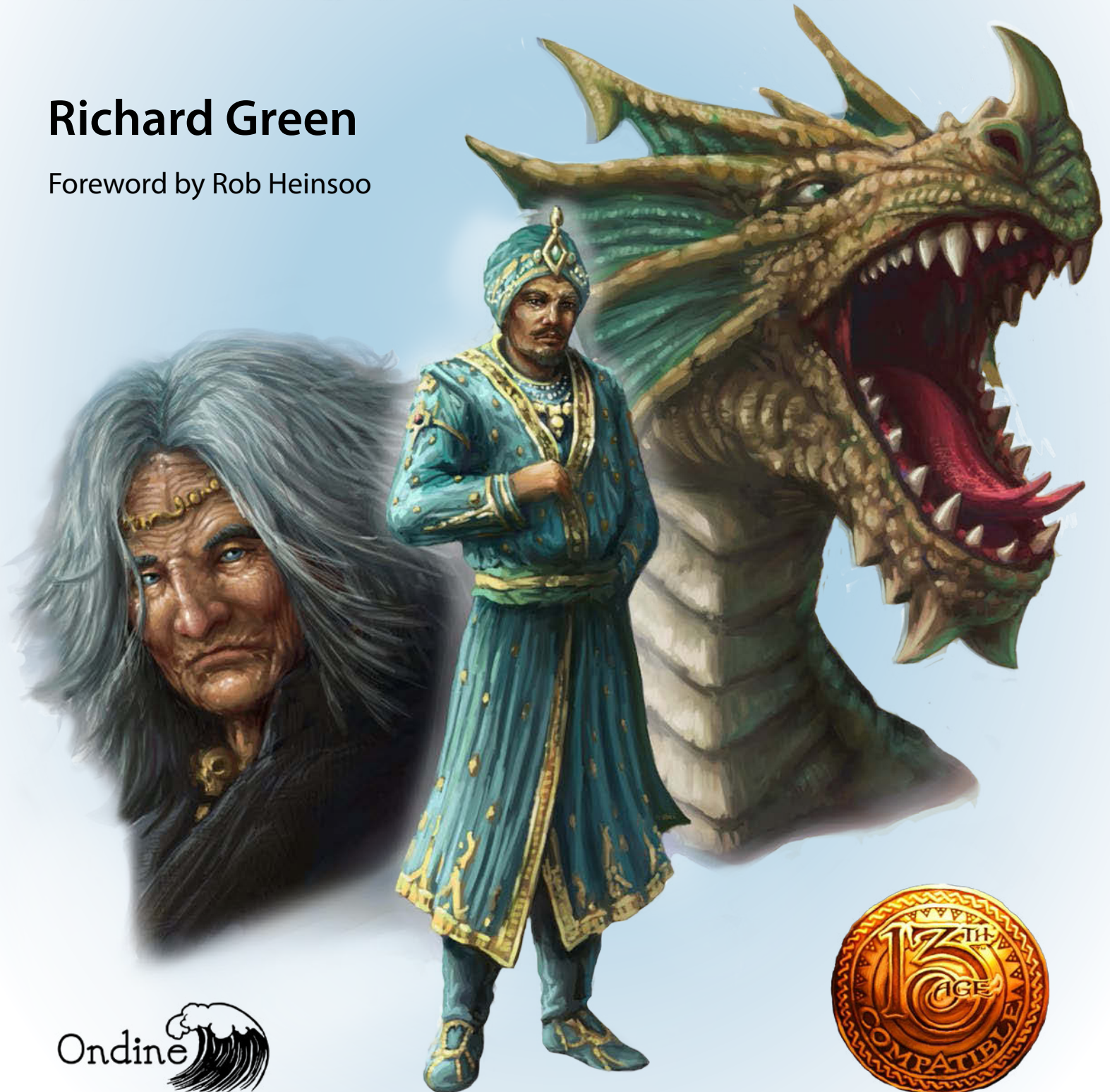


ICONS OF PARSANTIUM

Richard Green

Foreword by Rob Heinsoo





The Lands of Parsanctium

Endless Desert

Caliphate of Aqhran

Corsairs' Sea

Sea

Qardab

Navarra Mountains

Bathura

Forge smoke Mountains

The Gloomtangle

Lands

Urskovia

Evergreen Forest

Rimefrost Mountains

Parsanctum

Rangabad

Mandal River

Sarapu River

Kumar River

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Mandal River

Sarapu River

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ICONS OF PARSANTIUM

Richard Green



Ondine

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	3	The Lady of the Summer Kingdom	23
<i>Who Are Parsantium's Icons?</i>	4	The Maharani	25
The Archbishop	7	The Mummy	27
The Basileus	9	The Platinum Knights	29
The Boss of All Bosses	11	The Rajah	31
The Caliph	13	The Water Lords	33
The Dragon	15	The Witch of Flotsam	35
The Emperor of the Jade Throne	17	<i>Relationship Dice</i>	37
The Gnoll Khan	19	<i>Secret Knowledge</i>	42
The Grand Master of the Blue Lotus	21	<i>Glossary</i>	43

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Foreword

Part of the fun of designing roleplaying games is watching people reassemble elements of your game into new experiences.

Parsantium was already underway as an RPG campaign using other d20-rolling systems when Jonathan Tweet and I designed *13th Age*. Rich Green picked up the icons and icon relationships in our storytelling mechanics as the long-missing pieces of his Byzantine Lego castle! The most powerful NPCs of Rich's world of magical intrigue and political magicians were transformed into icons and Parsantium found its voice.

You're holding the blueprint for *13th Age* campaigns set in a world of Byzantine intrigue. The fifteen icons in this book are the pillars, or the potential destroyers, of the greatest city of the world. Follow the Basileus and you'll dedicate yourself to protecting Parsantium at all costs. Risk a flirtation with the Lady of the Summer Kingdom and you could be snared by the whims of Faerie. Ally with the Maharani to fight for the world's smartest heroine whose Peacock Throne pulls its mythic power from Hindu archetypes not seen that often in Western fantasy. Pit yourself against the Boss of All Bosses and you'll be setting yourself up as a fantasy crimefighter in a game where the stakes may rise beyond the streets to cosmic injustice.

A few of the Parsantium icons could stand in for core icons in a variant campaign – the Mummy, for example, could take over the Lich King for a subtle rewrapping of undead horror. The Grand Master of the Blue Lotus taking over for the Archmage would be a much bigger shift, but the campaigns that result would offer a much different take on magic prowess, as well as a race of intelligent magic-using monkeys that aren't humans!

I'm happiest with the figure of the Rajah, the dread archvillain who was supposedly taken out of the world's power struggles ages ago. The lesson here, as always, is that sometimes it's not enough to see the archvillain's body locked in impenetrable magical ice. You need to flame the rakshasa's body and holy-lightning the dread soul, or you'll always have to fear that the future will end up tiger-striped.

Speaking of tigers, *Parsantium* reminds me that core *13th Age* could do a lot more with rakshasas. For a start, any campaign could borrow the Rajah as a newly returned icon of terror, or as the true tiger behind the mask of the Prince of Shadows.

That's our gift cycle complete then. I helped out with icon relationships and by having no objection to my surname being used as a name for one of the world's worst guys. Rich gives me the dream of a resurgent rakshasa.

Here's to a tiger-striped future... or to the characters who forge themselves into heroes making sure that never comes to pass!

– Rob Heinsoo

Seattle, WA
June 1, 2015



Who Are Parsantium's Icons?

This supplement for *Parsantium: City at the Crossroads* contains fifteen icons from the Free City of Parsantium and the lands beyond, for use with the 13th Age Roleplaying Game. These movers and shakers should also prove useful for GMs running Parsantium games using the 13th Age icon relationship rules with other incarnations of the world's bestselling fantasy RPG – or indeed anyone using the setting.

The influential NPCs outlined in this section and described in depth throughout the book include the rulers of kingdoms, powerful priests, arcane and martial orders and their leaders, and monstrous beings, both malevolent and benign. Your player characters can ally with or work against the machinations of these icons, thereby driving the story of your campaign in interesting new directions.

You should feel free to tweak the icons to fit your own campaign. For example, if the simmering conflict between Parsantium, Aqhran and the city of Loranto is a focus for your game, then the Basileus, the Caliph and the Water Lords are likely to play central roles, while the Emperor of the Jade Throne and the Mummy fade into the background. Or you might decide that the Grand Master of the Blue Lotus is secretly up to no good, or that the Witch of Flotsam is a useful ally for your PCs.

Each of the icons is laid out in the standard format, with secret GM-only knowledge covered

in a separate section at the end of the book. An additional chapter provides ideas for icon relationship rolls. These suggestions are divided into positive and negative relationships, and whether the dice are 5s or 6s; they can also be used as adventure hooks.



The Archbishop

His Radiance Arcadius is the Archbishop of Parsantium and the head of the Church of Helion, Lord of the Gods and Bathuran god of the harvest, summer and the sun. The Church's doctrine is to shine the light of civilization onto the world; followers of the Archbishop are expected to guard against evil wherever it might be found, and to show kindness and compassion to others.

The Basileus

The Basileus, a Bathuran word meaning “sovereign”, is the absolute ruler of the Free City of Parsantium and its surrounding territories. The current Basileus is Corandias XVIII the Lion-Blooded; he has been on the throne for ten



years and is a direct descendant of Corandias I the Magnificent. Corandias is fiercely determined to protect Parsantium and its people at all costs: the city must never again be allowed to suffer the indignity of falling to its enemies.

The Boss of All Bosses

Also known as the Fourth Tribune, the Boss of All Bosses controls the criminal gangs of the Hidden Quarter beneath the city streets of Parsantium. A shadowy Aqhrani man named Avishandu is the current Boss of All Bosses, making strategic decisions, resolving disputes and taking a sizeable cut of the gangs' profits. Cunning, absolutely ruthless and phenomenally patient, Avishandu is playing a long game.

The Caliph

The Great Caliph, Faisal al-Aqil, Most Blessed Disciple of the One True God, Supreme Potentate of the Desert Realms, Grand Sultan of the Sparkling Sea, Conqueror of Khemit and Protector of Parsantium, rules the Caliphate of Aqhran, the vast desert kingdom to the southwest of Parsantium. The Caliph is a scholar and an astronomer who sees himself as the spiritual heir to Hulieman, Parsantium's great sultan and an enlightened ruler with a passionate interest in the stars.

The Dragon

The Dragon is Naelere, a very old female bronze, who has lived in Parsantium for the last 700 years under various guises and acts as the city's unofficial protector. Little more than a legendary figure to most Parsantines, the Dragon is a mysterious guardian who has appeared a handful of times in the city's past to defend Parsantium from danger.

The Emperor of the Jade Throne

The youthful human Emperor of the Jade Throne, Cheng Xiao, also known as the Ruler of All Under Heaven, presides over the mighty kingdom of Tiangao, situated far to the east of Parsantium at the end of the Silk Road. The Emperor battles criminal tongs inside his borders, as well as the bloody raids of the Gnoll Khan on Tiangaon trade caravans.

The Gnoll Khan

The Grand Khan of the Gnolls, Urgedai the Kinslayer, menaces the Silk Road that runs from Parsantium across the Great Grass Sea to the exotic land of Tiangao far to the east. The Gnoll Khan has united many of the feral tribes of the steppes under his bloody standard, building them into a rapidly growing army.

The Grand Master of the Blue Lotus

The Grand Master of the Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus is the head of the world's foremost arcanists' guild – an order dedicated to the advancement of magical knowledge. The vanara Tapasranjan, a superlative practitioner of magic of the mind, is the current Grand Master. Extremely intelligent, honest, and very direct, he champions the rights of the downtrodden citizens of Parsantium's Old Quarter.

The Lady of the Summer Kingdom

As arrogant as she is alluring, Queen Nazrylana is the Summer Queen of Faerie, ruling a kingdom that exists in two worlds simultaneously and encompasses the Feyshore Forest to the east of Parsantium. The Lady of the Summer Kingdom watches over the lands of Faerie and the forests and wild places of the material world, defending them from brutal humanoids and from the relentless expansion of human civilization.



The Maharani

The wise and beautiful Maharani Rashmi rules the Kingdoms of Sampur, which lie to the southeast of Parsantium beyond the Pillars of Heaven Mountains, at the end of the Path to Heaven.

The daughter of the human Rana (queen) of the kingdom of Jhanzadar and the sun god Surya, the Maharani united the six kingdoms of Sampur by marrying the Rajputs (princes) of the other five.

The Mummy

The Mummy is the undead Queen Merytnofru, last pharaoh of the fallen desert kingdom of Khemit, which lies to the south of Parsantium. Newly awakened by a group of blundering tomb raiders, the Mummy is gathering the forces she needs to restore her once great kingdom to its former splendour.

The Platinum Knights

The Platinum Knights of Themicia is a fighting order of knights and paladins acting as the sword and shield of the Church of Themicia, sworn to protect the god's clerics and worshippers from harm, and to mete out justice to evildoers. Followers of a strict chivalric code, the Platinum Knights defend the inhabitants of the former Bathuran Empire from orcs, hobgoblins and other hostile humanoids.

The Rajah

The Rajah is Vrishabha, the rakshasa lord who ruled Parsantium nearly 2,000 years ago when the city was known as Dhak Janjua. Vrishabha has been frozen in the ice at the top of the Pillars of Heaven Mountains for 1,900 years, waiting to be freed so he might return to rule his city with an iron fist once again.

The Water Lords

The twelve Water Lords are the elected rulers of the Most Serene City of Loranto, a powerful mercantile canal city situated across the Corsairs' Sea to the west of Parsantium. Although the Water Lords squabble, scheme and plot against each other, all of them share the common aim of making Loranto the dominant maritime trade power in the Corsairs' Sea.

The Witch of Flotsam

Jagadamba, the Witch of Flotsam, is a fortune teller, skilled apothecary, priestess of the Black Mother, and Parsantium's most powerful witch. Jagadamba is renowned throughout the Old Quarter, and it's recently become fashionable for Bathuran noblewomen of the Imperial Quarter to consult with her.

HEROIC ICONS

Usually the Archbishop, the Dragon, the Grand Master of the Blue Lotus, the Maharani and the Platinum Knights. Possibly the Caliph and the Basileus.

AMBIGUOUS ICONS

Usually the Caliph, the Lady of the Summer Kingdom, the Basileus, the Emperor of the Jade Throne and the Water Lords. Possibly the Archbishop.

VILLAINOUS ICONS

Usually the Boss of All Bosses, the Gnoll Khan, the Mummy, the Rajah and the Witch of Flotsam. Possibly the Water Lords.



THE ARCHBISHOP

His Radiance Arcadius is the Archbishop of Parsantium and the head of the Church of Helion – Lord of the Gods and the Bathuran god of the harvest, summer and the sun.

QUOTE

“May the light of Helion, Lord of the Gods, continue to shine brightly upon our Basileus, bathing him in its splendid golden glow.”

USUAL LOCATION

In the Holy Basilica of Helion in Parsantium’s Civic Ward.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

As head of the Church of Helion, the Archbishop is the pinnacle of what is a state religion in all but name. Each week, the Basileus, the royal family and court attend services in the Holy Basilica conducted by Arcadius, and the Archbishop is also called upon to preside over coronations, royal weddings and state funerals when these events arise. Arcadius is a sixty-year-old male human who relishes his influential role and is not shy of reminding ambitious nobles, government officials and politicians that the Basileus rules with his god’s blessing. He is thin and stooped, with gnarled arthritic fingers that no amount of clerical magic seems to be able to fix permanently, and appears weighed down by his ornate red and gold vestments and a fan-shaped mitre so tall and heavy he has trouble keeping it on his balding head.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

The Church’s doctrine is to shine the light of civilization onto the world; followers of Helion are expected to guard against evil wherever it might be found, and to show kindness and compassion to others. The Church is eager to recover holy relics plundered 100 years ago by the hobgoblin conqueror of Parsantium, Kalgroth Ironheart, and often hires adventurers to follow any leads to their whereabouts. More powerful (and trusted) characters might be sent by the Archbishop to deal with Laskaris, necromancer of the Bone Catacombs, or one of the sinister cults lurking in Parsantium’s Hidden Quarter.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Archbishop can call upon both lower-ranking clerics of Helion and paladins of St Invictus when required. Meletius, an earnest, tonsured human novice serving at the Holy Basilica, often acts as the Archbishop’s representative.

ALLIES

The Archbishop is a staunch supporter of the Basileus who, in turn, shows proper respect to the Church. Arcadius also maintains good relations with Orthas, the Knight-Commander of the Platinum Knights, since the order’s goals are often aligned with the Church’s. Arcadius courts the favour of the Water Lords to ensure his status as supreme leader of Helion’s Church is recognized throughout the former Bathuran Empire.



ENEMIES

Despite Helion's doctrine of kindness and compassion, Arcadius shares many Bathuran nobles' prejudice and distrust of the Old Quarter's mainly Aqhrani and Sampuran citizens, and this extends to the Caliph of Aqhran, whom he suspects is plotting to retake Parsantium. Arcadius despises the Cult of the Black Mother, which is corrupting Bathuran noblewomen and turning them away from Helion. He fears the Lady of the Summer Kingdom, who once tricked him into her bed after a state banquet.

HISTORY

The Archbishop of Rezana was once regarded as the supreme head of the Church of Helion, but was superseded by the Archbishop of Parsantium

when Corandias the Magnificent built the Holy Basilica. Not all previous archbishops have been as devout as Arcadius: many were corrupt, taking bribes from nobles and politicians; others regularly took part in debauched orgies or had their rivals murdered. Arcadius strives to live up to the beatific reputation of the legendary Archbishop Bonosus the Peacemaker who, 200 years ago, convinced an orcish warlord not to attack the city. Some say he did this by converting the orc leader to Helion; others that he bribed him with a huge chest of gold from the Church's vaults.

THE TRUE DANGER

Helion's light will continue to shine brightly on Parsantium as long as the Archbishop does not allow himself to be seduced by the Lady of the Summer Kingdom for a second time.



THE BASILEUS



The Basileus, a Bathuran word meaning “sovereign”, is the absolute ruler of the Free City of Parsantium and its surrounding territories. His is an hereditary title, passed down the male line, and his authority is said to derive from the divine will of the god Helion.

QUOTE

“Parsantium is the greatest city in the known world and will remain so while I am the Basileus.”

USUAL LOCATION

In the Great Palace in the Palace Ward of the Free City of Parsantium.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The current Basileus is Corandias XVIII the Lion-Blooded; he has been on the throne for ten years and is a direct descendant of Corandias I the Magnificent. Proud of his ancestry, he is fiercely determined to protect Parsantium and its people at all costs: the city must never again be allowed to suffer the indignity of falling to its enemies.

Corandias brings great energy to his mission. He is a short, stocky and physically powerful male human in his thirties, who conducts himself with a confidence that borders on arrogance, though he is handsome and charismatic enough to get away with it. Usually calm and businesslike, he has a violent temper when pushed too far, most often by his maddeningly contrary and beautiful wife, the Despoina Thecia.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

The city’s bloated Imperial bureaucracy sometimes finds it expedient to hire adventurers to undertake missions on its behalf; more often than not this involves a trip into the dangerous Hidden Quarter below the city streets. Capable and experienced adventuring bands may find themselves approached by the Prefect, or one of the three Tribunes who govern the city’s quarters. High-level adventurers in good standing may be granted a royal audience and entrusted with a challenging mission on behalf of the Crown.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Basileus has the whole weight of Parsantium’s vast and convoluted government behind him,



from his three most senior officials in the Triumvirate (the Prefect, the Royal Exchequer and the Strategos) down to the lowliest administrators in the city's labyrinthine bureaucracy.

ALLIES

As Helion's chosen ruler on earth, the Basileus enjoys the loyal support of the Church and Archbishop. He can rely on military backing from the Platinum Knights, who are sworn to defend civilization from the hordes of evil humanoids who frequently ravage its borders. From time to time, the Basileus meets secretly with the Dragon in one of her many guises to listen to intelligence on plots that might endanger Parsantium.

ENEMIES

The criminal gangs of the Hidden Quarter, controlled by the Boss of All Bosses, are a constant thorn in the Basileus's side. The Rajah dreams of retaking his city, Dhak Janjua, now known as Parsantium.

HISTORY

Parsantium has been ruled by a Basileus since its conquest 860 years ago by Corandias the Magnificent and the armies of the Bathuran Empire; a 200-foot-tall bronze colossus depicting the first Basileus still stands at the centre of the city. In the centuries that followed, dozens of men (and a handful of women) have held the position, sometimes acceding to the throne as a legitimate heir, sometimes following the assassination or exile of the previous incumbent. Corandias the Lion-Blooded became Basileus after his elder brother, Iosephus II, lost his life in a tragic hunting accident.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right provided the Basileus can prevent tensions between Parsantium and her influential neighbours across the Corsairs' Sea from spiralling into war.



THE BOSS OF ALL BOSSES

Also known as the Fourth Tribune, the Boss of All Bosses controls the criminal gangs of the Hidden Quarter beneath the city streets of Parsantium.

QUOTE

“You have failed to meet your tribute target, Darius, for the first and final time. You will find the consequences of failure to be most unpleasant.”

USUAL LOCATION

In his secret headquarters in the Bone Catacombs below the Forest of the Dead, Parsantium’s walled cemetery to the southeast.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Avishandu is the current Boss of All Bosses ruling Parsantium’s criminal gangs; he presides over any necessary strategic decisions, resolves disputes and takes a sizeable cut of the profits. Only the leaders of the biggest gangs (such as the Golden Scimitars) have actually met Avishandu – a handsome Aqhrani man with an impeccably neat moustache and beard, piercing blue eyes and a cruel smile. Dressed in a jewelled black turban and purple silk djellaba, he receives visitors while lounging on a golden throne, surrounded by beautiful women.

The Boss of All Bosses is cunning, absolutely ruthless and phenomenally patient – Avishandu is playing a long game. It has taken him ten years to build up his current power base in the Old Quarter, but the Fourth Tribune is plotting to

expand his sphere of influence into the Mercantile and Imperial Quarters when the time is right. Avishandu has some concerns about the Old Quarter tribune Murad al-Rumi and his plans to tackle the criminal gangs, but for now, he is content to gather more intelligence through the spy he has placed in the tribune’s household.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Rogues, sellswords and other adventurers with dubious morals may decide to join a Hidden Quarter gang, carrying out daring burglaries and robberies, or acting as enforcers. Gang members in good standing might be called upon to undertake special missions by Heinsoo, Avishandu’s right-hand man. Freelance thieves will need to pay a percentage of their earnings to the local gang, or risk being found floating face down in the Dolphin Strait.

Heroic adventurers based in the Old Quarter are more likely to find themselves in conflict with the gangs, perhaps coming to the aid of a local businessman being leaned on for protection money or breaking up a smuggling operation. Experienced adventurers may become mixed up in the sinister schemes of the gang leaders, Heinsoo, and the Fourth Tribune himself.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Boss of All Bosses has nearly every criminal gang in Parsantium at his beck and call, including the powerful Golden Scimitars and the crews run by the six Dock Ward Bosses. The ruthless Heinsoo serves as his chief lieutenant and troubleshooter.



ALLIES

See Secret Knowledge on page 42. The Boss of All Bosses will work with anyone who can further his aims to grow his power base in the city. He has met with agents of the Water Lords and the Caliph in the past, and the door is open for further negotiations.

ENEMIES

The Basileus is determined to contain the Boss of All Bosses' influence, and the Tribune of the Old Quarter, Murad al-Rumi, has taken an unprecedented stand against the criminal gangs. The Dragon works actively against Avishandu, steering heroic adventurers into the path of gang activity in the hopes they will put an end to it. The Cult of the Black Mother also operates in the Hidden Quarter: as yet, confrontations have been restricted to a few bloody fights over territory but further conflict is likely.

HISTORY

There has been someone in nominal charge of the Old Quarter gangs for centuries, but Avishandu is the first Boss of All Bosses to wield true influence over organized crime in Parsantium. In the past, the title was an honorary one given to the head of the most powerful gang, who would arbitrate territorial disputes, but the Boss relied on the backing of the other gang leaders and did not exact tribute from them. This changed with the arrival of Avishandu, who seized control in a bloody coup and ruthlessly eliminated any opposition to establish a firm grip on power. Now, the Fourth Tribune is feared and treated with great respect by all the gang leaders, several of whom have witnessed first-hand how he deals with those who displease him.

THE TRUE DANGER

If the Boss of All Bosses can remove the Tribune of the Old Quarter from office, there will be no one to stand in his way as he extends his power base to cover the whole of Parsantium.



THE CALIPH



The Great Caliph, Faisal al-Aqil, Most Blessed Disciple of the One True God, Supreme Potentate of the Desert Realms, Grand Sultan of the Sparkling Sea, Conqueror of Khemit and Protector of Parsantium, rules the Caliphate of Aqhran, the vast desert kingdom to the southwest of Parsantium.

QUOTE

“Though the scimitar and the bow have their uses, it is through wisdom and learning that we will achieve true greatness.”

USUAL LOCATION

In his golden palace, the Medina Azhara (“City of Flowers”), in Qadisa, capital of Aqhran.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Caliph Faisal al-Aqil has only sat on the golden throne of Aqhran for four years, but to date the

young monarch has ruled the kingdom well. The Caliph readily takes counsel from the leading imams of Amur (the Aqhrani god) and has demonstrated both piety and wisdom. Handsome and charming, he has a calm temperament, given to reason over passion.

Faisal al-Aqil is a scholar and an astronomer who sees himself as the spiritual heir to Hulieman, Parsantium’s great sultan and an enlightened ruler with a passionate interest in the stars. He has invited sages and philosophers from all over the world to visit the House of Wisdom, Qadisa’s great university, and share their knowledge with Aqhrani scholars. The Caliph dreams of ushering in a new “golden age”, but first he must deal with several major threats to Aqhran’s stability.

Since the Water Lords of Loranto won “most favoured trading partner” status in Parsantium following their support for Corandias’s Great Crusade, the city state’s growth in power shows no sign of slowing, while the Caliphate’s wealth and influence declines. To the south, the nomadic ifrit tribes of the desert have come under the leadership of an efreeti warlord named Saleem al-Nuri, who is carving out a new emirate amidst the shifting sands, conducting frequent border raids into Caliphate territory. And to the northeast, in the lost kingdom of Khemit, the Mummy begins to stir.

Faisal al-Aqil would love to bring Parsantium back under the Caliphate’s aegis, but knows that this is unlikely to happen. The next best thing is to become the Free City’s preferred trading partner once again, making conflict with the Water Lords inevitable. The Caliph has been discreetly issuing pirates on the Corsairs’ Sea with letters of marque



encouraging them to attack merchant vessels from Loranto. He is playing a dangerous game, since the scurvy dogs are not known for their loyalty or discretion, but he is willing to take a calculated risk if it means trouble for the Water Lords.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Aqhrani adventurers from Parsantium's Old Quarter are often happy to serve the Caliph. Such missions could include protecting the interests of the Aqhrani House Qasim from the machinations of the Bathuran nobility, or venturing into trap-filled tombs in the Hidden Quarter at the behest of Imam Efrat of the Golden Mosque. The Caliph is keen to obtain the secret alchemical recipe for Parsantine Fire and it is rumoured that the crime lord Sheikh Babak al-Hasid has secured the services of the notorious Juma Gang to obtain the formula from the vaults beneath the city garrison.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Caliph has the support of his affable ambassador to Parsantium Hani al-Bahir, the imams of Amur, and the wealthy nobles of House Qasim. If strong-arm tactics are needed, he can call upon the gnoll mercenaries who defend the Caliphate's borders and fight on board its merchant dhows.

ALLIES

The Caliph is on good terms with the Maharani, and merchants from Aqhran's east coast cities are frequent visitors to the Sampuran port of Surivata; the Emperor of the Jade Throne is another key trading partner. Faisal al-Aqil is, of course, at pains to maintain a strong, positive

relationship with the Basileus to protect Aqhrani trade with Parsantium, but he has also had at least one discreet conversation with the Boss of All Bosses – through intermediaries, naturally.

ENEMIES

The Water Lords offer a serious challenge to the Caliphate's traditional dominance over maritime trade on the Corsairs' Sea and Faisal al-Aqil seeks to contain their power. There is no love lost between the Caliphate and the Archbishop, an ally of Loranto. The Mummy is another foe: Queen Merytnofru has sworn revenge on the Caliph for her downfall 1,500 years ago at the hands of Aqhran's armies.

HISTORY

The Caliphate of Aqhran began life nearly 2,000 years ago when the First Caliph was chosen by his peers as the wisest among them and thus fit to rule them in the newly founded city of Qadisa. Since that time the empire's territory has expanded through exploration, pacts with genie lords, war and, above all, trade. The current Caliph was the youngest son of the previous ruler and not expected to inherit the throne: Faisal al-Aqil was a student at the House of Wisdom, while his two older brothers were skilled warriors. However, four years ago Faisal's father and both siblings were killed in a fierce border skirmish with the ifrits, and the young scholar became the Caliph.

THE TRUE DANGER

If the Caliph's secret plotting against Parsantium and Loranto comes to light, Aqhran could find itself at war with both city states, as well as with the Mummy and the efreeti warlord.



THE DRAGON



The Dragon is Naelere, a very old female bronze, who has lived in Parsantium for the last 700 years under various guises and acts as the city's unofficial protector.

QUOTE

“Do come in and have a browse, dear. I’ve just put the kettle on for a nice cup of tea. Would you care for one?”

USUAL LOCATION

Behind the counter of her shop in the Mercantile Quarter, at a fashionable restaurant, in her VIP

box at the Hippodrome in the Imperial Quarter, or in the boat town of Flotsam, depending on her disguise (see Secret Knowledge on page 42).

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Dragon is little more than a legendary figure to most Parsantines: a mysterious guardian who has appeared a handful of times in the city’s past to defend Parsantium. Some, however, believe that the Dragon still dwells in the city, quietly watching over its citizens and protecting them from harm.

Since the Dragon can polymorph herself into any humanoid form, Naelere has adopted a number of secret identities, allowing her to keep tabs on what is going on in all parts of Parsantium. Thus disguised, the Dragon seeks to influence the course of events by making those in power aware of sinister plots against the city, and nudging adventuring bands in the right direction to frustrate the schemes of criminal gangs and evil cults. See Secret Knowledge for her current guises.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Adventurers who serve the Dragon usually do so unwittingly, at least at first. Naelere might sell them a bargain-priced treasure map in her shop, which just happens to lead to the lair of a cruel necromancer deep in the Hidden Quarter. Or she might tell them a story of wriggling sacks being unloaded from a ship at the Old Docks in the dead of night, thereby directing them to the headquarters of a slaver gang. After a while, some adventurers might realize they are being



manipulated, prompting Naelere to come clean about her motives, although she will only reveal her true nature to her most trusted agents.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

As described above, the Dragon prefers to use adventuring bands to do her bidding. Both the infamous Juma Gang and the flamboyantly named Luminous Heroes of the Ironcrag have acted on her behalf, without knowing her true identity.

ALLIES

The Dragon meets regularly with the Basileus in one of her human guises to keep him informed about goings-on among the higher echelons of Parsantine society, including the plots of the noble families and of ambitious politicians within the city's labyrinthine bureaucracy. She also meets from time to time with the Grand Master of the Blue Lotus to discuss magical threats to Parsantium; Tapasranjan is one of the few individuals who knows Naelere's true nature.

ENEMIES

The Dragon opposes the Boss of All Bosses, sending adventurers to disrupt gang activity in the Old Quarter whenever she can. She keeps a close watch on the Witch of Flotsam and is constantly on the lookout for agents of the Rajah. Because of her regular meetings with the Basileus, rumours have started that one of her personas is the ruler's mistress, earning her the undying enmity of the Despoina, Thecia, who is actively plotting to get rid of her rival.

HISTORY

Naelere made her lair in a sea cave on the coast to the south of Parsantium for the first century of her life. Driven out of her home by an aggressive, venerable dragon turtle, she moved north to the city, using her innate ability to change shape to live undetected among Parsantium's human inhabitants as a merchant sailor, travelling up and down the coast on trading expeditions. On one of these trips, she slipped quietly off her ship, transformed into her true shape and flew to her old sea cave home. This time, she got the better of the dragon turtle, slaying him in a terrible battle, and recovering both her own treasure hoard and her enemy's.

Having had her revenge, Naelere decided from this point on she would use her strength and power to protect the people of the city from its enemies. She began using different identities to gather information about what was going on in the city and intervening subtly to ensure that good prevailed. Very rarely, she took a more direct approach and assumed her natural form: as the Dragon, she helped defend the city (unsuccessfully) against Kalgroth Ironheart, and returned to the skies when Corandias the Stubborn's Great Crusade attacked the city. For the last hundred years, though, she has not appeared publicly in her draconic form.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right as long as the rakshasa agents of the Rajah do not discover one or more of the Dragon's secret identities.



THE EMPEROR OF THE JADE THRONE

The Emperor of the Jade Throne, also known as the Ruler of All Under Heaven, rules the mighty kingdom of Tiangao, situated far to the east of Parsantium at the end of the Silk Road.

QUOTE

“Remember that I rule this kingdom with the mandate of Heaven, mother. Just as jade is not polished without rubbing, an Emperor is not perfected without trials.”

USUAL LOCATIONS

In the Palace of Heavenly Tranquility at the centre of the Imperial capital of Yingzhou.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Tiangao is ruled by Emperor Cheng Xiao, a young male human of eighteen winters who ascended to the Jade Throne as a small child following the untimely death of his father, Cheng Wei. The Emperor is a handsome man, tall and thin, with his long black hair tied in a topknot, a neatly trimmed moustache and a narrow goatee beard. Wise beyond his years, he is advised by his mother, the formidable Empress Dowager Lien, and the Emperor’s Wu Jen, a wily eunuch sorcerer named Tsung Hu (see Secret Knowledge on page 42). This pair are often at odds with each other: Lien insists that her son should focus on domestic issues, making sure he has the support of his

fifteen provincial governors, the noble families, and the kingdom’s huge bureaucracy (one so large that it makes even Parsantium’s seem tiny). Tsung Hu, on the other hand, urges the Emperor to prioritize trade and to protect the vital Silk Road by forging an alliance with the centaurs and wiping out the threat posed by the Gnoll Khan.

Certainly, both areas need focus: recent floods, squabbling among the noble families, and the rise of criminal tongs such as the Eight Scorpions are causing unrest within Tiangao’s borders, but if action is not taken soon against the gnolls, the entire Great Grass Sea might fall under the Gnoll Khan’s control. However, since it was the centaur Khan of Khans who killed Cheng Xiao’s father in battle, it is unsurprising that the Empress Dowager is firmly opposed to an alliance. The Emperor has had to become adept at juggling these many priorities and has reminded his mother more than once that she is no longer ruling Tiangao.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Adventurers might be employed by the Emperor’s agents to guard an important caravan on the Silk Road against attacks from gnolls or centaurs; in the city, missions could involve spying on the Eight Scorpions or the drug-dealers of House Pavone, or perhaps raiding a white lotus den. The pragmatic Cheng Xiao is also considering a temporary alliance with the Boss of All Bosses against the Eight Scorpions and may require PCs with the appropriate underworld contacts to act as brokers.



CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Jade Throne has agents based in Tiangao Town in Parsantium, and in similar enclaves in other major cities, who work to safeguard the Emperor's interests. These men and women are often warrior-monks or priests at Tiangaon temples.

ALLIES

The Emperor is on good terms with the Basileus and Tiangao's other important trading partners, the Maharani, the Water Lords and the Caliph.

ENEMIES

The Gnoll Khan and his rapidly growing army represents the biggest external threat to the Emperor, hence the discussion of an alliance with the striped centaurs of the Great Grass Sea.

Within Tiangao, several provincial governors and their noble families are starting to question whether the Cheng Dynasty's divine mandate has come to an end. The Jade Throne must also remain vigilant as the power of the criminal tongs and their Dragon Masters grows.



HISTORY

The Cheng Dynasty has held the Jade Throne for over three hundred years but it was during the last turbulent century that Cheng Xiao's ancestors expanded the size of the kingdom by defeating several neighbouring states in a series of bloody wars, creating a unified Tiangao.

Once peace had been reached through conquest, the Emperor turned his attention to the west, establishing connections with Parsantium to open up trade along the Silk Road. Frequent centaur raids on Tiangaon caravans led to warfare on the Great Grass Sea and the death of the Emperor Cheng Wei at the hands of the Khan of Khans. Since his son and heir Cheng Xiao was only five at the time, the Empress Lien ruled as regent until he came of age.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right as long as the Emperor does not allow his battles with the Gnoll Khan to distract him from the enemy within – the Dragon Masters of the tongs – and vice versa.



THE GNOLL KHAN

The Grand Khan of the Gnolls menaces the Silk Road, which runs from Parsantium across the Great Grass Sea to the exotic land of Tiangao far to the east.

QUOTE

“You’re not a real gnoll. You’re a pathetic weakling, grown fat on the gold of the city-dwellers. Renounce their ways or I will rip out your throat!”

USUAL LOCATION

In his yurt, somewhere in the Great Grass Sea.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Gnoll Khan, Urgedai the Kinslayer, has united many of the feral gnoll tribes of the steppes under his bloody standard, violently deposing those leaders who refuse to swear fealty, but rewarding those who do with commander’s positions in his burgeoning army. Urgedai will not rest until he has conquered the Great Grass Sea in the name of Okkidor, the Prince of Demons. The Khan has decreed that it is the duty of all gnolls to pledge allegiance to him, whether they belong to one of the nomadic tribes of the grasslands, or have turned their backs on their homeland to seek their fortunes on the streets of Parsantium or in the desert lands of Aqhran and Khemit. Those who do not are traitors to the gnoll race and to Okkidor himself. Of course, the striped centaurs of the Great Grass Sea must also be wiped out, their half-eaten corpses piled high to honour the Prince of Demons. And those humans who seek to cross the steppes with their

trade caravans must pay a hefty tribute to the Grand Khan for safe passage.

Urgedai cuts an imposing figure: the Gnoll Khan is eight feet tall, has blue-black fur patterned with orange spots, and glowing green eyes. He looks even more terrifying when mounted on his dire hyena and flanked by his troll bodyguards.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Gnoll adventurers are the most likely to have a connection to the Khan. Some may have renounced their demonic heritage and despise everything Urgedai stands for, but others feel a yearning to commit acts of wanton slaughter under the banner of such an accomplished warlord. Non-gnolls may be hired to protect caravans heading along the Silk Road to Tiangao, or to rescue individuals captured and enslaved by the Gnoll Khan. Higher level adventurers may even be sent into the Great Grass Sea to assassinate him.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

Only black-hearted gnolls, dire hyenas, steppe trolls and demons follow the Grand Khan.

ALLIES

None.

ENEMIES

The Gnoll Khan is beset by enemies on all sides. On the steppes, the centaur Khan of Khans is fighting (and losing) a fierce battle against Urgedai. To the west and east, the Basileus and the Jade Throne are both determined to protect the



flow of trade along the Silk Road, while the Lady of the Summer Kingdom hates the Khan for his bloody raids into the Feyshore Forest.

HISTORY

Urgedai was the only son of Khoghrun, the bloodthirsty and respected leader of the Carrion Eaters tribe. When his father was slain by a poisoned centaur arrow, Urgedai claimed the throne, only for the tribe to refuse to be led by one so young and of such a strange appearance. Instead, they made Urgedai's uncle Tubeghrun their leader. Unwilling to swear an oath of loyalty

to the new khan, Urgedai fled into exile, living a solitary existence on the steppes for several years before he was captured by a rival tribe. Urgedai escaped their clutches by slaying his captors in a berserk frenzy, and returned triumphant to the Carrion Eaters. Tearing out his uncle's throat, he proclaimed himself the new khan. Since then he hasn't looked back.

THE TRUE DANGER

If the centaurs are eliminated, there will be no one to stop the Gnoll Khan controlling the full extent of the Silk Road. Parsantium could be next...

GNOLLS AS PCS

+2 Con OR +2 Dex

POWER OF THE PACK (Racial Power)

Once per battle, when you roll a natural even hit with a melee attack against an opponent engaged with one or more of your allies, you can deal an extra 1d6 damage per level.

Champion Feat: You can use Power of the Pack twice in a battle, one battle per day.

Not all gnolls are demon-worshipping fiends like the feral packs who roam the Great Grass Sea to the east of Parsantium. Many of the desert-dwelling gnolls of Khemit and Aqhran have long made a living from their favourite activity – violence and killing – by working as sell-swords. When Aqhrani traders first came to Parsantium, some brought gnoll bodyguards with them, and a minority of Parsantium's population has been made up of gnolls ever since. More recently, a number of gnoll mercenaries in Kalgroth Ironheart's army defected to the side of the crusaders led by Corandias the Stubborn, and stayed on in the city as part of the Parsantine army once the fighting was over. In recent years their numbers have been swelled by more barbarians arriving from the steppes.

Like the half-orcs, gnolls are part of the city's underclass, but while the former strive to become respectable, gnolls stay true to their savage heritage, finding employment as hired enforcers, bodyguards, bouncers and thugs, often getting mixed up in crime. Parsantium's gnolls are neutral or neutral evil, rather than chaotic evil in alignment, and have almost always abandoned worship of Okkidor in favour of Martek or the Sampuran battle god Indra.

Some gnolls have thrown their lot in with the Boss of All Bosses; others with the Basileus, the Caliph, or even the sinister Mummy, who plots to bring glory to the long-buried kingdom of Khemit. Those who stay most true to their bloodthirsty roots serve the Gnoll Khan.



Gary Dupuis



THE GRAND MASTER OF THE BLUE LOTUS



The Grand Master of the Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus is the head of the world's foremost arcanists' guild – an order whose foundation dates back to the conquest of Parsantium by Corandias the Magnificent.

QUOTE

“May I remind you, Sabir, that the purpose of the Order is to advance magical knowledge, and not to use magic for political power over the people of this city.”

USUAL LOCATION

In the Marjani Minar, headquarters of the Esoteric Order, in Parsantium's Artisans Ward.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus is ruled by a council of four arcanists, each representing a different magical tradition. This is a lifetime role; on the death of a master, the other three will meet to choose a successor. Each master serves as Grand Master for two years in rotation.

The current Grand Master, the Master of Southern Magic, is the vanara Tapasranjan, a superlative practitioner of magic of the mind. Tapasranjan is just over five feet tall and his monkey-like body is covered in snow white fur; he rarely sits on his Master's chair, preferring to float in the air in the lotus position instead. The Grand Master is extremely intelligent, honest, and very direct, cutting straight to the heart of any argument. He hates bullying and oppression and has recently spoken out about the prejudice faced by the citizens of the Old Quarter and the worsening division between the two halves of the city.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

The Esoteric Order is interested in acquiring spells, tomes and magical items, especially those found in the buried remains of Dhak Janjua beneath Parsantium's streets, or further afield in the desert ruins of Khemit to the south. Occasionally, those affiliated with the Order may be called upon to assist the City Watch in dealing with a dangerous magical threat. High-level arcanists may find themselves summoned to the



Marjani Minar and entrusted with the recovery of an unusual artefact or with sealing shut a portal leading to a perilous planar location.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Grand Master will often ask loyal rank and file wizards and sorcerers belonging to the Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus to carry out his wishes. If facing a dire magical threat, Tapasranjan will seek aid from the other three masters of the Order.

ALLIES

The Grand Master meets irregularly with the Dragon to discuss potential magical dangers threatening the city. The Maharani of his homeland appreciates Tapasranjan standing up for the interests of Sampurans living in Parsantium and is in frequent magical contact. From time to time, the Grand Master will travel to the lands of Faerie to meet with the Lady of the Summer Kingdom.

ENEMIES

The Mummy loathes the Esoteric Order for plundering magic from the tombs and pyramids of Khemit. Tapasranjan is all too aware of the

Rajah's desire to return and watches carefully for signs of rakshasa activity in the city.

HISTORY

The Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus was founded over 850 years ago by Marcus Servius, vizier to Corandias the Magnificent, who was intrigued by the exotic Sampuran and Aqhrani magics used in battle against the Bathuran army by Parsantine sorcerers and wizards. Servius, a capable wizard, set up the Order so that magic could be studied across cultural boundaries. Since then, the Order has expanded throughout the world and there are smaller branches in other major cities. Tapasranjan has served as the Grand Master for one year; he has another year to go before he hands over the title to Sabir al-Falasifa, the temperamental Master of Western Magic.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right as long as Ziyad, the fearsome efreeti lord imprisoned by the Esoteric Order, doesn't escape his great copper urn and bring the Grand Master's term – and his life – to a premature end.

VANARA AS PCS

+2 Dex OR +2 Wis

NIMBLE FEET (Racial Power)

Once per battle, you can pop free from an enemy as a free action during your turn.

Champion Feat: You can pop free even if you are grabbed or stuck.

Vanara, a race of furred, simian humanoids from the jungles of Sampur, can be found living alongside their human counterparts in parts of Parsantium's Old Quarter. Bold and curious, they are kind-hearted but have a tendency to poke their noses into matters that don't concern them and to play harmless but irritating pranks on others, which they think are hilarious. Vanara have prehensile tails, which they can use to pick up and carry objects, although these tails are not strong enough to wield weapons. Most vanara worship Hanuman the Monkey God.

Tapasranjan, current Grand Master of the Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus, is the most famous vanara living in the city, and the icon with whom most vanara have the strongest connection. Those with an affinity for their jungle homeland are likely to have a relationship with the Maharani.



THE LADY OF THE SUMMER KINGDOM

Queen Nazrylana is the Summer Queen of Faerie, ruling a kingdom that exists in two worlds simultaneously and encompasses the Feyshore Forest to the east of Parsantium.

QUOTE

“Well met in sunlight, brave mortals – try not to be too dazzled by my splendour. Pray tell what brings such humble souls before my shining throne.”

USUAL LOCATION

Within the Palace of Gleaming Spires in the city of Fiondil, attended by the lords and ladies of her Court.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

As arrogant as she is beautiful, the Lady of the Summer Kingdom rules the bright, southern half of the Faerie lands, while her counterpart the Winter King rules the cold, darker kingdom to the north. From Midwinter, the Lady’s power and influence grows as the Winter King’s wanes, reaching its zenith at Midsummer. The Queen watches over the lands of Faerie and the forests and wild places of the material world, defending them from brutal humanoids and the relentless expansion of human civilization. Her Court meets in Fiondil, an exquisite city with twisting spires of enchanted glass and elegant buildings of white and green marble, located in the heart of the vast forests of the

Summer Kingdom. Among the ranks of her Lords and Ladies are the elven queens and kings of the material world, including the Rowan Queen who rules the town of Forathin in the Feyshore Forest.

Queen Nazrylana is a tall, willowy, elf-like fey with long silver hair and stunning green eyes that seem to pierce the very souls of those she meets. She wears enchanted gowns spun from the finest gold thread, decorated with brightly embroidered flowers and leaves that change with the season. Her crown is a garland of deep crimson roses, their thorns never scratching her delicate, pale skin. Capricious and unpredictable, the Lady might be gracious or spiteful towards visitors to her Court, depending on her mood, and it is wise not to get on the wrong side of her. She responds better to poetry, dancing, merriment and song than to demonstrations of arcane or martial prowess. Each year on the Spring Equinox, the Queen chooses a new consort – male or female – from those who seek her favour, to rule by her side for the next twelve months.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Elves, gnomes, rangers, druids and others with an affinity for wild places might serve the Lady of the Summer Kingdom through her vassals in the material world. Adventurers in or near Parsantium may be sent by the Rowan Queen to investigate recent fomorian raids on the surface, to put a stop to the deadly pranks of the Brotherhood of Spite on the city streets, or to protect the Feyshore Forest from a rampaging gnoll pack.



CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Summer Queen is served by the Lords and Ladies of her Court – many are elven kings and queens, but the capricious Pixie Prince, the Baroness of the Brownies and other faerie nobles also number among their ranks. The Lady uses elves, gnomes and all sorts of fey to do her bidding in Parsantium and the surrounding lands.

ALLIES

The Lady enjoys meeting with the Grand Master of the Blue Lotus to discuss the finer points of enchantment and illusion magics over a refreshing cup of tea. She is also (mostly) on good terms with the Basileus, who knows how to treat another monarch with proper respect and keeps the humanoid tribes around Parsantium in check. This relationship has become strained recently over encroachments into the Feyshore Forest by loggers from nearby villages.

ENEMIES

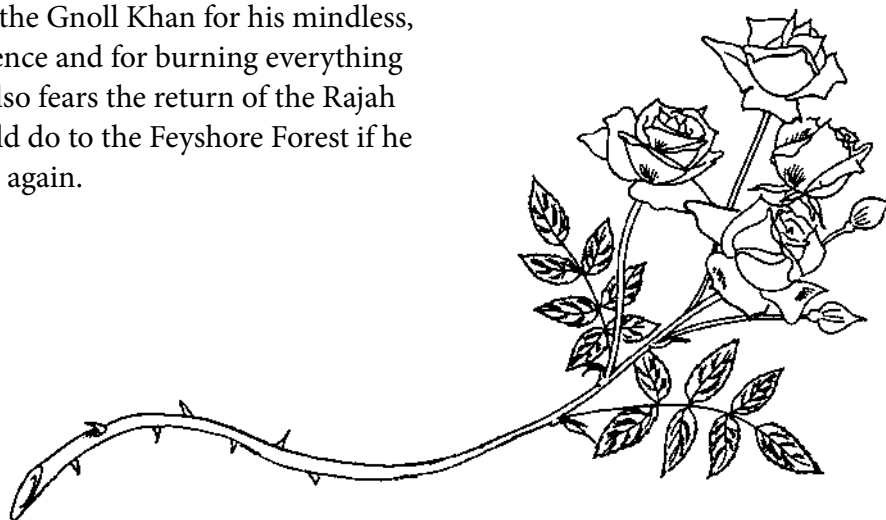
The Queen hates the Gnoll Khan for his mindless, bloodthirsty violence and for burning everything in his path. She also fears the return of the Rajah and what he would do to the Feyshore Forest if he ruled Parsantium again.

HISTORY

Long, long ago, the Lady was married to the Winter King and they ruled the lands of Faerie together as King and Queen. Following a terrible argument – some say this was caused by the Winter King cheating on Nazrylana with a pair of nymphs; others that the Summer Queen slept with the Bathuran god Piagus – the two monarchs separated, splitting Faerie into two kingdoms. The brightest and merriest of the fey – brownies, dryads, pixies and sprites – went to live in the Lady's Summer Kingdom, while the darker-hearted quicklings, redcaps and spriggans followed the Winter King to his icy fortress in the north. There have been several attempts at a reconciliation in the centuries that followed, but to no avail.

THE TRUE DANGER

As long as the Lady of the Summer Kingdom and the Winter King do not get back together, the material world will not fall to the power of Faerie.





THE MAHARANI

The Maharani rules the six Kingdoms of Sampur, which lie to the southeast of Parsantium, beyond the Pillars of Heaven Mountains, at the end of the Path to Heaven.

QUOTE

“While I sit on the Peacock Throne, brother will no longer take up arms against brother.”

USUAL LOCATION

At one of her six royal palaces in the Kingdoms of Sampur.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The wise and beautiful Maharani Rashmi is the daughter of the former Rana (queen) of the Sampuran kingdom of Jhanzadar and the resplendent sun god Surya – her name means “ray of light” or “sunbeam” in Sampuran. The Maharani has five husbands, each one a Rajput (prince) of the kshatriya (warrior) caste and ruler of one of the other five kingdoms. Rashmi rules Sampur from each of its six kingdoms in turn, spending two months of the year in each with her court, and with each husband, before returning to the Royal Capital in Jhanzadar, where she has no husband, in the winter.

The Maharani’s unusual marital arrangements have allowed her to unite Sampur under her rule, although there is nearly as much jealous squabbling among her husbands as there was between their kingdoms before she married them. Nevertheless, the forceful Maharani is determined

to keep control of the Kingdoms and prevent them descending into civil war yet again. Strong trade links with both Parsantium and Aqhran are vital to maintaining stability in Sampur, and Rashmi feels a responsibility to safeguard the interests of Sampurans living in Parsantium.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

The Maharani sees Parsantines of Sampuran origin, whether human, halfling or vanara, as her people, and will use adventurers living in the city to look after her Kingdoms’ concerns. This might involve guarding an important caravan as it passes through the Pillars of Heaven Mountains, or protecting the interests of House Kapali against the machinations of its Bathuran rivals in House Marfisi. Her oracles have warned her of the Rajah’s impending return, prompting the Maharani to call upon high-level PCs to oppose his rakshasa agents.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

Warriors of the kshatriya caste, brahmins (priests) of the Sampuran gods, and sorcerers (often specialists in southern “mind magic”) serve the Maharani in the lands beyond Sampur’s borders. Most are humans, some are vanara or halflings.

ALLIES

Tapasranjan, the vanaran Grand Master of the Blue Lotus, is the Maharani’s closest ally in Parsantium, but she also maintains cordial relations with her key trading partners, the Basileus and the Caliph.



ENEMIES

The Maharani fears for the return of the Rajah, whose tyrannical rule in Dhak Janjua was even worse than that of the infamous geomancers of Karjan who once oppressed the people of Sampur. Rashmi is also concerned by tales from Parsantium of the Witch of Flotsam and the Cult of the Black Mother, which is twisting the worship of Kali to some dark purpose.

HISTORY

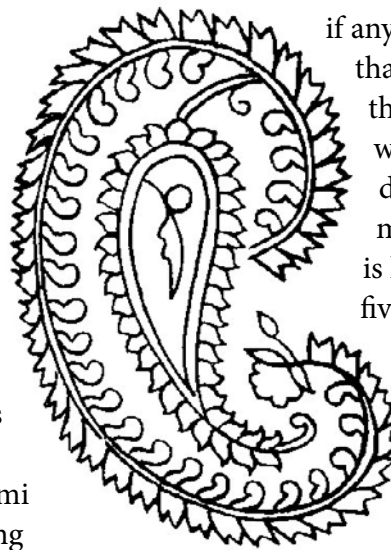
Rashmi has been on the Peacock Throne for fifteen years. After the death of her mother Avanti, Rashmi became the Rana of Jhanzadar and soon found herself wooed by the rajputs who ruled the other five kingdoms of Sampur. Each proposed uniting his kingdom with Jhanzadar through marriage. One prince offered Rashmi a sacred white elephant as a wedding gift, another offered her a ruby as big as a giant's fist, the third offered a cloak spun of

purest gold, and so on. Rashmi, who was as wise and clever as she was beautiful, told the rajputs she was having trouble deciding between them and proposed that she would marry them all.

The princes dismissed this suggestion angrily, but Rashmi, who knew how much they loved to gamble, challenged them to a game of dice: if she won the game, she would marry all five of her

suitors and become Maharani of Sampur, but

if any of the rajputs won, she would marry that prince alone and he would rule both their kingdoms. Some say that Rashmi was lucky, others that she used a magic die, but whatever the truth of the matter, she won the game – and that is how she became the Maharani with five husbands.



THE TRUE DANGER

As long as Maharani can stop her husbands' bickering from boiling over into civil war between the Kingdoms, the geomancers of Karjan will never return to power in Sampur.



THE MUMMY

The Mummy is the undead Queen Merytnofru, last pharaoh of the fallen desert kingdom of Khemit, which lies to the south of Parsantium.

QUOTE

“The waters of the Nahal River will soon rise again, bringing the bounteous floods and restoring my kingdom to its former greatness.”

USUAL LOCATION

In her pyramid tomb in the half-buried ruined city of Hammunopolis, Khemit.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The desert kingdom of Khemit collapsed more than 1,500 years ago following a terrible magical cataclysm caused by Queen Merytnofru’s sorcerers as they battled the invading army of the Caliphate of Aqhran. Khemit today is a burning hot wasteland, its magnificent cities buried beneath the desert sands. Its few inhabitants – humans, gnolls and halflings – eke out a meagre existence in small towns based around oases.

Since the time of Corandias the Magnificent, expeditions from Parsantium have ventured into the abandoned desert ruins and carted off whatever they could lay their hands on, from great stone sphinxes and obelisks (like the one standing on the spina in the Hippodrome) to the fabulous treasures and jewellery found inside the tombs and pyramids of the pharaohs. Sometimes, the tomb-raiding of adventurers and thieves has disturbed things best left well alone. A group of arcane scholars from Parsantium’s university

recently discovered a secret entrance into the Great Pyramid of Merytnofru in Hammunopolis and made the fatal mistake of opening the Mummy’s gold sarcophagus.

Having disposed of the interlopers, the newly awakened Mummy began gathering the forces needed to restore her once great kingdom to its former splendour. She swiftly seized control of the nearest oasis and subjugated its human and gnoll inhabitants. Next, Queen Merytnofru plans to return her powerful sorcerers from the dead, so they might raise an undead army. The Mummy will use this force to conquer what’s left of Khemit before turning her fury on the hated Caliphate of Aqhran. But to bring back the sorcerers, she needs to recover a number of lost artefacts, many currently in the Free City of Parsantium.

Queen Merytnofru is horrifying to behold: a shrivelled, blackened, walking corpse, wrapped in yellowed bandages and dripping with gold and lapis-lazuli jewellery. She wears the tall golden Cobra Crown of Khemit atop her head.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Evil sorcerers and dark-hearted Khemiti adventurers, both gnoll and human, ally themselves with the Mummy, seeking to gain personal power through their service. The Queen sends her agents to Parsantium to steal back magical items plundered from desert tombs. At higher levels, adventurers may be required to break into the hidden vaults beneath the Imperial Museum of Antiquities or even the “Collection” on the nineteenth floor of the Marjani Minar.



CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Mummy uses human warriors and desert gnolls from Khemit as muscle, alongside undead servants (typically skeletons and zombies) animated by her growing coterie of evil necromancers. Once she has found the means to bring back her long-dead sorcerers, the army of undead soldiers she can call upon will number in the thousands.

ALLIES

None currently, but the pharaohs of Khemit traded with Dhak Janjua in the time of the Rajah's rule, so there is potential for an alliance in the future.

ENEMIES

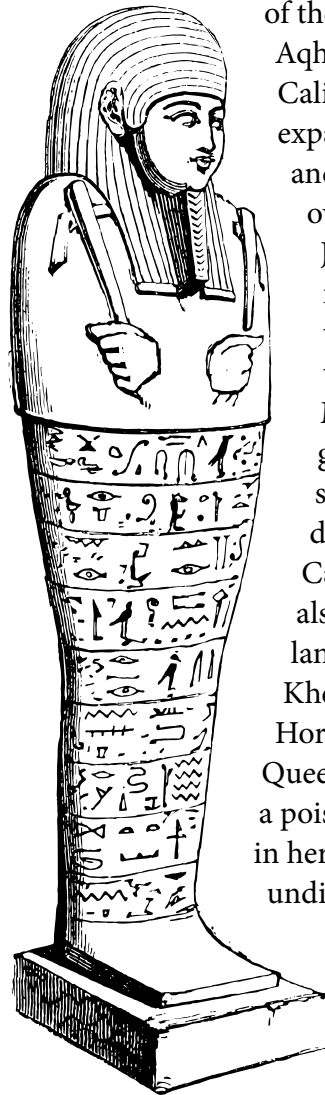
The Mummy hates Aqhran for causing the downfall of her kingdom, and has sworn revenge on the current Caliph. The Grand Master of the Blue Lotus has her enmity because mages of the Esoteric Order have been plundering magic from the tombs and pyramids of Khemit.

HISTORY

The kingdom of Khemit was already in decline when Vrishabha became Rajah of Dhak Janjua: its pharaonic dynasty had long since fallen into decadent

indolence. In the centuries following the fall of the Rajah, Khemeti civilization

continued to decline as the power of the neighbouring Caliphate of Aqhran rose. Eventually a warlike Caliph, Bahir al-Asad, sought to expand the Caliphate into Khemit and thereby secure the important overland trade route to Dhak Janjua. Expecting to just march into Khemit with his army, the Caliph underestimated the lengths to which Queen Merytnofru was prepared to go to protect her kingdom. Her sorcerers cast a terrible ritual of dark power that obliterated the Caliph and his entire army, but also devastated the surrounding lands and the Nahal River on which Khemit's very existence depended. Horrified at what she had done, Queen Merytnofru killed herself with a poisonous asp, and was entombed in her Great Pyramid, where she lay undisturbed for over 1,500 years.



THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right as long as the Mummy and the Rajah do not form an alliance.



THE PLATINUM KNIGHTS

The Platinum Knights of Themicia is a fighting order of knights and paladins acting as the sword and shield of the Church of Themicia, sworn to protect the god's clerics and followers from harm, and to mete out justice to evildoers.

QUOTE

“Let the nine principles of the Code of Themicia guide your every thought and deed and the path from squire to knight will run straight and true.”
– Orthas

USUAL LOCATIONS

In their cloud fortress headquarters, hovering above the island of Cervenra in the Corsairs' Sea, in the Celestial Bastion in Parsantium's Grand Ward, and in chapter houses throughout the former Bathuran Empire.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Followers of a strict chivalric code, the Platinum Knights of Themicia defend the inhabitants of the Sunset Lands from orcs, hobgoblins and other warlike humanoids. Grand Master Baragarr, a male dragonkin (dragonic) paladin, leads the Platinum Knights, directing the order's activities from its cloud fortress base; a female adult silver dragon named Theodoracia is his companion and mount. Baragarr's current priorities are to keep the Corsairs' Sea safe for merchant traffic by putting a stop to piracy, and to protect the remnants of the Bathuran Empire from humanoid and giant attacks.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Good-hearted adventurers are most likely to join the order as Platinum Knights-Errant, since they are not required to stand duty in the chapter house but instead can wander freely in search of honourable adventures and quests. Knight-Commanders will sometimes dispatch knights-errant on missions for the order, such as investigating reports of humanoid raiding on nearby villages.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

Each chapter house has a Knight-Commander: the veteran male human paladin Orthas leads the Celestial Bastion in Parsantium, alongside the high priestess of the temple, a bronze-scaled female dragonkin named Ruthva. Human members of the Platinum Knights are often the devout younger sons of nobility, but dragonkin also join the order in large numbers, nearly all of them paladins.

ALLIES

The Platinum Knights are closely allied to the Basileus of Parsantium, who relies on the order's military backing to help defend the city against the hordes of evil humanoids who menace its borders. The Knights' goals are often aligned with those of the Archbishop, who also seeks to safeguard civilization. Despite their dubious morals, the Water Lords of Loranto share the Knights' desire to keep the Corsairs' Sea free from pirates and have enlisted the order's support in protecting their merchant shipping from attack.



ENEMIES

The hobgoblins, orcs, trolls and giants of the Sunset Lands to the west and the Gnoll Khan to the east are the main foes of the Platinum Knights. On the Corsairs' Sea, they wage war on pirates and are likely to come into conflict with rival fighting order the Crusading Brothers of the Sword, who have taken to attacking both Aqhrani and Lorantine ships en route to Parsantium.

HISTORY

The Platinum Knights were founded 500 years ago in the city of Rezana by Drusilla, a paladin of Themicia and Bathuran army veteran, who spoke out against the insane and sadistic Emperor Quintus II for burning hundreds of innocents alive for "treason", while ignoring the orcish armies ravaging the villages on his borders. Drusilla swore she would defeat the raiders herself and led a dozen or so knights to victory over the

humanoids; she fought bravely but perished in the battle and was canonized, becoming Themicia's first saint. Nearly 200 years later, the much larger Order of Platinum Knights saved Rezana from a savage orcish attack; in gratitude Emperor Iosephus granted them the island of Cervenna. A century ago, the Platinum Knights played a key role in the Great Crusade to recapture Parsantium from its hobgoblin conquerors, establishing the Celestial Bastion as their chapter house in the Grand Ward following their victory. Now, the Platinum Knights form the core of Parsantium's elite cavalry in open battle.

THE TRUE DANGER

Provided the Platinum Knights can stand firm against the foul hordes of giants and trolls spilling out of the Gloomtangle Forest, the lands of the former Bathuran Empire will not fall further into darkness.



THE RAJAH

The Rajah is Vrishabha, the rakshasa lord who ruled Parsantium nearly 2,000 years ago when the city was known as Dhak Janjua.

QUOTE

“Soon...”

USUAL LOCATION

Frozen in the ice at the top of Mount Kalathang, the highest peak in the Pillars of Heaven Mountains, located to the southeast of Parsantium.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Rajah’s cruel and tyrannical rule over Dhak Janjua lasted for 33 years. Vrishabha would brook no challenges to his authority, outlawing the worship of Kali, whom he believed too popular with the masses, within a few years of taking the throne, and brutally crushing a rebellion led by priests of Hanuman in the later days of his reign. Those directly involved in the revolt, their families, friends and acquaintances were all tortured viciously before being put to death. The temples of the Monkey God were razed and his priests rounded up and slaughtered.

One young priest, named Srivatsa, escaped into the great forest outside the city and prayed to Hanuman for help. The god sent a messenger to Srivatsa in the form of a talking blue-bottomed monkey, who arrived at the priest’s camp riding an enormous white elephant. Wrapped in its trunk the elephant held the means to bring down Vrishabha: a great bow forged from steel that fired holy arrows.

Srivatsa rode into Dhak Janjua astride the elephant, a mount fit to serve the avenger of the god. Unopposed by the guards on the city gate, he was cheered by gathering crowds as he passed through the city streets. Arriving at the palace, the hero fought his way through the Rajah’s soldiers and sorcerers before confronting Vrishabha himself in his throne room. Here, Srivatsa shot the rakshasa through the heart with Hanuman’s bow, slaying him, and thus saving the city of Dhak Janjua from tyranny and evil.

But that wasn’t the end of the Rajah. After his death Vrishabha was reincarnated in his tiger-like form and frozen in the ice at the summit of the Pillars of Heaven Mountains. For 1,900 years he has been trapped in the glacier, waiting to be freed so he might return to rule Dhak Janjua once again.

The Rajah’s agents have been searching for centuries for the ancient texts, rituals and esoteric components needed to free their master. Dire warnings of the Rajah’s imminent return can be heard on the streets of Parsantium from the lips of mystics and fakirs, but these are usually dismissed as the rantings of madmen.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Only the most black-hearted and evil adventurers would knowingly serve the Rajah, but his rakshasa agents often employ parties of unwitting PCs to carry out missions on their master’s behalf. These jobs might involve retrieving an ancient scroll from a location in the Hidden Quarter below the city for a kindly old priest, or spying on a foreign merchant or noble house for a rakshasa who has infiltrated the city’s bureaucracy.



CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Rajah is served by rakshasa agents in Parsantium, and by a shadowy cabal of yak-headed sorcerers living in the Pillars of Heaven Mountains; both are capable of taking human form and hiding in plain sight. In Parsantium, Vrishabha's rakshasa agents hold positions of power in the city's bureaucracy, noble houses and criminal underworld (see Secret Knowledge on page 42).

ALLIES

None.

ENEMIES

No one (with the possible exception of the Mummy) wants to see the Rajah return.

HISTORY

Vrishabha was among the refugees who fled across the Pillars of Heaven Mountains from the evil geomancer rulers of Karjan to the fledgling town of Dhak Janjua. The young rakshasa had

been sent there by his fiendish master Nataraj with orders to infiltrate the new city and insinuate himself into a position of power. Vrishabha was charismatic and devious so this wasn't hard for him, and both his wealth and his sway with the nascent ruling class grew rapidly. He soon took control of the burgeoning city as its Rajah, aided by powerful servants, including other rakshasas, human sorcerers and warlocks, as well as some infernal allies. By now he had superseded his former master Nataraj in influence and magical power, which granted him independence and advancement to the highest rakshasa caste.

During his reign, Vrishabha expanded the city's influence, strengthening trade links and instituting a programme of public works to make Dhak Janjua even greater: Parsantium's huge stone bridges crossing the Dolphin Strait were built during this time.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right as long as the Rajah's rakshasa allies do not uncover the secret of freeing him from the ice.



THE WATER LORDS

The twelve Water Lords govern the Most Serene City of Loranto, a thriving and powerful canal city situated across the Corsairs' Sea to the west of Parsantium.

QUOTE

"If you would be so kind as to sign the agreement here. And here. Oh, and here. I wouldn't worry about the fine script at the bottom – that's just there to keep the clerks happy. Excellent..."

USUAL LOCATION

In the Grand Council Chamber of the Duke's Palace in the heart of Loranto.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

The Water Lords are the elected rulers of Loranto, chosen by members of the city's 36 wealthiest noble families in a convoluted voting process involving coloured stones, enchanted bowls fashioned from exquisite blue glass, and the recital of a lengthy hymn to Amphetia, Queen of the Sea and patron goddess of Loranto. Each Water Lord governs for life; typically, the Lords are elderly Bathuran men, although there are three women among the current line-up, one of whom is a half-elf.

The Water Lords squabble, scheme and plot against each other, sometimes hiring assassins to eliminate a rival, at other times using blackmail, bribery or intimidation in pursuit of their individual goals. Despite their scheming, however, all of them have the best interests of Loranto at heart and share the common aim of making the

Most Serene City the dominant maritime trade power in the Corsairs' Sea.

The twelve Water Lords elect a Duke from among their number to lead them, also a lifetime post. The Duke is usually considered to be the wisest of the Lords and is referred to by the honorific "Most Sagacious". Upon his (or her) election, the Duke "marries" the Queen of the Sea in a ceremony held in her island basilica and attended by the noble families. The wily but frail septuagenarian Peregrinus Galvano has been clinging onto the position of Duke for the past three years, despite barely being able to stand unaided, let alone walk to his throne. Galvano refuses to give credence to the warmongers among the Water Lords; he has so far seen off several assassination attempts by his rivals.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

The Water Lords make frequent use of mercenaries and other disposable "hired help" to achieve their aims, and will often recruit adventurers to carry out missions on either their personal behalf or that of the Grand Council as a whole. These tasks might be directed against pirates or evil humanoids threatening Loranto's trade interests, but are just as likely to involve more dubious activities such as spying, theft or violence against seemingly innocent enemies of the individual Lord. Capable PCs in Parsantium who are affiliated with the Water Lords might be charged with stealing the formula for Parsantine Fire, or assassinating a troublesome politician or bureaucrat.



CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The scheming Water Lords rely on numerous spies, rogues and assassins to carry out their devious plots, but their ambassador to Parsantium is not above taking the direct approach and deploying hired swashbucklers on the streets of the city when the need arises.

ALLIES

Despite their ambitions for Loranto to eclipse Parsantium's wealth and power, the Water Lords maintain good relations with the Basileus and enjoy favourable trading arrangements, while the Archbishop seeks the Water Lords' continued endorsement as supreme leader of Helion's church. Because both groups are determined to wipe out the pirates plaguing shipping on the Corsairs' Sea, the Water Lords sometimes ally themselves with the Platinum Knights, who have a chapter house in Loranto.

ENEMIES

The Caliph of Aqhran resents the lower rates of duty paid by the Water Lords and is wary of Loranto's growing power.

HISTORY

Loranto remained part of the western Bathuran Empire until the fall of Rezana to the orcs

in 1122. After successfully repelling a series of orcish attacks on the city, the Lorantines appointed Lord Admiral Valentinus Piramo as Duke, and declared themselves a free city. Loranto relied on trade – particularly in salt but also glassware, pottery and silver – and it secured a vital trading agreement with Parsantium to safeguard important trade routes to the east. This treaty acknowledged the Basileus as ruler of the Bathuran Empire while preserving Loranto's newly won independent status.

Three hundred years later, when Parsantium fell to the hobgoblin armies of Kalgroth Ironheart, the Water Lords bankrolled Corandias the Stubborn's Great Crusade to retake the city. In return for their financial support, the previous trading agreement was renegotiated: Loranto's merchants now enjoy a "favoured partner" status and pay only 7% duty (rather than 10%) on trade goods entering and leaving Parsantium. The references to the Basileus as ruler of the Empire were quietly dropped from the revised document.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right if Duke Peregrinus Galvano survives the fourth and fifth assassination attempts by the cat's paws of those Water Lords who want Loranto to go to war with Parsantium.



THE WITCH OF FLOTSAM



Jagadamba, the Witch of Flotsam, is a fortune teller, a priestess of the Black Mother, and Parsantium's most powerful witch.

QUOTE

"I see a bright future for you if you can shake off your childish fears and embrace the path of the Black Mother."

USUAL LOCATION

On her houseboat in the boat-town of Flotsam, floating in the Dolphin Strait off the Dock Ward.

COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Jagadamba is renowned throughout the Old Quarter and beyond as a gifted fortune teller, a

skilled apothecary, and – some whisper – a witch. She has long practised the art of samudrika sastra (palm reading) and sold potions to locals, but it's recently become fashionable among the Bathuran elite of the Imperial Quarter to consult with her. Many rich women travel in disguise by boat across the Dolphin Strait to visit Jagadamba for a love potion to woo back a wandering husband, or to have their palms read. Some of these women are later initiated into the Cult of the Black Mother by the Witch at a secret deul below the streets of the Temple Ward. The Cult's aims are obscure, but through Jagadamba's efforts it is slowly infiltrating the highest echelons of Parsantine society.

The Witch of Flotsam is a very old Sampuran woman, tiny and stooped, with a wrinkled face and wispy white hair sticking out in all directions. She wears plain black robes and plenty of gold jewellery bearing snake and skull motifs (both symbols of her patron goddess). Her houseboat is furnished with colourful wall hangings and intricately woven Aqhrani rugs; a cat-sized purple pseudodragon sits atop one of the crammed shelves of potions and jars, looking down curiously on the Witch's visitors.

ADVENTURERS & THE ICON

Many hard-up adventurers begin their careers in Parsantium living on a leaky houseboat in Flotsam; they may visit the Witch to buy potions and elixirs, have obscure magical items identified, or seek answers to questions on occult matters. Sometimes Jagadamba's fee isn't paid in gold bezants: she might ask the PCs to harvest rare herbs under the light of a full moon in the Feyshore Forest, bring her the



yellowed fingernails of a ghoul, or fetch some other bizarre ingredient for her concoctions.

Heroic adventurers who uncover the sinister plots of the Cult of the Black Mother, hatched deep below the city streets in the Hidden Quarter, should be wary. Jagadamba is a mighty wielder of dark magics, making direct conflict with her a fearsome prospect.

CHAMPIONS & FOLLOWERS

The Witch can call upon the thuggee, an ancient order of robbers and assassins who serve Kali, to protect her from her enemies, and has the full weight of the Cult of the Black Mother behind her.

ALLIES

Jagadamba has won over many noblewomen among the Bathuran families of the Imperial Quarter, and has even initiated Ciceria, the mother of the Despoina (the Basileus's wife) into the Cult of the Black Mother. Although the Cult and the Boss of All Bosses maintain an uneasy truce in the Hidden Quarter, Jagadamba has worked for the Golden Scimitars in the past, once implanting a "spirit snake" inside a meddlesome adventurer to bring his mind under the control of the criminal gang.

ENEMIES

The Archbishop is appalled at stories of Bathuran noblewomen getting mixed up in dark cults and witchcraft, and is determined to stamp out the Cult of the Black Mother's influence. The Boss of All Bosses bides his time, watching Jagadamba and the Cult carefully, but avoids direct confrontation for now. The Dragon knows the Witch is up to no good and will manipulate some of her pet adventurers into investigating on her behalf.

HISTORY

Jagadamba has lived on her houseboat in Flotsam for as long as anyone can remember – and in a city with elves and dwarves, that's a long time. The Witch joined the Cult of the Black Mother over a century ago and has served the goddess's will ever since.

THE TRUE DANGER

Everything will be all right provided that the Witch and the Cult are unable to complete the ritual that will enslave the population of Parsantium.



RELATIONSHIP DICE

This section presents some suggestions for the results of icon relationship dice rolls in Parsantium. These are divided into positive and negative results, and whether the dice are 5s or 6s. Where the PC has a conflicted relationship with the icon, you should choose the result that seems the most interesting. Alternatively, you can pick one or two of these ideas to use as adventure hooks or simply as ways to complicate the lives of your PCs.

THE ARCHBISHOP

POSITIVE 6: You are given a small, beautifully painted wooden icon (religious painting) depicting Morning Glory, Helion's golden hippogriff. This icon can be used to summon a magical flying steed once per day to carry you wherever you want to go.

POSITIVE 5: As 6, but the hippogriff will fly you to where the Archbishop wants you to go.

NEGATIVE 6: A rich Bathuran noblewoman offers you financial assistance. This wealthy lady had been a regular visitor to the Witch of Flotsam until the Archbishop found out and told her husband, who banned her from crossing the Dolphin Strait.

NEGATIVE 5: As 6, but the rich noblewoman's husband notices his coffers are not as full as they should be and demands you make recompense.

THE BASILEUS

POSITIVE 6: You are granted an audience with a senior official in the Bureaucracy, who cuts

through the customary red tape and grants you access to the hard-to-find information you've been seeking.

POSITIVE 5: As 6, but in obtaining the buried information, you attract the attention of your enemies.

NEGATIVE 6: Criminal contacts in the Hidden Quarter provide some extra muscle to help you against the agents of the Basileus.

NEGATIVE 5: As 6, but the extra muscle cannot be trusted and will turn on you once the mission is over.

THE BOSS OF ALL BOSSES

POSITIVE 6: Your connection to the Boss of All Bosses allows you to call upon one of the local criminal gangs for aid: perhaps they will hide you from your enemies in the tunnels of the Hidden Quarter.

POSITIVE 5: The gang helps you out of your current predicament but expects a favour in return: the Coopers' and Wainwrights' Guild has got behind with its protection payments to the gang and its guildmaster needs to be sent a strong message.

NEGATIVE 6: The Dragon approaches you in one of her many guises and provides you with the information you need to frustrate the Fourth Tribune's plot.

NEGATIVE 5: As 6, but unfortunately, the Dragon underestimated the number of gang enforcers at the rendezvous, so there's a good chance you could be in over your head.



THE CALIPH

POSITIVE 6: House Qasim puts one of its swift merchant dhows at your disposal.

POSITIVE 5: As above, but the vessel comes under attack by the Crusading Brothers of the Sword, arranged by Qasim's arch-rivals in House Scipio.

NEGATIVE 6: Gnoll servants of the Mummy give you a magical scarab pendant of lapis-lazuli and gold that will protect you from the Caliph's agents.

NEGATIVE 5: Unfortunately, the scarab was stolen from the hidden vaults beneath the Imperial Museum of Antiquities in a violent raid. The Chancellor of the Scholastica demands the item is returned and those responsible are brought to justice.

THE DRAGON

POSITIVE 6: In a curio shop in Tinker's Alley you stumble across an old scroll, map or book that contains an ancient ritual that will help you with your current quest.

POSITIVE 5: As above, but part of the old scroll is faded or missing. The ritual still works, but there are unwanted repercussions in casting it.

NEGATIVE 6: Hidden Quarter gang members in the service of the Boss of All Bosses help you outwit a band of rival adventurers working for the Dragon.

OR

NEGATIVE 6: A Dinejan's Deliveries pigeon brings you an anonymous message from an enemy of the Dragon, providing a clue to one of her secret identities.

NEGATIVE 5: As the first 6 above, but the gang's assistance leads to a bloody confrontation with the other adventurers on the streets of the Old

Quarter. From now on, Sergeant Saurish of the City Watch is keeping an eye on your every move.

THE EMPEROR OF THE JADE THRONE

POSITIVE 6: Gong Sun, priest at the Temple of Qian Lao in Tiangao Town, is happy to provide you with healing magic and potions.

POSITIVE 5: As above, but Gong Sun's offer of healing comes with a request that you track down the temple's high priest, Wang Jin We, who has gone missing.

NEGATIVE 6: Shen Fu, leader of the Eight Scorpions, offers to lend you some of his tattooed hoodlums to assist you in your endeavours.

NEGATIVE 5: Siding with the Eight Scorpions draws unwanted attention from another criminal gang, most likely the Golden Scimitars or the Lamplighters.

THE GNOLL KHAN

POSITIVE 6: Warriors serving the Gnoll Khan give you a magical *cruel* spear decorated with clan totems and with a nasty barbed head. The spear is capable of inflicting terrible wounds in battle.

POSITIVE 5: As above, but the spear is possessed by a demonic servant of Okkidor, and sometimes sends its wielder into an uncontrollable frenzy of bloodlust.

NEGATIVE 6: A centaur priestess of Zana warns you of a planned ambush by the Gnoll Khan's forces as the caravan you are guarding travels along the Silk Road.

NEGATIVE 5: As above, but in avoiding the gnoll ambush your caravan is attacked by a centaur raiding party.



THE GRAND MASTER OF THE BLUE LOTUS

POSITIVE 6: Arcanists in the Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus offer you the use of a magical staff from the order's "Collection" to aid you in your quest.

OR

POSITIVE 6: Your studies in the library of the Marjani Minar allow you to make sense of the mystical runes carved on the dungeon wall.

POSITIVE 5: As the first 6 above, but an unscrupulous wizard belonging to the Fireball Club gets wind of you having the item and decides he deserves it more than you do.

NEGATIVE 6: Rakshasas serving the Rajah send you a magical dream revealing how to bypass the wards protecting the secrets of the Blue Lotus.

NEGATIVE 5: While helpful, the rakshasas' dream message takes the form of a disturbing nightmare and you wake up in a cold sweat. Lose a recovery.

THE LADY OF THE SUMMER KINGDOM

POSITIVE 6: The high elves of Forathin allow you to use a fey crossroads to pass swiftly through Faerie to your destination.

POSITIVE 5: The crossroads guardian insists you perform a favour for him in return for letting you pass through, perhaps getting rid of an angry ogre or troll living nearby.

NEGATIVE 6: The Gnoll Khan provides you with a pack of gnoll warriors to aid you against the Lady.

NEGATIVE 5: As above, but the gnoll warriors are feral and bloodthirsty, horrifying the locals by snacking on live meerkats and biting the fingers off their opponents. Your reputation suffers as a result.

THE MAHARANI

POSITIVE 6: You receive a blessing from the gods when you go to pray in the Vishnu Mandira. Until your next full heal-up, once per battle you can reroll any single d20 roll.

POSITIVE 5: As above, but the blessing of the gods comes with a price: the brahmin Laksminath asks your party to accompany him into the Hidden Quarter in search of secret temples belonging to the Cult of the Black Mother.

NEGATIVE 6: A rakshasa in the service of the Rajah approaches you in human guise and tells you of a secret entrance to the estate of House Kapali, where the scrolls you need to obtain are located.

NEGATIVE 5: As above, but the secret entrance is guarded by a dangerous six-armed animated stone statue which must be overcome.

THE MUMMY

POSITIVE 6: Your knowledge of Khemeti burial customs allows you to identify the correct path to follow in order to avoid the tomb's deadly traps.

POSITIVE 5: As above, but by avoiding the traps you run into a huge swarm of ravenous scarab beetles.

NEGATIVE 6: Aqhrani allies of the Caliph give you a bejewelled magical scimitar that deals +1d6 extra damage to undead (+2d6 champion tier, +3d6 epic tier).

NEGATIVE 5: As above, but the scimitar's quirk is that it observes the four daily prayers of Amur's faithful – at dawn, noon, dusk and an hour before midnight – reciting them in a loud bellow, wherever you happen to be at the time and whatever you are doing.



THE PLATINUM KNIGHTS

POSITIVE 6: Your affiliation to the Platinum Knights grants you an audience with the Lorantine ambassador to Parsantium; he shares with you useful secret information obtained by spies of the Water Lords.

OR

POSITIVE 6: Aetheria, a young female silver dragon paying a visit to the Celestial Bastion, is impressed by your knightly virtues; she offers to carry you into your next battle.

POSITIVE 5: As the first 6 above, but the Water Lords wants a favour in return for the information. Perhaps you can deal with the well-organized band of hobgoblins attacking merchants as they travel along the Via Bathura.

OR

POSITIVE 5: As the second 6 above, but Aetheria is a very gung-ho flyer, so you're in for a rollercoaster ride... and that's if you can stay on!

NEGATIVE 6: Knights of the Crusading Brothers of the Sword offer you the pick of gear looted from a Platinum Knights ship they recently attacked and sank in the Corsairs' Sea.

NEGATIVE 5: As above, but the item you choose is easily identified as belonging to a well-known Platinum Knight-Errant and you are blamed for her death.

THE RAJAH

POSITIVE 6: A rakshasa agent who has infiltrated House Scipio puts the noble family's considerable resources at your disposal.

POSITIVE 5: As above, but the agent wants your help in obtaining a rare Aqhrani religious text.

The only known copy is in a restricted section of the Library of All Knowledge, under the watchful eye of its minotaur librarians.

NEGATIVE 6: Vashnawi, the guardian naga living in the Ivory Towers of the Scholastica, invites you to meet with her. You and your companions have appeared in her dreams and Vashnawi can provide you with useful information about the rakshasa plot to free the Rajah.

NEGATIVE 5: As above, but you must obtain some of this information yourself by recovering a book of esoteric lore from a wizard's tomb somewhere in the Hidden Quarter.

THE WATER LORDS

POSITIVE 6: The Water Lords are incredibly wealthy and are happy to provide you, their loyal servant, with whatever assistance or equipment you might need.

POSITIVE 5: As above, but the Water Lords' ambassador needs your help. The current Keeper of the Argent Coffers is not sympathetic to the Lorantine cause and has been asking all sorts of awkward questions recently. This dwarf is in the habit of visiting a certain bathhouse every Veneris (Friday); the floors there can be quite slippery and there's a chance he could meet with an unfortunate accident...

NEGATIVE 6: Sometimes the Water Lords' machinations against each other are better played out on the streets of Parsantium rather than the canals of Loranto. Representatives of one Lord tell you about a fortune in gems hidden on board the vessel of his rival.

NEGATIVE 5: As above, but once you have stolen the gems, you are double-crossed by the first Lord, who sends his well-armed men to eliminate you.



THE WITCH OF FLOTSAM

POSITIVE 6: The Witch of Flotsam is willing to give you one or two magic potions or elixirs to help you on your current quest. Alternatively, she provides you with the occult information you seek.

POSITIVE 5: As above, but Jagadamba asks you to head into the badlands to the south of Parsantium and bring her back the mantichore's tail spike she needs as a potion ingredient.

NEGATIVE 6: The Dragon, in one of her many guises, provides you with clues to the location of a secret temple to the Black Mother beneath the streets of the Temple Ward.

NEGATIVE 5: As above, but thuggee killers in the Cult of the Black Mother's service are on your trail.



SECRET KNOWLEDGE

Secret, GM-only knowledge on several of the icons is covered here, separately from the main icons section, so you can more easily share the rest of the book with your players.

The Boss of All Bosses

Avishandu is a powerful rakshasa lord, serving the Rajah, Vrishabha. His natural form is that of a sleek, white tiger-headed humanoid with bright blue eyes, striking markings and impressive whiskers. As he builds his power base in Parsantium, the Boss of All Bosses is using his lieutenant Heinsoo to search for the means to free his master from his icy prison in the Pillars of Heaven Mountains.

The Dragon

Naelere hides in plain sight in Parsantium by adopting three principal secret identities:

Irene, the sweet, friendly old lady who runs the Curio Cabinet, a shop in Tinker's Alley in the Mercantile Quarter.

Lady Viviana Megaris, the fashionable and seemingly air-headed young socialite who sponsors a gladiator stable at the Hippodrome and holds clandestine rendezvous with the Basileus.

Jarwyn, an elderly male dwarf carpenter with a fine pirate accent, who lives on a houseboat in the boat-town of Flotsam.

The Emperor of the Jade Throne

The Emperor's Wu Jen, Tsung Hu, is a polymorphed tien lung (celestial dragon) and an erstwhile lover of Naelere, the Dragon. He is a source of much wise counsel, and encourages the Emperor to be his own man rather than following his mother's lead in all things.

The Rajah

The Rajah is served by two rakshasa lords in positions of great power in Parsantium: the Boss of all Bosses and Aurius Kalothese, Tribune of the

Imperial Quarter. While Avishandu tends to rely on his lieutenant, the deadly assassin Heinsoo, to undertake missions for his master, Aurius will often employ adventurers, assuming a suitably innocuous guise to do so, and disposing of them after their work is complete.

The number of rakshasas in the city has increased considerably recently, following an unfortunate incident in which the notorious Juma Gang accidentally freed 49 rakshasas who had been transformed into cows by a curse.





GLOSSARY

AQHRANI A noble human people originally from the deserts of the Caliphate of Aqhran to the southwest of Parsantium. Mostly living in the city's Old and Mercantile Quarters, they have light brown to mahogany skin, dark hair and brown eyes, and the men typically wear beards.

BATHURAN Humans originally from Bathura or its former Empire in the Sunset Lands to the northwest of Parsantium. They are white- or olive-skinned, with a wide range of hair colours and blue, brown or green eyes. Some can trace their ancestry back to the noble families of the Bathuran peninsula, but many are the descendants of merchants and common folk.

BROTHERHOOD OF SPITE A group of around 70 gnomes and goblins who have banded together to play murderous pranks on the "big folk".

THE FIREBALL CLUB An exclusive club for "gentlemen arcanists", located in the magic district of the Victory Ward.

KARJAN One of the six Kingdoms of Sampur. In the distant past, it was home to a cabal of powerful and evil geomancers who ruled over northwestern Sampur.

MARJANI MINAR The headquarters of the Esoteric Order of the Blue Lotus, a slender tower nearly 500 feet in height.

PREFECT The senior government official responsible for the day-to-day running of the Free City of Parsantium and head of its vast Bureaucracy.

SAMPURAN Humans from the Kingdoms of Sampur to the southeast of Parsantium. Those in

the city are usually descended from the original founders of Dhak Janjua, who fled from their homeland nearly 2,000 years ago and live almost exclusively in the Old Quarter. Sampurans have light to dark brown skin, black hair and almond-shaped brown or black eyes. They adhere to a strict caste system.

SCHOLASTICIA Parsantium's university, renowned as the foremost centre of mundane learning in the former Bathuran Empire.

ST INVICTUS One of Helion's many saints. A soldier in Corandias I the Magnificent's army, he was martyred when he died defending his comrades from a wyvern, piercing it through the heart with his lance.

STRATEGOS The commander-in-chief of Parsantium's army and navy.

TIANGAON A human people from the kingdom of Tiangao to the east of Parsantium, at the far end of the Silk Road. They have light-coloured skin, almond-shaped brown, amber or green eyes, and dark brown, black or silvery-white hair (even among the young).

TRIBUNES Appointed by the Prefect, the three tribunes each govern one of the city's quarters (Imperial, Mercantile and Old).

VANARA A race of furred, monkey-like humanoids from the jungles of Sampur.

VISHNU MANDIRA A large, impressive temple in Parsantium's Temple Ward, dedicated to the most widely worshipped god of the Sampuran pantheon.

WHITE LOTUS DUST An addictive hallucinogenic drug, smuggled into the city via the Silk Road.

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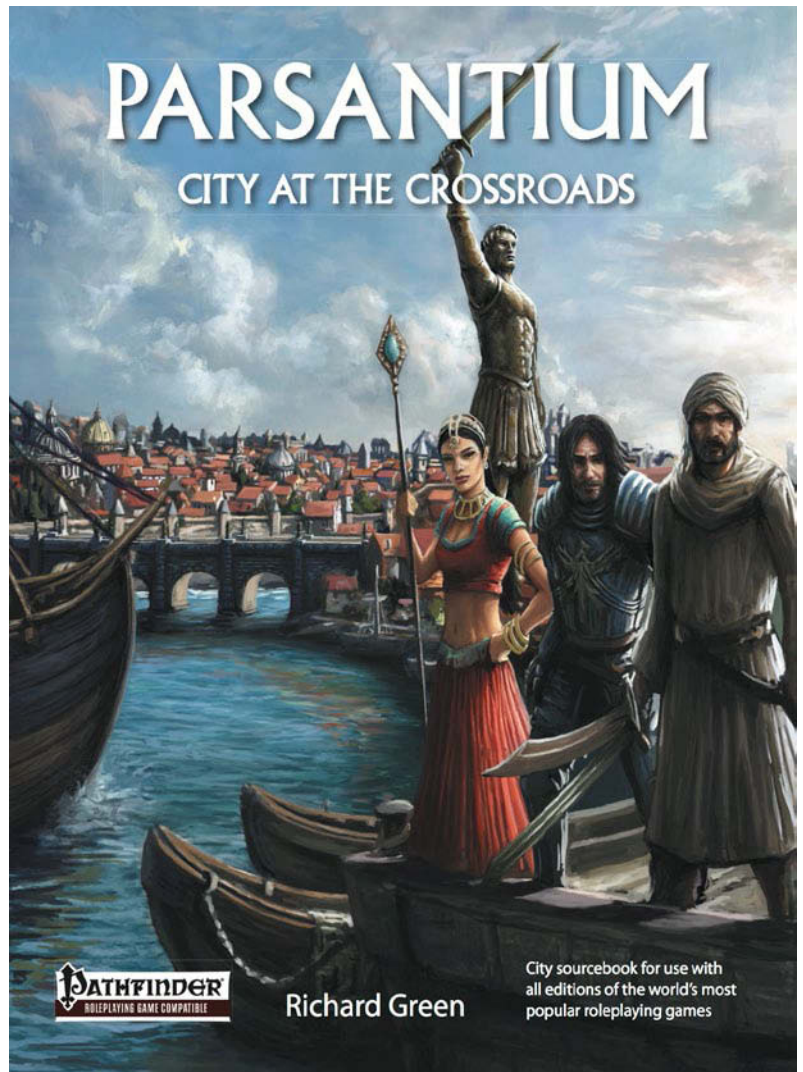
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