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Neverdusk Empire

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NEVERDUSK EMPIRE

WHERE DUSK MUST NOT FALL



There are realms that celebrate the dawn, and others that boast of banners bright enough to outshine it. The polity that would one day bear the name Neverdusk belongs to a darker inheritance. Its memory gathers at the edge of the lamp, at the hour when roads become uncertain, walls acquire a second meaning, and the distance beyond the watchfires no longer belongs entirely to the living.

That difference matters. The future empire was not shaped by a fantasy of unbroken light, but by the knowledge of what follows when light fails. In later imperial memory, dusk is never only weather or pageantry. It is pressure. It is the loosening of order at the border. It is the return of buried things, the thinning of reason, the



hour in which the world remembers that civilization is an achievement rather than a condition.

For that reason, the doctrine later associated with Neverdusk does not begin in triumph. It begins in maintenance. Light is not imagined as a blessing that endures by its own virtue. It survives because hands keep it alive.

BEFORE THE NAME

Long before there was an empire to speak of, the human communities from which Neverdusk would later arise lived under the protection of the Stormwolves. That shelter was real. It allowed roads to lengthen, granaries to fill, and settlements

to believe, perhaps too easily, that

LIGHT, POWDER AND HONOUR

NEVERDUSK WAS NOT
BORN TO INHERIT THE
LIGHT, BUT TO MAINTAIN
IT AGAINST THE DARK

security might be a lasting climate rather than a temporary arrangement.

The Stormwolves were not negligent guardians. Their departure came under the hard necessity of a greater war, when they marched against the Realms of Mayhem and left behind the people they had long defended. But necessity does not soften consequence. What remained was an exposed human world, suddenly aware that prosperity built beneath another's shield is still a form of dependence.

In later imperial memory, this was the first wound: not betrayal, but revelation. Protection had been present. Protection could also be absent. Once that lesson entered history, it never truly left.

The fear that followed was not abstract. It was administrative, civic, immediate. A road without patrols is a different road. A settlement without relief becomes a calculation. A harbor becomes more than a harbor when it is the last path west. So began the westward crossing, not as a heroic migration cast in triumphal tones, but as a wager against collapse. Those who boarded ships did not sail toward an empire. They sailed away from a narrowing future.

The new continent seemed, at first, to answer that fear with abundance. Valleys opened. Settlements rose. Roads were cut. Granaries, canals, towers, and fortresses took shape with the urgency of people determined never again to be caught unprepared. Yet the promise of open ground concealed another inheritance. Beneath those valleys, beneath old lines of stone and forgotten foundations, lay the buried dead empire: not a field of inert ruins, but a power that had endured in another register, retaining hierarchy, memory, and will below the surface of the living world.

When the westward settlers disturbed what had not been surrendered, the land answered.

Cities at the edge fell first. What had looked like settlement became





INFANTRY: THE BACKBONE OF THE IMPERIAL ARMY

These soldiers march in ordered ranks, armed and drilled for conquest, carrying the ambition of an empire determined to leave its mark on every realm it touches. Drilled, disciplined, and relentless, these halberdiers form the backbone of the imperial battle line. Their long weapons and tight formations make them deadly against cavalry, monsters, and advancing foes alike. Equipped for close combat and defense, these soldiers hold the line with determination and training. They are the steady core of the Neverdusk war machine, ready to fight and die for the empire's cause.



withdrawal. What had looked like arrival became retreat. Survivors turned toward the mountains, where refuge still depended on the oldest of disciplines: hold the high ground, ration the stores, keep the roads open if roads can still be kept open at all.

There, too, the enemy changed shape in human language. Courtly or archival terms had little use on a wall at dusk. Soldiers, refugees, and later chroniclers more often wrote of the dead legions: the advancing hosts that rose from below, reclaimed buried space, and turned the ground itself into an accomplice. The phrase was a field name, born of fear and repetition. It did not replace the deeper reality of the buried empire, but it carried the immediacy of what the living believed they were facing.

THE HOUR OF THREAT

This is the point at which many state histories would choose spectacle. The future empire had no need of it. Its deepest transformation was quieter, though no less severe. The threat it encountered was not merely an enemy in the field. It was a condition. It was the realization that darkness, once allowed to gather, changes the balance between what is ordered and what is waiting to unmake order.

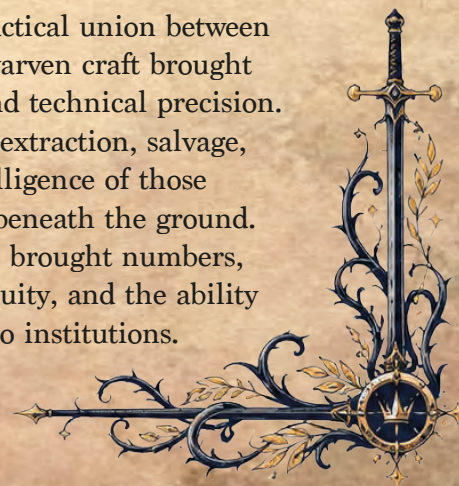
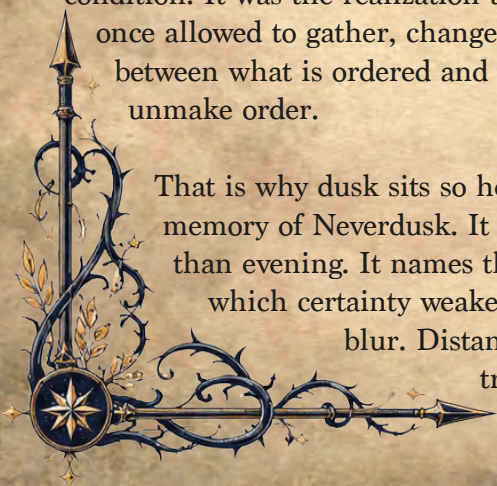
That is why dusk sits so heavily in the memory of Neverdusk. It names more than evening. It names the interval in which certainty weakens. Frontiers blur. Distances grow less trustworthy. The

buried, the deformed, and the impossible find room to move. The people who would later become Neverdusk learned that what fails at sundown is not only sight. Judgment fails. Signals fail. Routes fail. The calm assumptions by which a city lives by day begin to loosen.

Light, in Neverdusk, is not inherited splendor. It is a maintained condition of survival.

The doctrine later called imperial emerges from that insight. Not every wall can keep out what comes with night, but every wall can be improved. Not every road can be made safe, but every road can be watched. Not every settlement can be preserved intact, but every settlement can be prepared to endure longer than it would have endured yesterday. The polity that slowly took shape from these convictions did not promise the end of darkness. It promised labor against its advance.

The mountains gave that labor its first durable partners. There, the human exiles encountered dwarves and Black Horde goblins already hardened by their own struggle against the dead. The alliance that followed was neither decorative nor easy. It was a practical union between survival cultures. Dwarven craft brought powder knowledge and technical precision. Goblin skill brought extraction, salvage, and the ruthless intelligence of those who know what lies beneath the ground. Human communities brought numbers, administrative continuity, and the ability to scale discipline into institutions.



That coalition matters because it changed the terms of the war. The future empire was not simply human courage given a flag. It was an answer assembled under pressure: part engineering, part logistics, part memory, part fear taught into method. Against the buried empire and the dead legions it fielded, survival ceased to be a sequence of desperate improvisations. It became a structure.

POWDER, STONE AND THE KEPT BORDER

From that mountain discipline came the instruments most closely associated with the Neverdusk Empire: regiments formed not only to fight, but to hold; artillery meant not for spectacle, but for denial; engineers who understood that a bridge, a powder store, or a line of signal towers might determine whether a province survives its first season of crisis.

Powder altered more than battlefields. It altered civic thought. A people that had once known the cost of waiting for rescue began to build as though rescue might never come. Fortifications became arguments in stone. Roads were planned not only for trade, but for withdrawal, reinforcement, and return. Cities were shaped to remain habitable under pressure. Watch systems multiplied. Stores were placed with redundancy in mind. The question beneath these acts was always the same: what remains standing when the light thins and the old confidence fails?

This is where the Neverdusk Empire departs most clearly from the generic image of imperial power. It does not organize itself merely to extend command. It organizes itself to prevent civil collapse. Vigilance is not ornament in such a state. It is habit raised to duty. Engineering is not a neutral sign of advancement. It is a response to remembered disaster. Even restoration carries a harder meaning here. To restore is not to polish a wound until it looks ceremonial. It is to make a damaged place defensible again, habitable again, trustworthy enough to be lived in again.

POWDER, STONE, AND VIGILANCE TURNED SURVIVAL INTO DOCTRINE

Seen in that light, the later return to the old continent becomes legible. The Neverdusk Empire did not come back chasing the glamour of lost inheritance. It returned with fleets, cannon, standards, engineers, colonists, and organized armies because it had become the kind of polity that could sustain a return. Its re-entry into the older war against the Mayhem belongs to the logic of restoration: aid to old allies, recovery of devastated ground, re-establishment of civil order where devastation had hollowed it out.

The empire that emerged from this history does not speak as if dawn is guaranteed. It speaks as



if every province must be prepared for the hour before dawn fails to arrive on time.

That is why Neverdusk endures so strongly as an idea. Its light is not innocent. Its brightness does not imply ease. The lamps are trimmed because someone remembers what happens when they are not. Powder is kept dry because confidence without preparation is only another form of negligence. Walls are traced and retraced because the border is never entirely symbolic. Every restored road carries with it the memory of roads once abandoned.

The Neverdusk Empire inherited no eternal radiance. It inherited exposure, distance, and the knowledge that darkness is patient. What it built from those conditions was not a mythology of uninterrupted glory, but a civilization of held lines, maintained fire, and disciplined return.

In the end, that may be its clearest distinction. The empire does not claim ownership of the light. It keeps the light alive.



CAPTAIN JUAN DE ESPINOSA

Juan de Espinosa is easier to understand in the field than in a hall of portraits. He belongs to the Neverdusk Empire in its second age, after the return, when the argument is no longer whether lost ground can be reached again, but whether it can be kept, settled, provisioned, and made fit for ordinary life. The title most often attached to him, Warden of the Reclamation, carries some of the weight of office and some of the weight of habit. It suits him because his authority is measured less by display than by what remains standing after the banners move on.

He was born on the old continent, into a world already altered by the empire's re-entry. The campaigns that shaped his life were not the first desperate crossings or the founding wars against the buried dead empire. They belonged to a later phase, when territories taken back from the Mayhem had to be secured against relapse, privation, and administrative failure. In such places, victory was only the beginning of the work. Roads had to be reopened. Stores had to be counted. Walls had to be surveyed twice. Civilians had to trust that a reclaimed province would not be surrendered by carelessness a season later.

That is where Juan's name took hold.

THE WORK AFTER THE BANNER

The Office of the Reclaimed Marches, as current imperial usage tends to call it, deals in a kind of labor that attracts less





romance than a cavalry charge and far more resentment when mishandled. A territory newly freed from the Mayhem is unstable long after the first reports declare it safe. Fields may be fertile and still unusable. A town may have gates and still lack a second line. A pass may be open and still impossible to hold once the weather turns. The work requires soldiers, engineers, quartermasters, clerks, carters, and a temperament wary of optimism when lives depend on it.

Juan de Espinosa rose inside that machinery because he was trusted with the stages that follow liberation. He could command troops, but command alone was never the center of his reputation. He understood roads, stores, fallback positions, and the temper of frontier settlements. He knew how to read a wall for weakness and whether the map is wrong. In imperial accounts, he appears less as a taker of ground than as the man sent to make ground stay taken.

His authority therefore sits across several kinds of responsibility at once. He is a field commander when command is needed, an overseer of fortification when a district must be made defensible, a logistical mind when distance begins to starve the margin, and an imperial representative when local obedience has to be turned into something steadier than fear. The composite can seem severe from the outside. To those who prefer quick movement and theatrical momentum, Juan's habits read as caution carried too far. Yet the empire has always had use for officers who ask what happens after the gate opens.

A reclaimed territory reveals its truth slowly. The first week belongs to relief. The first month belongs to repair. What follows belongs to people like Juan, who understand that permanence is built in revisions, inventories, redundancies, and patient refusals to trust a single plan merely because it worked once.

In the Reclaimed Marches, a safe road is not the road that exists. It is the road that can still be held tomorrow.

CASA ESPINOSA

Some of that caution belongs to the wider culture of Neverdusk. Some of it is older and closer to home.

Casa Espinosa is not remembered for courtly glamour. Its name travels with maps, reserve stores, bells, and the uneasy respect given to those who inspect graveyards before they trust a wall. Its standing comes from use. Again and again, the house was valuable where a district needed to be held together after damage, panic, or retreat. Imperial service gave it weight. A family wound gave it character.

That wound is Torremira.

During a campaign on the western continent, one of the key responsibilities for Torremira's defense fell to Juan's great-uncle. The arrangement was severe, but not reckless. A lighter force would hold the defensive positions while civilians were withdrawn. When the evacuation was complete, a bell from the church would signal that the defenders could abandon the line and pull back in order.

What failed at Torremira was not the existence of a plan, but the city's ability to keep faith with it. The dead rose from the small cemetery beside the church and broke the city from within. By the time the burial ground had become a breach, the bell on which the withdrawal depended could no longer serve its purpose. Men on the defenses waited for the signal that was meant to release them. By the time it sounded, the order it carried no longer reached the city it was meant to save.

Later accounts gave the event the name by which it is still remembered: "The Night of the Last Bell".

Juan did not inherit that night as a family legend to be performed. He inherited it as a warning about dependence,

delay, and the cost of trusting a single path of retreat. From outside, such habits can look joyless. From inside the history of Neverdusk, they look earned.

DRY POWDER, DRAWN MAPS

Juan's habits are often described in plain material terms, which is fitting. Dry powder. Revised maps. Secondary walls. Reserve stores. Withdrawal routes settled before a campaign advances too far to remember them. These things do not make a stirring legend, but they do make it possible for ordinary people to remain where they have been told the empire has restored order.

This is why his severity is worth reading carefully. It does not come from contempt for weakness, nor from any hunger to turn administration into punishment. It comes from the knowledge that loss often begins in the small places where confidence goes untested. A badly traced route. A signal path assumed rather than checked. A storehouse placed for convenience. A commander who would rather look resolute than ask whether a retreat remains possible.

Juan de Espinosa belongs to a generation that respects the Stormwolves without expecting them to return as rescuers whenever the world narrows again. He understands what

they once were to the human communities under their protection, and what necessity demanded of them when they marched against the Realms of Mayhem. That respect remains. So does the harder conclusion drawn by the empire that followed: human settlements must be able to survive the absence of saviors.

For that reason, Juan is remembered less for brilliance than for reliability. He gives reclaimed land a chance to remain reclaimed. He helps turn districts scarred by the Mayhem into provinces that can feed themselves, defend themselves, and trust their own roads after sundown. He is useful in the way strong institutions are useful: not because they dazzle the eye, but because they hold when strain arrives.

The Neverdusk Empire has no shortage of banners, officers, and names attached to campaigns. Juan de Espinosa matters because he belongs to the part of imperial life that begins after applause has ended. He checks whether the powder is dry. He checks whether the map is wrong. He checks whether the wall behind the wall exists. In a state shaped by hard returns and long frontiers, it is how a province learns to endure.

He does not win ground for the pleasure of marking it on a map. He keeps it fit to live on.

FRAY AGUSTÍN DE LEÓN
ETERNAL CITADEL- ANNO 1375
OF THE GOLDEN AGE



SERGERIK

A POWER BEYOND THE WALL

not improvise his hunt in the dark. He prepares it with the same care he gives to the movement of troops.

Some Warrants are narrow, aimed at a single officer, artillery position, or escape route. Others are broader and include a command group, a cluster of standards, or the enemy general himself. Whatever its scope, the Warrant fixes three things before battle begins: who is to be hunted, how far the hunt may go, and under what conditions Sergerik commits himself to the chase.

When the order is complete, he seals it with “The Voivode’s Seal” The wax is black and mixed with magical ingredients known to his order. Once pressed shut, the document is no longer only a written command. It binds Sergerik to the pursuit he has named.

While the seal remains whole, the hunt is ready but dormant.

That is the point often missed by those who first encounter Sergerik, Pack Leader. His war form is not something that overtakes him at the first scent of battle. The chase is held in reserve. It waits for the right moment, as planned.

THE BREAKING OF THE VOIVODE’S SEAL

Sergerik does not break the seal when the first arrows fly.

He stays in command while the battle still requires command. He holds formation, watches the enemy line, and waits to see whether the field is unfolding as expected. If the moment has not come, the Warrant remains closed. He does not abandon his troops for spectacle, and he does not release the hunt because blood has been spilled.

On the night before battle, Sergerik plans like any other commander.

He studies the ground with his generals and attendants. They mark the strongest flank, the weak side of the enemy line, the likely point of collapse, and the moment when pursuit will matter more than formation. His dire wolves are part of that discussion from the start. They are not an afterthought. Their position, their direction, and the point at which they are to be released all belong to the battle plan.

Only when that work is done does Sergerik withdraw in private.

There, away from the noise of camp, he prepares “The Warrant of the Hunt”. This is the second act of the night, and the one that gives his war form its purpose. The Warrant names the prey. It marks the ground over which the pursuit may run. It sets the limits of the chase and binds Sergerik to it. A lord may promise bloodshed in many ways; the Warrant turns that promise into a formal act.

THE WARRANT OF THE HUNT

The Warrant is written after the battle plan, not instead of it. That detail matters. Sergerik does

Then the battle turns.

A flank opens. An artillery line is exposed. A retreat path begins to form. The enemy commander moves closer to the place already marked for him. At that point Sergerik takes up the sealed Warrant and breaks it. This is “The Breaking of the Voivode’s Seal”: the instant when the prepared order becomes active and the chase passes from ink to flesh.

The transformation follows at once. Armor shifts with the body instead of shattering under it. Limbs lengthen. Mass gathers across shoulders and chest. What emerges is not a man’s frame spoiled by frenzy, but a larger war-shape made for speed, impact, and pursuit. Sergerik was already a formidable figure before the rite. As Pack Leader, he becomes larger still, built for the work the Warrant has just released.

From that moment, Sergerik is no longer directing the hunt from behind the line. He is leading it.

THE DIRE WOLVES

His dire wolves move the moment he does.

They are not driven by panic or simple hunger. They answer Sergerik and the Warrant he has opened. The prey has already been named. The path has already been fixed. The wolves run inside that command.

On the field, that makes them fast in a way ordinary cavalry is not. They cut across open flanks, slip through broken intervals, harry gunners before crews can limber their pieces away, and break the confidence of units that thought themselves safely behind the main line. Their speed matters, but so does their direction. They do not scatter at random. They follow the hunt where it was meant to go.

Sergerik runs at their head, tracing the line of pursuit through the weakest part of the enemy position. What he opens, they widen. What they distract, he exploits. By the time the rear believes itself threatened, the danger is already among it.

THE ENEMY COMMANDER

The hunt often ends where the battle truly breaks: at the enemy commander.

Sergerik’s purpose is not to roam the field without end. He is used to close on the figure whose survival might still restore order, organize retreat, or turn defeat into escape. If the Warrant has been prepared well, the final chase brings him to that point.

There, the battle narrows. The wolves clear the way, isolate the command, and leave Sergerik to the final work. He meets the opposing general directly and denies him the safety of withdrawal. It is a grim kind of precision, not slaughter for its own sake.

If the fallen commander proves worthy, the necromancers of the Undying Legions may take an interest in him. Service does not always end with death in such armies. If he does not, Sergerik’s wolves finish what the hunt began.

CODA

Sergerik is an unusual figure even among the Undying Legions. He is also known as “Sergerik, Dark Voivode”, and that older title hints at a longer life of rank, command, and dealings with other powers among the Undying Legions. That history matters, but it belongs elsewhere.

Here the clearer image is the necessary one: a commander who plans the battle, withdraws in private, seals the hunt, waits, and only then releases his war form at the chosen moment.

Pack Leader is the form Sergerik takes when the order must cross the field and reach the prey itself.



SERGERIK, PACK LEADER

A fearsome werewolf and alpha predator of the night, Sergerik leads the hunting packs of the Undying with savage instinct and unstoppable fury. Fast, brutal, and terrifying, he is death in motion.

SHENXEN

— THE BLEEDING MOTHER —



Before the Black Horde Goblins gave her a name, the creature lived above the high passes, where the stone grows thin and the wind scrapes the bones of the mountain clean.

The dwarfs knew of her first by absence. Goats vanished from ledges where no wolf could climb. Prospectors failed to return from shafts that had not yet been named. One winter, a watchtower sent no smoke for three days, and when the gate was broken open, the walls inside were webbed from floor to beam.

So a champion was chosen.

His name is remembered in dwarf halls, though never spoken lightly among goblins. He climbed into the upper dark with an oath, a rune-axe, and enough pride to believe that all things with too many legs were still only beasts.

He did not know she was heavy with young.

That was why she did not fight as the mountain stories claimed she should have fought. Xenshen could have filled the cavern with silk and shadow. She

could have dropped from the roof and taken him before his axe was raised. Instead she held the deeper chamber, guarding the swollen white nests fixed to the stone behind her, spending strength she could not spare to keep the dwarf away from what had not yet hatched.

The battle was long enough for both legends to be true.

The champion struck deep. His axe opened one of her flanks and shattered the chitin near her heart. But as he drove the blade in, her fangs found the gap beneath his beard-guard. The venom did not kill him. It did something worse. It left him breathing, seeing, and unable to move, trapped inside his own flesh while the creature dragged herself away.

She did not return to the upper lair.

Wounded, emptied, and half-blind with

pain, the great spider descended from the mountain into the black gullies below. Her brood came with her, clinging beneath her body and along the torn plates of her abdomen. By the time she reached the low caves, she had already chosen a place to die.

That was where the Black Horde Goblins found her.

The goblins came first for meat, venom and shell. Spears were raised. Knives were drawn. The creature was too weak to flee, and her daughters had begun to hatch around her in the dark.

Then the goblins saw what did not happen.

The spiderlings did not swarm their mother. They did not open her wounds further. They did not feed on the soft meat exposed beneath the broken armour of her body. They gathered over her instead, covering the torn places with their legs, standing between her and the goblin blades as if the first law of hunger had forgotten itself.

The Horde fell silent.

To wiser folk, it might have been instinct. To the goblins, it was a sign.

If nature breaks its own cycle, then something larger must be pulling at the thread.

A shaman of the Black Horde Goblins pushed through the crowd with a basket of moon-pale cave mushrooms, the kind that make broken things remember how to grow. Others followed, muttering, arguing, laughing nervously, because goblins do not become reverent without also becoming loud. They fed the mushrooms into the great spider's mouth one by one. They packed paste into the axe wound. They sang crooked healing songs over her daughters and slapped away any warrior foolish enough to test the omen with a spear.

By dawn, the bleeding had slowed.

By the next night, she could stand.

After that, she never truly left them.

The goblins named her ****Xenshen****, often rendered in the common tongue as ****the Bleeding Mother****. The name is not gentle. It carries the wound that brought her down from the heights, the brood that refused to devour her, and the red trails left behind when she goes to war.

Among the Black Horde Goblins, Xenshen is not kept like a beast. She moves with them when she chooses, bears riders when the noise pleases her, and hunts alone when the old mountain hunger returns. Goblins sleep beneath the span of her legs as if under a shrine. Shamans daub her ancient scar with mushroom paste before battle. Young warriors bring offerings to her daughters and dare one another to touch the place where the dwarf axe bit deepest.

Some say the dwarf champion still lives in the mountain halls, seated upright in a chair of iron, eyes open, hands folded over the haft of a weapon he can no longer lift. If this is true, then perhaps he hears the stories carried down by traders and frightened scouts: that the monster he was sent to kill has become mother, omen and war-beast to the Black Horde Goblins.

Xenshen still bleeds in battle.

The Horde believes this is why she was not allowed to die.



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WE WILL MARCH BENEATH THEIR LIGHT

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COMING THIS JULY

