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A Place for Everyone

by *Diator Paracletus Mitt Stift Tinte von Drei Täler XXJ*

How can anyone conceive of a happier land than the Three Valleys Region? Where else can adventurers enjoy all the varied experiences of a campaign with none of the risks? Sun-seekers can enjoy a swim in the warm waters of the Bay of Teeth, to the west of the peninsula, while pilgrims in search of natural remedies can energise themselves on the volcanically enriched black-sand beaches overlooking the Dift, to the east. On the steep, icy slopes of Blood Mountain (considered by the guild of cartographers to mark the northern boundary of this happy country) the athletically-inclined will find unparalleled opportunities for hiking, climbing, and even downhill skiing. Or for those looking for a more sedate pace, there are exactly six hundred, three times twenty and six well-marked trails through the shady woods of the Darkened Vale, the southernmost – and some say the happiest – of the Three Valleys. So there's absolutely no need for visitors to ever consider setting even one foot off the path.

Find your perfect day of carefully moderated and strictly timed adventuring with a sample of our delicious national cuisine. To do so, you simply – and legally – must return to your accommodation at *Green Wyrm Tavern* in Ziegendorf, where the chef will prepare a meal of flesh-and-bread from our sustainable farms, washed down with precisely one pint of the famous *Wyrm'sblood* ale. No doubt some locals will then happily fulfil their lawful obligation to regale you with stories of the benevolent, unassailable and soon-to-be-expanding rule of the Amicus family, who shaped the past, control the present, and dictate the future of this happy country and all who happily live here.

Set me provide you, dear reader, with but one example of that beloved and unquestionably human family's wise leadership. Shortly after first Baron Amicus, that visionary human known as The Lawbringer, saved the land from chaos at the end of the Fiend Wars, the family began the process of modernising and developing the region. Under the campaign slogan "a place for everyone", the common races were divided into the habitats that best suited their characteristics. Humans, like the Amicus family, kept to the towns, principally Ziegendorf, and were given responsibility for trade and diplomacy. Halflings, with their love of rural life, were put to work in agriculture; dwarfs shouldered the burdens of mining, construction and industry, while their old rivals, the wood elves, tended the southern forest. Gnomes were decreed redundant in an ordered society, but do not worry about administrative confusion at the border crossing: gnomish tourists are simply recorded as halflings or dwarfs, depending on their height. Halfelves, of course, are not permitted to enter the country.

Peace reigned. With the common races segregated according to their type, conflict fell to an all-time low, the rule of law flourished, and every legal resident of the Three Valleys felt happiness like they had never experienced before. However, the baron's bold experiment in nation-building was incomplete. Travel outside the designated habitats could still be dangerous, particularly by night, when cyclops, goblins, manticores, orcs and wyverns and all manner of other creatures of chaos emerged from

their subterranean lairs; some even had the temerity to attack the smaller settlements. Once again, the noble Amicus family had the perfect answer: on the first day of the new year, all monsters would be deported, into either the Shattered Lands to the west, to that northern wilderness known as the Edge of the Wild, or simply driven east towards the Rift. Any that remained in the country illegally would be put to the sword. This second campaign was enthusiastically pursued by every law-abiding citizen for a period of eight years, under the slogan "make the Three Valleys perfect once more". After this time, it became all but impossible to find even one monster in even the most remote corner of the Three Valleys.

Hunfortunately, monsters are notoriously ill-behaved. On occasion, some uninvited winged beast might take up residence on the high peaks, or a particularly bold hobgoblin captain would lead a band of marauders from their war-camps across the Bay of Teeth, carrying away precious metals, jewels, and slaves from the dwarf-mines. To ensure continued compliance with the law, a colourful festival, *Frühjahrsputz* (or "spring cleaning", in Common), is held on the first day of the first month of each year. In this joyful event, the folk of each settlement dress in cheerful red costumes and carry swords of bright steel, then being a day-long search for monsters in the surrounding hills, woods, or ponds. Should a monster be found, it must be killed immediately. Such findings were once common, a fact that is attested by the portfolio of Ingenio Artifex Pinsel Malen von Drei Täler JV, the nation's lawfully appointed favourite artist. There are said to hang in the *Volksgalerie*, a securely locked treasure chamber deep within Castle Amicus, two-and-fifty of his exquisite paintings of this quaint tradition, each lovingly rendered in every conceivable shade of red. Nowadays of course, there are seldom any monsters to find. To preserve the unique cultural heritage of the Three Valleys peasants, the current baron has pronounced that every year a volunteer, called the *Sündenbock* (a term which loosely translates as "migrant" or "refugee", because of the ceremonial chase that follows) will be appointed from each of the main habitats. The *Sündenbock* is dressed in one of four traditional monstrous costumes – resembling a chimera, a dragon, an orc, or a troll and then "hunted" across the countryside. Should the *Sündenbock* be found, it must be killed immediately. It is said that a street whose cobbles run red with the blood of the *Sündenbock* is a happy street indeed!

S till the baron's descendants do not rest in their quest to bring civilisation to the world. The third campaign, "and hour in each day for each baron" saw the economic productivity of the Three Valleys vastly increase. The twenty-fourth baron amicus, grandfather of our present ruler, realised that not only food and water, but even sleep might be commodified and regulated – the nation's industries would work round the clock, with volunteers earning the right to sleep depending on their labours. The laziest among them would receive the shortest allocation of sleep; the most effective workers would receive a longer rest, and thus return to work stronger. The fourth campaign is now under development. So why not visit us in the Three Valleys to find out for yourself just how much we have to offer an adventurer, or even a party of seasoned campaigners. You will surely not be disappointed! *Editor's note: shortly after this article was submitted to The Adventurer's Bulletin we received word that its author, Diator Paracletus, tragically and entirely accidentally lost his life during the Frühjahrsputz. We publish with permission from his widow, who said of Diator: "he was a writer first, and he loved language and wordplay. He would most certainly wish for your subscribers to read the article which he submitted to your esteemed publication. Perchance some inquisitive type might even return to it over and again, gleaning facts about our land that they may have missed on their first reading. I hope such adventurers would feel inspired to visit our happy land".*