

TRIUMPH LARP

**Greshal's  
Handbook  
4.0**

## **The Gre'shal of Lantai**

A Gre'shal is a humanoid being in Lantai, recognizable by their feline features and mannerisms. The Gre'shal have the natural grace one would expect from their appearance, and share other feline traits as well. They are often enigmatic...aloof but fiercely loyal, playful, but with the potential for violence lurking just under the surface. Honor is very important to the Gre'shal. Gre'shal have a life span of 150-200 years, and most approach life with an intense curiosity and passion for experiencing life.

There are two castes of Gre'shal, the warrior caste and the artisan caste. These castes are a matter of breeding, not of society. The warriors are bred in their line, and tend to be warriors, rangers, and the like. The artisan caste is smaller of build, and are often mages, clerics, and such.

This handbook, along with the class handbook of your choice, will help you to portray a character that will help drive an epic story which we call Triumph. This game is story-driven, and the more thought given to your character, the better your game experience will be. Welcome to Lantai, welcome to Fairhame, and may you Triumph.

This handbook is not meant to replace reading the manual...in fact, if you've not read the rulebook, you should put this handbook down and go do so now. OK...so you're back. Hope you enjoyed the rulebook. Now, let's talk about Gre'shal.

## **Physical Representation**

So, what exactly makes Gre'shal look like Gre'shal? The answer is feline features. If you're going to play a Gre'shal character in Triumph, you are required to represent feline features using makeup or good quality mask. There are no human-looking Gre'shal. If after your 3<sup>rd</sup> event you do not wear your minimal physrep and costume, you can still play, but will receive no Triumph Points. Note that this is a minimum physical representation...you can go further! You can always improve your look via prosthetics, ears, tail, mask, bodypaint/bodysuit, and more. The more feline you appear, the easier it is to portray a Gre'shal!

## **Racial Modifiers**

By choosing to play a Gre'shal, you receive some advantages and some disadvantages compared to others in the game. These racial modifiers exist to help characterize the race.

Gre'shal have clawed hands, and some are quite deadly with these natural tools. A Gre'shal of any class can use safety approved claw boffers which do 2 damage in combat. If a Gre'shal uses a weapon or weapons, they must choose the claws OR the weapon, the natural claws cannot be used to gain Florentine effects for free.

Gre'shal have the feline trait of 9 lives. Once and only once per day, a Gre'shal that has been killed may defy death, resurrecting at a Cauldron without having to reach for a stone, and thus bypassing the chance to truly die. This may be done only nine times in the Gre'shal's entire life.

A Gre'shal may not play a Bard class. Ever. The Gre'shal don't make good singers...at least not to the rest of the citizens of Lantai.

A Gre'shal of the artisan caste may not use two handed weapons.

A Gre'shal of the warrior caste pays double triumph for magic/scholar skills.

## Racial Traits

Each race has its defining qualities, or traits. This includes typical costume, common attitudes, traditions and ways of life, and natural tendencies. By playing to these traits, you are portraying a fairly typical member of the race. If you choose to ignore these traits, your character is probably quite uncommon...and might even be frowned upon by members of your own race.

Gre'shal have a deep respect of nature, and of its bounty. Even in cultured Unc'ial, the hunters have a sacred duty to perform. The Gre'shal are tolerant of other races, even friendly at times. Most Gre'shal will judge the individual, not the race or allegiance, and the artisan caste produces quite a few diplomats that maintain ties to other races and cities.

The city of the Gre'shal is Unc'ial, though they have many villages and hamlets throughout the Rrallr'katta Reaches of the Gidry Mountains. While the villages and hamlets have an almost tribal culture, the city of Unc'ial is refined, ruled by a mayor and council, with infrastructure and most amenities available.

In Unc'ial, society is quite polite, and crime is very low. Unc'ial has its ruling court, constables, huntsmen, crafters, metalsmiths, clothiers, carters, tradesmen, and merchants just as any other city. The architecture of Unc'ial varies between utilitarian and artistic fancy, and makes use of cunning stonework that seems to change appearance at night. There are some notable landmarks in Unc'ial: the Warrior's Academy, the Museum of Art and Hunt, and the Tower of Freyja, with its aerie of swallows atop its marble spire.

The villages are self sufficient, for the most part, possessing less trade with the outside world. The villages will send marketers to Unc'ial to retrieve durable goods that they cannot produce for themselves.

*Tips for Roleplaying a Gre'shal: Should maintain feline traits...watch a cat, or a jungle cat, and note their method of lounging, of striding, of pacing...and try to emulate this. Grammar is often different, and a Gre'shal might often refer to themselves as "this cat", or "this mage", etc...*

*Warrior Caste: Honor is life, and life for honor. The warrior caste is bred large, and should resemble one of the great cats (lion, tiger, puma, leopard, etc...). The warrior caste is trained to hunt, to fight, to work hard. Will care for their weapons and gear quite well. If from the tribes, might have some "rituals" to complete over a kill...giving praise to the warrior spirit, tapping the body with a blade, etc. Costume will vary, and tends more toward class than race, but allowing for freedom of movement. Gre'shal will typically favor speed over heavy armor.*

*Artisan Caste: The artisan caste is bred for brainpower, and should resemble a smaller cat (ocelot, lynx, shorthair, etc...). The artisan caste tends to dress in more finery than the warriors, and holds much of the knowledge of the race. Artisans have more curiosity than their warrior cousins, and will often seek to know how a thing works, or how a spell is cast, or what a member of another race feels and thinks about a situation, etc.*

*Costume should be more noble-ish, less armor, maybe some jewelry and other gear. If a cleric of Freyja, will likely have a set of "working robes" that features the symbol of the swallow, and a set of dress robes for formal occasions.*

### **Key Points in Gre'shal History**

Many millennia ago, the Dream reshaped the world of Lantai. It created the Gods, who lived upon and discovered Lantai's secrets. The Gods, in turn, Ascended, seeking a further enlightenment. Some of the Gods gave birth to Children of their own. In time, the younger races were given birth. The Gre'shal are one of these younger races.

The Goddess Fryja set about making children of her own, long ago. These children were stolen by the jealous God Stryde, and transformed into the goblinoid races. Fryja wept, and wherever one of her tears fell to Lantai, a huge glittering stone of amber was formed. Lugh, god of the sun, harvested these tears, along with many cats of the world. He used these to craft new Children for Fryja, and presented his gift to her with the dawning sun. Her joy was boundless, and the Gre'shal were given life.

The castes developed early in the race's history, when they were still living in tribes and caves. Their society flourished quickly under the attentive tutelage of their mother goddess, and as the Gre'shal made ties to the Tuatrans, Dwarves, and Elves, they began to build the city which would become Unc'ial. The Gre'shal prospered.

Approximately 3 thousand years ago, a very important visitor came to Unc'ial...an elf with a fantastic tale of a glittering stone of Amber found across the ocean, on the left continent. The priests of Fryja became excited, and sought communion with their goddess. She revealed to them the nature of the artifact, the one tear that Lugh had failed to collect, and she charged them to protect it. A group of nearly 500 volunteers sailed on the western wind, and the town of Yew was founded.

The Gre'shal continued to prosper, and built a few more cities in the Gidry mountains. Some 2 thousand years ago, war came to the Gidry mountains, as a cunning giant led a combined army of orcs and goblins to attempted conquest. The Gre'shal, Tuatrans, and Dwarves of Sundabal stood united against the threat, and over time were victorious.

Then came the Cataclysm. The mountains heaved, and a years-long winter settled into the Gidry mountains. Tribes were cut off from contact, and whole cities laid to waste. The only Gre'shal city that remained was Unc'ial. The Dark Times were hard on the Gre'shal, as the mountains crawled with strange monsters, Changebeasts, and Changelings.

In recent history, the Gre'shal have worked hard to rebuild their society, and now have begun to prosper again. They are still finding lost tribes in the mountains, and they have strengthened their alliances with Myth Celtor, Sundabal, and the Tuatran villages close by Unc'ial.

Now, in the present, the Gre'shal strive as we all do. The Savage Lands have become more dangerous, if that were possible. Orcs, goblins, trolls, and worse have become more and more common. Monsters long thought to be extinct, or mere fairy tales, have been sighted. The Oracles speak of dark days ahead. May we all triumph.

## GRE'SHAL TALES

*Move quietly, watch for sticks and leaves. Eyes and ears open. The woods speak to a cat if he will only listen. There, that flash of color. A foolish mage, and behind the rest of their party. Wait until the other cats round the bend, then take him out. They will not hear him fall for all the noise they are making. Which shaft? This one, it is keen and true.*

An arrow is set to string, a bow is drawn, a shaft takes flight...a cat dies.

*They did not see, they do not know. Quickly now, keep moving. Kill the intruders, punish them. The elders and the cubs rely on this cat, and this cat will not let them down.*

Again, an arrow is sent towards the invaders. A special tip pierces the enemy's armor, the shaft goes through a cat's heart. Another enemy falls, but this loss is noticed by the war party. They stop, they talk. Scouts head into the woods, looking for the archer who has already taken out two of their party and leaving only thirteen.

*They have all come, all the warriors of the Mre'fshal tribe. This day will be glorious for the Cre'lahalla. This day will be the end of our enemies, and this cat will be the hero of his tribe. We will control these lands, the ancestors will see us prosper and our enemies languish.*

The hunter moves, settling into the shadows as a scout searches the woods. A deadly game begins as the hunter evades his own prey. Continually moving and hiding in the shadows, the hunter kills them one by one. The arrows whisper through the air as they find their mark, the silence then pierced by the thump of a falling body and the gurgle of a dying cat.

*The blunt arrow, stun a cleric so he will not pray. Then find a cat and slit its throat on the ground.*

A special arrow flies, and a cleric is knocked unconscious. The hunter finds a cat in the woods, forgotten by her friends.

*This cat sends a cleric to Freyja, one of nine is taken.*

A throat is cut, no scream pierces the night air.

*More. Move. Wait for a shot. Use the potential within an arrow. Make a shot count.*

A special arrow is set to flight. It finds its target, and a cat screams as the energy of the arrow crackles over its body and arcs into the night.

*A cat on the left, pin its foot. Kill the other, then kill the first.*

An arrow flies, slicing between the bones in the paw of a warrior and trapping its foot to the forest floor. Another cat tries to flee, but the hunter sends a shaft through her neck. A warrior snarls in pain, calling for help, but the hunter ends its cries before any others arrive. The hunt continues until only two are left.

*Ah, Fornel and Penn'ashel. Their two greatest trackers. Where have they gone?*

From a low branch Fornel swings down and into the path of the hunter. They struggle, claws swiping and snarls rumbling under the tree canopy. The hunter is able to open Fornel's throat.

*Move! Now! Celebrate a cat's death later. Find this cat's bow and arrows, move to the next shadow.....Quiet. Listen. Look. Where is Penn'ashel?*

An epic hunt begins, for Penn'ashel is the greatest tracker of the Mre'fshal tribe and the hunter is the greatest of the Cre'lahalla. The moon rises over the woods, new and eerie shadows come to life under its soft light. Hours pass and the sun begins to rise. Bright rays of red and gold shine over the tree tops and filter down, making new shadows as those of night fade away.

*There, across the valley! The light of Lugh reflecting off a blade. Quickly, quietly, shoot.*

An arrow is set to string, a bow is drawn, a shaft takes flight...a cat dies.

*Victory for Cre'lahalla. This cat will collect trophies to bring to his tribe.*

This day the tribe of Cre'lahalla was defended and the long time enemies of the Mre'fshal tribe were defeated. The hunter killed fifteen of his enemies from the shadows, and his story has come through the ages...but not his name.

### **Uncial**

*Rain fell heavily upon the gre'shal city of Unc'ial. There were no sacred swallows in the air, they huddled in their aerie atop the marble spire of the Tower of Freyja to hide from the downpour. Normally they would be swooping around the Grand Courtyard just outside the museum, diving for insects and treats as citizens and visitors to the city met below.*

*The rain washed over the granite face of the Museum of Art and Hunt, the water flowed through the rivulets carved in the building's façade. The museum was carved directly into the living stone, and it stretched up a dozen stories to give enough space for the displays of Gre'shal artistry and handiwork. It had been there for over five millennia, and each year the rain washed a little more of the museum away. A plaque by the entrance stated the museum's façade was originally very plain, the dwarven architect who designed the building told the city that "nature would provide all the decoration the*

*structure would ever need.” Now the building façade was a tangle of lines carved by the wind, rain, and snow of the Rrallr’katta Reaches. Clerics studied the façade looking for guidance from the gods of nature and the elements, and cubs tried to find shapes amongst the lines the way an elf looks for shapes amongst the clouds.*

*But not this day. Few gre’shal wanted to stand in the rain that long.*

*The wise old shaman stood waiting in the entry to the museum. Soon the cubs and kits would come into the foyer for their weekly history lesson. Today the shaman was to tell the story of the founding of the great city of Unc’ial, one of his favorites to recall. Slowly and reluctantly the young gre’shal made their way into the museum. Once the class was gathered they climbed the wall hangings to the top floor. The shaman brought the cubs to this level each year when he taught the story of Kineo and Lemani so they could see the great city and appreciate how small its beginnings were.*

*“Today, young ones, this cat will tell the tale of Kineo and Lemani. Over five thousand years ago they founded this city, it was the first site where multiple tribes lived in one space and shared a territory. Kineo was a mage of small magical talent but great curiosity and charisma. Lemani was a shaman, like this cat, a follower of Swallow and a seer of truths and the future. When they met the Gre’shal did not have great cities, all the tribes had their own caves and villages and constantly fought to keep their territories...”*

Kineo walked through his village, trying to figure out what to say to the elders. The air carried the sounds of the drums from the funeral ceremony to his ears, and he lifted a cry of mourning into the air for the fallen warriors. Four more had died in the battles with a nearby rival tribe, and now there were very few to defend the village. Kineo wanted to put an end to the fighting between villages, and he hoped to persuade the village’s warlords to put forward an offer of peace to their rivals and enemies. He dreamed of a grand village, one where many tribes lived together and worked together. His hopes were not high as he approached the elders’ hut, the warlords and leaders were very traditional and would not be easy to persuade, but he had to try.

Kineo scratched at the doorpost, and a voice called him inside. Three of the five warlord seats were filled, the others empty because of the recent fighting. Kineo stretched a paw forward and dipped his head in deference to the warlords. “Respected Elders, this cat would speak of the future of this tribe and village,” he said. They gave no reply, so the gre’shal mage pressed on. “Long have we fought with our rival tribes, but we must also fight the monsters and enemies of these Gidry Mountains. This cat would see a new way for this village and this tribe, this cat would see the tribes make peace with each other and work together. If a great village is formed, one of several tribes who work together, the gre’shal of these mountains will no longer fight each other. Instead we will fight the monsters and goblins of the mountains, our peoples will grow and be strong and Freyja’s children will prosper. We can...”

The Eldest held up a hand. "Stop. This council has heard enough," he said. "This council will not listen to the dreams of a young, untried, unproven dreamer. A mage's ideas are grand, but there is no way to bring them to be."

The elder battle-mage then spoke, her tone was softer but no more welcoming than the Eldest's. "Kineo, this cat understands what it is to dream, but now is not the time. This tribe's path is set, this council cannot allow our rivals to take these lands from us."

The third concluded the interview by saying, "This council thanks a cat for bringing these dreams to us, but this council will not be so amused should a cat come to us again. This council would see a cat fighting for the tribe, fighting for the village. If a cat comes up with ways for our village to win this war, then we look forward to seeing him again."

Dejected, Kineo bowed to the elders and exited the hut. He had hoped they would at least give his proposal some consideration, but the perfunctory way in which they cut him off made it clear they had already made up their minds. His friend Lemani, a shaman and follower of Swallow, waited outside. Her expression was hopeful, but when she saw how upset Kineo was she knew the verdict. Lemani came to Kineo and nuzzled his shoulder, offering her support and understanding. "How bad? Did they listen at all?" she asked. The two began to walk down the streets and away from the stubborn village elders.

"No, the elders would not listen and have told this cat not to return with such ideas. The dream is done, they will not seek peace."

Kineo's words unlocked a forgotten dream in Lemani's mind. She gasped and grabbed Kineo's arm, stopping him in the street. "But *this cat* has had a dream! Swallow has given this cat a vision, one of a mage's great village! In the vision this cat saw the lands as if flying high above. On every hill cats stood, brandishing their weapons and snarling challenges. But there was one valley, a nook between mountains that had no cat to guard it. This cat knows that valley, this cat would take Kineo there so that he may see it!"

"Lemani, why try? Two gre'shal will not be able to take and hold land, the cats of the surrounding lands will sweep down on us. The valley a shaman sees may not even exist!"

Lemani's face pulled down and a soft mewl of hurt came from her throat. "Kineo...this cat is your dearest friend, and has always supported a dream. Do not give up now! Swallow has shown this cat that there is a place for a gre'shal city to be built. This cat knows where the valley is! Please, come and see it."

Kineo studied Lemani's face. Her earnestness and faith in her words were clear in her eyes. Looking directly into Lemani's eyes he said, "A shaman is this cat's greatest friend, this cat will trust in her. Let us go to this valley."

And so the two set off. Lemani walked with a surety of foot Kineo had never seen in her; normally the shaman could hardly remember her way around the village much less in the

woods. She never hesitated when they came to a divergence of trails. Several times she turned off the deer paths and marked trails to cross through tangles of brambles and mazes of pine trees. The day progressed faster than Kineo might have wished, and by the time Lemani stopped the sun was beginning to set.

They stopped atop a hillcrest and looked into the large valley below. The valley was wide and deep, a small river ran through the center and ended in a small waterfall before continuing through the Rrallr’katta Reaches. One side of the valley was a steep cliff of granite with a large ledge about half-way to the top. The other started as a gentle slope and became a steeper hill, cresting where the two friends stood. As Kineo gazed upon the valley, he realized that his dream might indeed have a chance.

The sun moved lower, casting its final rays onto the idyllic scene. The golden-orange rays bounced off something in the bottom of the valley, the light reflected into Kineo and Lemani’s faces. The two looked at each other, grinning, and simultaneously growled “Race!” They darted off the crest of the hill and into the valley. Lemani began to chant as she ran, a song of praise and celebration sung by the followers of Sparrow. Kineo marveled at the beauty of the valley and prayed to the goddess Freyja that no other tribes claimed the land as their own.

The race was close, but Kineo got to the prize first. As Lemani rushed up behind him she found her mage friend sitting on his knees and staring at the ground. Closer to him she could see that he was looking at a precious piece of amber, carved in the shape of a lion. The two were speechless as they marveled at this gift from Freyja, a sign that this was indeed a fortuitous spot.

They turned around and returned to their home, arriving just before moonrise. In the village the drums were not beating their usual songs of death and war. Instead there were songs and flutes, cries of joy and bursts of laughter. Kineo and Lemani *ran* to the village square, hoping to find a victory celebration and their warriors returned home. Instead they found strangers; three elves playing instruments and juggling small stones, as well as a group of strange gre’shal who wore the markings of no tribe Kineo and Lemani had ever met. The cubs of the city laughed and danced about to the flutes and lyres of the elves. Older cats paced back and forth around a dance circle, stalking one another as they weaved a dance of cats. One small kitten did her best to climb out of her cradle, but the smooth sides of the deep stone bowl gave no purchase to her little claws.

The two friends spotted Kineo’s mother by one side of the square, she was talking to one of the visiting gre’shal. They approached his mother and she moved to introduce the new cats.

“Kineo, Lemani, these cats are the guards and escorts of the elven performers. They guard the club-fisted who travel through the Reaches as we cats have our wars.”

The first of the visitors stepped forward. A tall, muscular panther with many scars extended his foot and nodded his head to Kineo on greeting. “This cat’s name is Tinac, a

warrior from a distant village. This cat is alpha of a traveling pride, we are only here long enough to escort the elves.”

Lemani spoke first, a welcoming grin on her face. “This cat’s name is Lemani, a shaman in service to Swallow. This cat’s friend is Kineo, a mage and visionary.”

Kineo scowled at Lemani for calling him a visionary, but wiped it from his face to greet the visitors. “This cat is glad to see new gre’shal in our village. With the fighting and danger we get few visitors, it is good to meet cats from other tribes.” He looked at the visiting gre’shal, noting that between the eight he could see there were five strange villages and tribes represented. None of the braids, weaves, or colors on their clothes marked them as being from a nearby village. They did not have the tattoos or weapons that Kineo’s people were so familiar with seeing. “Who are these other cats that travel with a warrior? Where do they come from?”

One by one the visitors stepped forward to introduce themselves. Resalen and Tripelen of the Rock’en tribe. Bu’chal and De’andral of Magnalor tribe. Coving and Rying of Jazz’urlar tribe. Ryal of Compunar tribe, and Meifi of Lea Halalela. Eight gre’shal, a mix of tribes and skills, but they seemed to be friends and to share a pride together. Kineo and Lemani had never seen such a thing.

As the evening progressed the villagers gathered in the square and enjoyed the celebrations and music of the visitors. Gre’shal have no bards of their own, and it was a rare treat to have such entertainment. Kineo spent the evening chatting with Tinac and the other visiting gre’shal. Each had come from a distant village, leaving their homes and loved ones because they were no longer happy with their way of life. It seemed that many areas in the Rrallr’katta Reaches were at war, and those that weren’t often had long standing feuds that prevented communication and trade. None of the gre’shal that Kineo spoke to had been happy in their homes, they each dreamed of finding a gre’shal village that would welcome them all. They had traveled together for quite some time and become close friends, and now none were willing to give their new pride up. Kineo began to realize other gre’shal felt the same way he did and had the same dreams.

Lemani spent the night talking with the elven entertainers. Their names were Invali, Forrenal, and Keanor, long time friends and hopeless wanderers. “It is our destiny to explore all the lands of Lantai,” said Forrenal. “We will spend our days meeting the peoples of this land. Lantai is not a place of many nations to we three. It is one world of many peoples, cultures, and ways. We learn all your ways and share them with others as we travel about, hoping to bring understanding and eventual unity.” Lemani was fascinated with all the peoples the elves had met, but astounded to hear that in all their travels never had they found a gre’shal village of more than one tribe. “Your people seem more insular, but we have hope. Those who travel with us as our guards and escorts yearn for something more. They want peace and accordance amongst cats. This is something you want as well, Lemani, is it not?”

Lemani waited before answering, but she did say “Yes. Kineo has a dream, and this cat has had a vision. Today we found a valley, unclaimed by any of the surrounding tribes. This cat hopes it is what we dream of.”

Keanor had been listening in, and suddenly he stopped playing his lyre and seemed to stare through Lemani and into Kineo. The dancing gre’shal fell silent as the music stopped, their hair stood on end in response to a gathering power in the square. Keanor began to speak, his voice rumbling with an otherworldly power. “This day marks a new era for the Children of Freyja. Visions and Dreams come into reality as a new city is born. But this new peace will not come without a fight. A leader must make a decision...tonight.” As he finished Keanor slumped to the side, exhausted from channeling the Oracle of Lantai.

The silence in the square was heavy upon Kineo’s head. The eyes of the cats of his village bore into his chest, all of them had heard him speak of his dreams. Lemani quietly moved to his side, she nuzzled his shoulder to show her support. Then Tinac and the other travelers were at Kineo’s side. Remembering his dream and the words he had shared with these gre’shal gave Kineo the courage he needed. He stepped forward to address the assembled village.

“This cat has long dreamed of a new way of living, and knows that others share his dream.” He pulled the amber lion from a fold in his shirt and held it up to the gathered villagers. “The Goddess Freyja has sent this sign, to mark the spot where she would have us live. A land claimed by no one tribe of cats, instead it will be shared by all. The spirit of Swallow has sent visions to a cat called Lemani, showing her the same lands we found this day. This cat would have the gre’shal of this village join him and these others, in a new way for our people. The words of an elf show that this cat’s dream is possible. Come! Join us! Raise your voices as we take a new step!”

Kineo, Lemani, Tinac, and the others gave a roar of assent...but the cats of the village were quiet. The idea was too new and the risks too great, none of them wanted to risk their lives for an unknown city with strange cats and the young Kineo. The silence from the villagers was cutting, and Kineo retreated to the safety of his allies as the cats of his village began to drift away and go to their homes. When the only beings left in the square were Kineo, Lemani, and the visitors to the village they began to pack their instruments and things. Tinac and Keanor spoke together, then approached Kineo to have a discussion.

Keanor spoke first. “Kineo, we have decided we’re going to move on tonight, rather than stay in town. Its obvious that my words upset your people, and we don’t want to have any trouble. Tinac and I have spoken, and we would like to invite you and Lemani both to join us. Come travel with us, and hopefully you’ll find a village more receptive to your dreams.”

“This cat appreciates an elf’s offer, but he must decline. This cat already knows where such a village will come to be, even though it does not yet exist.” Kineo paused only a

second to think, the decision he had to make was easy. "If a cat called Tinac and his pride would join this cat and Lemani, we would be pleased and honored. With this small group of gre'shal we can start the village this cat has dreamed of. What does a cat say?"

Tinac grinned and answered, "Let this cat speak to his companions, and if all agree we will join Kineo and Lemani." The panther gathered his companions, and the group stood together to speak. It did not take them long to come to a decision, and Tinac returned to Kineo. "We will join this new village, and help it be born." The two cats clasped arms and the pact was made.

The travelers finished packing their belongings while Kineo and Lemani returned to their respective homes. The goodbyes were painful, but neither cat's family was terribly surprised by their decisions. They took their belongings and some food provided by their families and joined the travelers on the outskirts of the village. It was late, but Rying of Jazz'urlar tribe was a farwalker who was able to follow the tracks left earlier that day by Kineo and Lemani. The group made their way to the valley and camped for the night. Lemani and Kineo showed the spot where they found the amber lion to Keanor, and the elf told them he felt the area had a purpose yet to be realized. The group slept easily that night....

...but their waking was not so peaceful. The cats and elves had made camp in some underbrush, and their slumber was violated by the harsh clanging of metal on stone. They all awoke instantly, but kept their wits as they quietly grabbed weapons and put on what armor they could. Rying the farwalker slinked through the undergrowth to see who, or what, had come into the valley. He came back quickly.

"Dwarves! Dwarves in our valley!" he said.

"Dwarves?!" Kineo could not believe it. His people had heard of the hairy, club-fisted beings who lived under massive mountains and grubbed for gemstones as if they were air, but he did not think such beings actually existed. "A cat is foolish to joke at this time! If any of the surrounding tribes come here and take this land our dream will be lost! In truth, who is there?!"

Anger flashed across the farwalker's eyes. "This cat does not joke! They are dwarves. If a mage is too sheltered to know dwarves are real, he has much to learn before he can lead a pride." Kineo's eyes dilated and he flexed his claws at the insulting words from his new acquaintance.

"Stop. Now." Tinac put a firm paw between the two before the impending challenge could go any further. "Settle this later, now we take care of intruders." The gre'shal and elves moved through the brush and through the valley to the source of the noise. Tinac held up a fist to stop the pride, and they looked through the branches at their visitors.

There were five donkeys by the base of the cliff, their backs piled high with gear and tools. Beyond the donkeys were five dwarves, busily hammering at the stone and drilling

into the cliff. They used chisels and hammers to take flakes and chunks off the cliff, tossing them to one another and peering closely. All of them were smiling and talking excitedly.

“Lemani, can a swallow shaman freeze dwarves where they stand?” Tinac whispered.

“Yes, this cat knows that song. But what then? They are not to be killed, are they? They have done no wrong, just send them on their way,” she pleaded.

“Freeze them in place, so *they* do not start a fight. Then we will send them along,” Tinac assured her.

Lemani cleared her throat and stood from the brush, singing as she rose. It wasn't a pretty song, but it was effective (no one can claim gre'shal have good singing voices, but as a servant of Swallow Lemani had a special magic normally reserved only for bards). As she sang the dwarves turned to look, two ran to their donkeys to grab weapons, but the other three were held in their spot as Lemani sang an enchantment that held their feet from moving. Bu'chal and De'andral rose from the bushes and loosed arrows at the two dwarves going for weapons. Both dwarves quickly found their feet pinned to the earth by their accurate shots.

The cats and elves left the cover of the brush and moved to the intruders. They circled around the dwarves while the bowmen kept the group covered. Kineo and Lemani marveled at the dwarves, they were so short but so obviously muscular. Tinac saw their stunned faces and took charge of the situation. “Which dwarf is leader of this group?”

One of the two pinned by arrows nodded his head. “Then 'tis me ye'll be after, furry one. Why do ye meddle in our affairs? We've nae quarrel wit' yer kind.” Dwarves are always pissy and hungover, especially after being attacked unprovoked.

Kineo shook himself and refocused, he placed a paw on Tinac's arm and looked into the panther's eyes. A conversation that would have taken hours if spoken happened in seconds as the two cats truly looked into each other. Tinac saw something in Kineo's eyes, the determination and will to make this city *be*...and he stepped aside. In that moment, Kineo truly became the leader of the group. “This cat's name is Kineo, leader of...this pride. Why do...dwarves come into our valley?”

“My name is Justhelm Lovell, and I'm the leader of this here band. We are *here* because ye valley has some of the finest stone we've ever seen for the purposes of building,” the dwarf answered. “Now...I don't think this needs to be a confrontation. We didn't think this valley was claimed by any of ye cat clans or prides or whatever ye call y'selves. We was just trying to have a look at these cliffs. So, why don't ya put down your bows and swords, and we'll put down our rocks and hammers and we'll have a civilized chat? What ye t'ink?”

Kineo puzzled over it for a moment, but ultimately the cats and their friends the elves had superior numbers. He motioned for the gre'shal and elves to lower their weapons. Bu'chal and De'andral moved to the trespassers and removed the arrows from their feet. The dwarves grimaced, but neither cried out.

The dwarves grouped together and a conversation was indeed had. After some talking, and a fair amount of cursing on the dwarves part (after all, they *had* been shot at and trapped in place by magic) the truth was determined. The dwarves were a traveling band who looked around Lantai for the best stone they could find. When they found good prospective quarries they would make deals with whatever people owned the land so they could mine the stone and send it back to their homelands. The cats didn't quite understand why dwarves would want to travel so far to find big boulders and stones to ship across the continent. Eventually they decided it was what dwarves did, even if it made no sense to go to so much effort for stone. After all, aren't all stones the same? By the end of the conversation everyone had relaxed and a peaceful solution to the situation was being hammered out.

“So, Kineo my friend, what do ye think of letting us take some of these here stones? We could pay ye and yours well, or come to another arrangement,” Justhelm said.

Kineo thought for a moment. A spark of inspiration flared in his eyes and he grinned as he made an offer to the dwarf leader. “This cat will let a dwarf and his people take as much stone from these cliffs as they wish, but they must build us a city as well.”

“A CITY?! Ye be a crazy cat if ye think we'll build a city for this stone! Yes, its some of the best stone we've seen in a long while, but not worth the labor to build a city. We'd have to mine the stone, shape it, then build with it. The price is not worth it, lad!”

Kineo laughed. He had outsmarted the dwarves, and he knew it. “Ah, but a dwarf, *will* build a city, and at no extra effort to his people.” Kineo pulled the amber lion from his pocket and showed it to the dwarf. “Carve us a city, dwarf. Take stone from these cliffs, but leave behind great halls and small huts. Rooms carved from the hills as this lion was carved from the amber.”

The dwarf's jaw dropped. He never would have expected a gre'shal mage to come up with such a clever idea. “Ye've got a keen idea there, Kineo.” A greedy look came into his eyes. “Ye've got *quite* the keen idea, in fact.” Turning to address the other dwarves, “Boys, we're going to make ourselves legends! We'll be the first group of dwarves to create a city in a whole mountain, from the *outside!* They won't believe us back home, but this will be the most original city on Lantai! The glory we'll get from making this place, why it would almost be worth living above ground. Almost.”

And so the deal was struck. They settled on three large buildings to be constructed on the large ledge on the granite cliff side of the valley, rather than several smaller buildings. In return the dwarves would get to take what stone they wished, and a trade agreement was made for future transactions.

The gre'shal set up a temporary village. Invali, Forrenal, and Keanor remained with them for quite some time, helping where they could. "What you are doing here is the thing of legends, Lemani. We want to be here to see it so we can spread your tale across all of Lantai," the elf said.

The dwarves sent word to their home and more dwarves came. They began to carve a great building out of the side of mountain cliff, taking the stone for whatever dwarves do with stone in their own homes and leaving behind the first structured quarry ever seen on Lantai. The three buildings were constructed on the large ledge, and the ledge was soon referred to as the Grand Courtyard. Around the Courtyard the dwarves carved and built the three largest buildings of the fledgling city: the Warrior's Academy, the Museum of Art and Hunt, and the Tower of Freyja.

The Museum of Art and Hunt was carved from the side of the mountains themselves. The dwarves did little to decorate the museum, assuring the gre'shal that the elements would provide all the decoration needed. The top floor was a large open room, the entire outer wall was an open balcony area, giving a breathtaking view of Unc'ial. On great festival days and important civic days key dignitaries and visitors would be able to meet on this level. From there they had a beautiful view of the valley and city, and they could stand at the balcony edge to speak to people gathered in the Grand Courtyard below.

The Warrior's Academy was a large building behind a broad courtyard. The building was made of many small rooms that could be living quarters or offices. More care was given to decorate this building. The dwarves carved patterns in the stone that looked as if they had been made by the claws of a gre'shal. By day the patterns added texture to the building, but at night if the moon was shining the shadows from the marks were deeper and the silhouette of a cat leaping onto the back of a deer could be seen. The courtyard of the Academy was wide and open, with plenty of space for training. The warriors of the new city built dummies to practice fighting techniques and quickly classes began. Kineo knew that the new city would have to be able to defend itself and claim the land it stood on if the dream was to succeed.

The Tower of Freyja was made to Lemani's design. She had discovered that the area had a large swallow population, and the dwarves built a tall tower to her specifications. Each stone in the Tower of Freyja had several small niches carved into it so the swallows could nest in the tower. It took several years, but the Tower became the tallest structure in the city with a total of eight stories. Over the years generations of swallows would be born in the tower, and return there as adults to mate and to raise the next generation. On windy days the niches in the tower would cause a whistle to blow, and the hair of the gre'shal in the city would stand on end.

Gre'shal villages did not usually have buildings taller than one story, so the cats had to devise new ways of moving between multiple stories. Their solution was to hang thick leather mats or woven nets on the walls. The gre'shal would use their claws to climb these hangings in order to go to higher stories. There were no staircases in any of the

new structures, instead baskets and platforms were set up on pulleys that could be raised to higher floors. Club-fisted visitors, or cats that were too old to climb, could be raised and lowered in this method. The climbing walls also added a measure of security to the city, few races were able to scale the walls the way the cats of the city could.

While the dwarves built the city Kineo, Lemani, and Tinac learned much from the elves. They told the gre'shal of other cultures and other governments they had seen in their travels through Lantai. Eventually Kineo decided that their new city, which they called Unc'ial, was to be ruled by a mayor and council. The gre'shal would get to choose their leaders, rather than positions going to the eldest as was done in their original home. Kineo was unanimously voted the first leader of Unc'ial.

The tribes immediately surrounding their lands called Unc'ial "the village of many tribes," and they attacked it many times over the first few years. But Tinac and the other warriors proved that Unc'ial could and would hold its own land, and eventually the surrounding tribes recognized their claim.

The city grew slowly at first, but as time passed gre'shal from other tribes and other villages heard about this radical new city, one where many tribes could live together in peace. Every year more and more cats came to Unc'ial to share in Kineo's dream, and the city grew greater and stronger. Eventually Unc'ial had its own ruling court, constables, huntsmen, crafters, metalsmiths, clothiers, carters, tradesmen, and merchants just as any other city.

Seven years to the day after they found the amber lion, Kineo and Lemani were mated. The eldest cleric of Fryja from their original village performed the ceremony, and the day marked the official peace between Unc'ial and their former village.

*As the shaman finished the tale the sun began to peak between the clouds. By the time the cubs had finished talking and made their way out of the Museum of Art and Hunt the sky was completely clear. All of them stopped to look with a new appreciation upon the great city of Unc'ial. The rain had washed the city, making it smell as new and fresh as it had to the legendary Kineo and Lemani. When the dwarves had originally built the Museum it was only four stories tall, but over the millennia it had been expanded. The fourth floor was still an open platform where the leaders could make their speeches to crowds in the Grand Courtyard below, but the top floor had the same design so visitors could appreciate the beauty of the city. The Tower of Freyja was filled with thousands of swallow's nests, and as the rain disappeared the birds came out and swooped upon the earthworms in the courtyard. Students at the Warrior's Academy stretched in the training yard and began to practice their claw-work.*

*The shaman's students went running through the many streets of the city to find their homes. That night over the evening meal their parents were told mangled versions of the story of Kineo and Lemani, and the older cats smiled as they remembered when they were told the tale as cubs...*