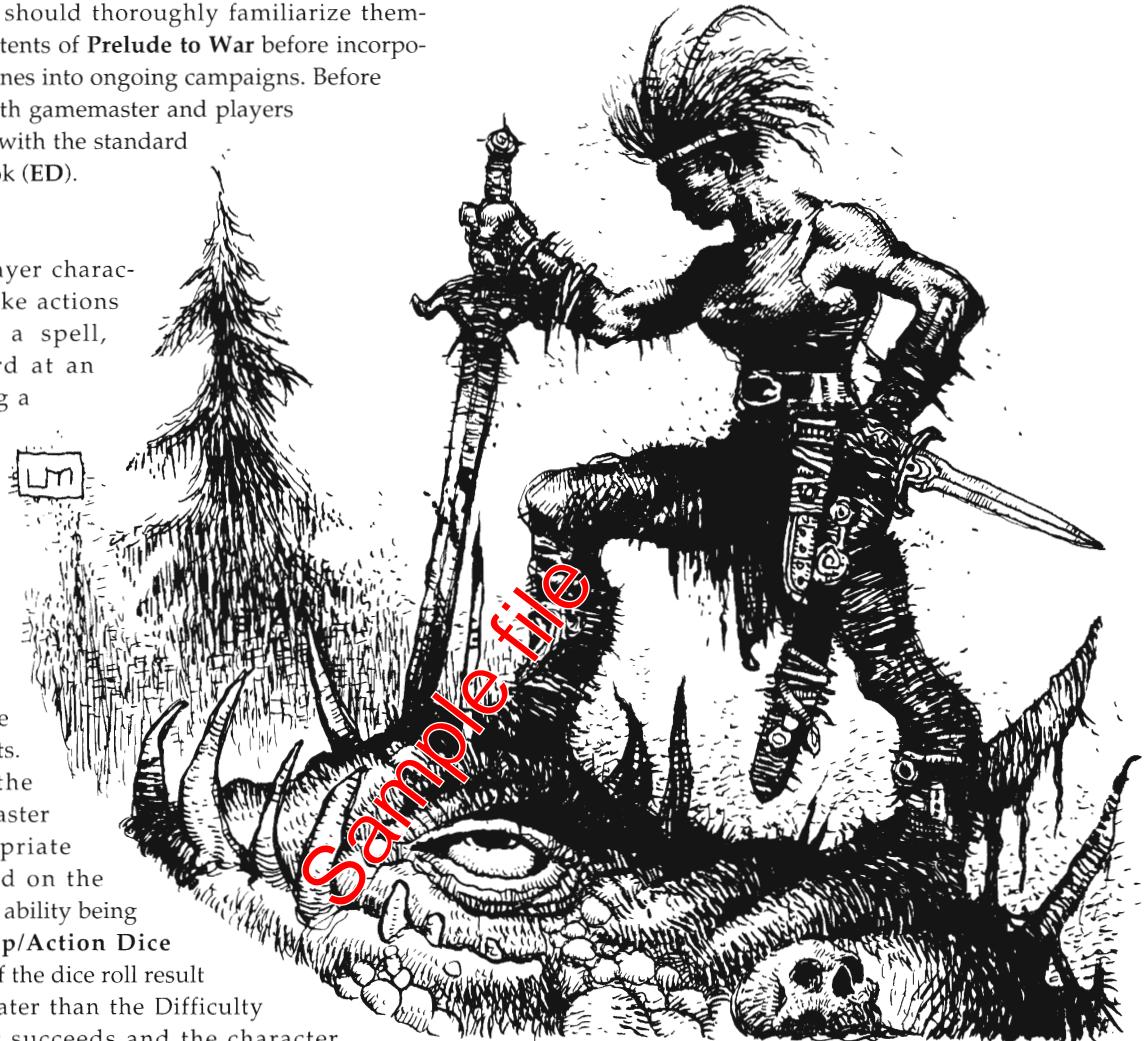
GAMEMASTERING NOTES

Gamemasters should thoroughly familiarize themselves with the contents of **Prelude to War** before incorporating these story lines into ongoing campaigns. Before using this book, both gamemaster and players should be familiar with the standard **Earthdawn** rulebook (ED).

MAKING TESTS

Whenever player characters attempt to take actions such as casting a spell, swinging a sword at an opponent, tracking a Horror or flirting with a barmaid, the gamemaster or the appropriate player rolls dice against a Difficulty Number to determine the action's outcome. These dice rolls are called tests. To make a test, the player or gamemaster rolls the appropriate Action dice based on the step number of the ability being used (see the **Step/Action Dice Table**, p. 36, ED). If the dice roll result is equal to or greater than the Difficulty Number, the test succeeds and the character accomplishes his action. If the result is lower than the Difficulty Number, the test fails and the character does not accomplish his action. In tests that deal with magic, the dice roll result often determines the duration of a magical effect as well.

Frequently, a test result determines not only success or failure, but the level of success. A test may have one of five success levels: Poor, Average, Good, Excellent, or Extraordinary. A Poor success level indicates failure that causes unpleasant side effects. An Average success—equal to or barely exceeding the Difficulty Number—means that the character just barely accomplished his action. A somewhat better dice roll yields a Good success, and a result close to double the Difficulty Number means an Excellent success. Achieving an Extraordinary success requires an even better roll. Any success level greater



than Average may give the character some gain for his actions or valuable extra information. The amount of gain for each success level is determined by the gamemaster unless otherwise noted.

In many cases when a player character must make a test, the required ability is noted, followed by the Difficulty Number of the task in parentheses. For example, a Perception (13) Test means that a player character must use his Perception ability against a Difficulty Number of 13.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Aside from the ED rulebook, **Prelude to War** contains everything required to run the adventures contained in the story lines. Additional background for the story lines appears in the following previously published **Earthdawn**

