

COMBAT ADVANTAGE

A FREE Bi-Monthly Supplement for 4E

**50+
PAGES**

#16

March/April 2010

Explore the Wonders of
CASSIA



A complete 34-page 4e mini-setting

- New races
- Six planar realms
- Introducing the Messenger specialist class



INCLUDES 2 PREVIEWS!

Study the kapre from the Buan campaign setting by Nosotecatu Publishing and explore Wilford Manor in Neuroglyph Games' upcoming Doombringer Saga...

PLUS

The Artist's Spotlight: Martin Hanford



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I'd like to start by saying ALL our issues are special to us. Each one holds some value, no matter how small or gracious the content. We love each and every one of our CAs.

But as with all parents with their children, we do tend to push the others out of the way when a new one arrives. It's so fresh and exciting and you can't wait to show it off. Such is the same with CA16.

This issue is kind of like giving birth to twins for we have two new provisions for your campaign: a **mini-setting** and the **specialist class**. First off, there is the **Three Ring of Cassia mini-campaign**. All the basics you'll need to drop your players into this arcane dominion of teleportation, exquisite beauty and hidden danger. Or you can use it as your character's homeworld, ripe with details to twist and turn to suit your own needs.

And then we have the **messenger specialist class**, a new concept we've been working on for a while and one you're going to see quite a bit. Specialist classes are a way to bulk up your existing class with a unique direction and guidance right from first level. Plus, in the case of mini-campaigns, they allow you the chance to try out variations suitable to your environment without having to roll up a new character.

But my space here is getting smaller and I could blush and gloat forever. While you read through, I'll just sit here and take a much needed nap... like all new parents.

Todd Crapper
Editor-in-Chief
Combat Advantage

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Mini-Setting: The Three Rings of Cassia

pg 3

Nestled within the Astral Sea is the mysterious and alluring Three Rings of Cassia, a dominion conceived by a god of travel and constructed to allow teleportation as the natural mode of transportation. A complete mini-setting designed to fit in any campaign.

by Todd Crapper

Specialist Class: The Messenger

pg 29

The word of Tyrolar is more than just gospel - it is power! Introducing a new class designed to combine with your existing character to add flavour to your Cassian campaign.

by Todd Crapper

REVIEW: Soundscapes by Sonic Legends

pg 37

Dwarves play cards in the far corner while the barkeep pours them a flagon of ale; the door to a haunted keep creaks open and gives you cause to draw your weapon. Check out this review for two Soundscapes from Sonic Legends!

by Michael Evans

PREVIEW: The Kapre by Norfecatu Publishing

pg 41

Introducing the kapre in this exclusive preview of the upcoming Buan Campaign Setting.

PREVIEW: Wilford Manor by Neuroglyph Games

pg 44

Explore the mysteries of the manor in this exclusive preview for the upcoming Doombringer campaign saga.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: Martin Hanford

pg 53



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(Note: Exclusive content not available in layers...)

Combat Advantage #16

Design/Content: Todd Crapper, Michael Evans, Billy Recio, Tim Rose

Artwork: Dimitri Castrique, John Corpuz, Robert Kusiak, Sara Moses, Leszek Nowak,

Kieron O'Gorman, Dimitar Tzankov, Dr. Zsolt Zatrok

Layout: Todd Crapper, Michael Evans (Wilford Manor) Editors: Vincent Harper, Philip Corpuz (Kapre)

First Publication 2010, Emerald Press PDF Publishing

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Cover:

A magnificent landscape by Chris Hortsch used to provide a view of the plains of Ynman, Inner Realm of the Second Ring of Insight on the Three Rings of Cassia.

“...and when the Traveler looked upon his Creation, he was pleased for he had made something beautiful. As he watched his people rise from fields to stretch their legs, he blew a soft wind on them and the glow of Tyssa touched their faces and His people felt blessed. To celebrate His creation, Tyrolar lit up the night sky with stars and comets for His people to enjoy. As the Rings passed overhead, His people passed from one to the other in glee, amazed by the magnificence their god had created and they wept in appreciation. And on the next day, the Traveler left the Rings to teach them how to survive on their own. The Rings stopped turning, darkness fell over His people and they began to despair.”
- A recalling of the **First Lesson, one of the most revered tales from the Torrus.**

THE 3 RINGS OF CASSIA



A MINI-CAMPAIGN SETTING

by Todd Crapper

There was that scent again. Matted fur soaked in the pollen of young trees. It was distinct, especially compared to the tall stalks of corn surrounding Bevel that he knew it could only mean one thing: predators had passed over from Upteran.

Prepared for the worst, Bevel crouched to the ground and held perfectly still. What was that smell? What were these things exactly? He hadn't been in the jungle realm enough to commit scents and details to memory, and it was only because he could see the First Ring of Might passing windside in the sky ahead of him that he guessed the origin of this potential danger. With the smell of the predators coming from that direction, he could only assume that whatever-they-were passed over a short while ago and prowled for food...or worse.

Crumbled stalks cracked under the pressure of a paw to his left, but Bevel did not turn to face it. There was more than one, of that he was certain. Their smell was too profound to come from just one animal. When another crack came to his right, he knew he was right. They were surrounding him and that could only mean they knew he was here.

Pulling the strap at the front of his pack, Bevel held his grip around the shoulders, allowing his supplies to slowly and easily lower to the ground. Reaching behind, daring not to move any more than necessary and alert these creatures to his exact location, he fumbled around until he found the leather tongue sticking out of the upper pouch. Holding his upper body as still as possible, he shifted his feet slowly, preparing to dart away from the creatures and through the cornfield. His other hand was already bound around the grip of his small crossbow. Snapping out the tongue on his pack, Bevel shot into the corn, causing a commotion as he did. Retreating close to a hundred feet from his original position, he crouched back down again and turned to face his fallen pack.

The secret weapon of any Cassian was the stenchpack, a marvelous invention that had saved so many lives but taken credit for by too many people to allow any one person to benefit from the thousands of purchases made every day. Pulling out the tongue on the pouch tore open the stenchpack and released a powerful scent of cooked deer meat around the pack, guaranteed to lure any hunters into view.



Any creature eating the stenchpack would die a quick death from its poison, but Bevel suspected that if these creatures did come from the jungles of Upteran, they would mostly be immune to its effects. Poison was one of the most natural occurrences on that realm and any creature living into maturity would have developed their own resilience to everything but the deadliest kinds.

Dark shadows peered out past the corn and came into view as Bevel raised his crossbow to aim at the first one he saw. Blackwolves. Three of them. Each sniffing out the stenchpack and distracted from any other scent within range, including Bevel's. The lure of deer meat was too strong for these simple creatures to turn down, but it wouldn't take long until they either consumed it or realized there was no meat at all inside. Bevel aimed for the first one to lick at the pack.

The bolt struck its neck and snapped as the shaft slid across the bone and tightened muscles of the wolf. The creature went limp with a shortened yelp and collapsed on top of the stenchpack, startling the others as they scurried away. Bevel could hear them break through the cornfield and fade out of sight until he was satisfied enough to stand up and return to his supplies.

The blackwolf was still alive, breathing heavily and whimpering with its eyes pleading with Bevel for mercy. Reloading his crossbow, Bevel prepared to finish the animal off. Not just to spare it pain, but the nights were cold and his fur cloak was already thinning out from excessive use. Pointing the tip of the bolt at its heart, a flash of colour caught his eye and he removed his finger from the trigger.

Underneath the thick, wiry fur of the wolf's neck was a dark grey band and a rope-like loop attached. A collar, Bevel realized. This was not a wild animal, but a hunting dog. It had an owner...

The arrow embedded in Bevel's left shoulder answered his next question before he could ask it. Instinctively, he dropped down to the ground on his side and crawled away from his pack and the wounded wolf. Despite the immense pain of the wound already inflicted, Bevel could feel the oozing poison coursing into his bloodstream. It was only a matter of time and he had to act fast or become unable to defend himself at all. Rolling over onto his back, Bevel aimed the crossbow forward, waiting for the first creature to break through the corn and charge forward.

A second arrow fell from the sky and pierced the ground inches from his scalp. Looking up, he watched as more of them flew through the air, angling down towards the area where he lay. There were five of them at a time, and that could only mean there were a handful of these hunters looking for blood. Cannibals, Bevel thought, and that could only mean rastans: barbaric raiders with no sense of decency or humanity in their raging bodies. Whatever they found, they took, and whoever they saw, they killed. The rush of fear was too great for Bevel to remain still and it would only be a matter of time before one of these blind arrows caught him. He rolled onto his feet, scraping the shaft of the arrow along the ground and tearing his wound further, and ran like mad away from the rastans.

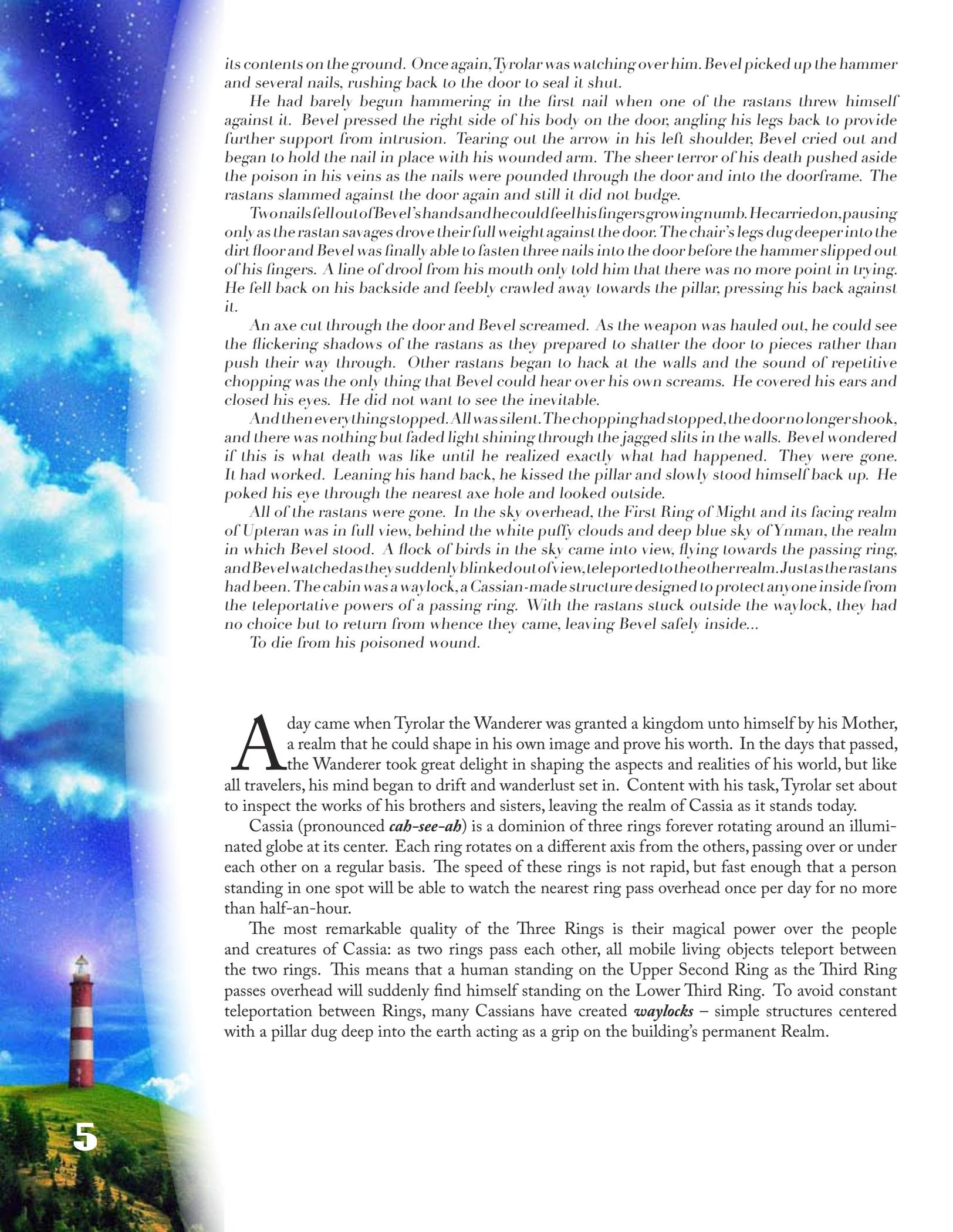
The bloodthirsty screams of a dozen rastans confirmed his worst fears. Bevel tried to keep his path scattered, darting from side to side, increasing and decreasing speed so as not to make for an easy target. With the corn acting as a barrier between him and his attackers, none of the arrows hissing towards him could ever come close. But he could not run forever and the poison was starting to cloud his mind.

Pushing his way through the field, Bevel tripped forward as the corn suddenly cleared and he laid face first in an open circle of grass. Thirty yards ahead was a simple wooden shack. There were no windows, no chimney, just front door, walls, and roof. Bevel thanked Tyrolar for his blessings. A waypoint.

Kicking his feet in the dirt to right himself, Bevel barely made it to the door of the waypoint when another arrow came close enough to startle him, striking the wall next to where he stood. Praying that it wasn't locked, Bevel turned the knob and pushed. It opened. Turning inside, he slammed the door shut and looked for a lock on the inside of the door. There was none. But the door opened inwards, so he only needed something to jam against the door.

Inside the waypoint, there was very little. A single chair in the centre of the room, a clay basin set in the floor for someone to relieve himself, and shelves containing various farming supplies. Next to the chair was the pillar, a long wooden shaft buried deep into the ground and connected to the roof above. This was going to be Bevel's salvation...so long as he could survive the assault of the rastans.

Bevel grabbed the chair and jammed its head directly under the doorknob, kicking its legs firmly into the dirt floor. As another arrowhead slammed into the door, its metal tip barely piercing the wood, he leapt to the shelves and pushed everything aside, searching for anything else that could be used to keep that door closed. A hammer fell onto the ground and the box of nails next to it flew open, spewing



its contents on the ground. Once again, Tyrolar was watching over him. Bevel picked up the hammer and several nails, rushing back to the door to seal it shut.

He had barely begun hammering in the first nail when one of the rastans threw himself against it. Bevel pressed the right side of his body on the door, angling his legs back to provide further support from intrusion. Tearing out the arrow in his left shoulder, Bevel cried out and began to hold the nail in place with his wounded arm. The sheer terror of his death pushed aside the poison in his veins as the nails were pounded through the door and into the doorframe. The rastans slammed against the door again and still it did not budge.

Two nails fell out of Bevel's hands and he could feel his fingers growing numb. He carried on, pausing only as the rastian savages drove their full weight against the door. The chair's legs dug deeper into the dirt floor and Bevel was finally able to fasten three nails into the door before the hammer slipped out of his fingers. A line of drool from his mouth only told him that there was no more point in trying. He fell back on his backside and feebly crawled away towards the pillar, pressing his back against it.

An axe cut through the door and Bevel screamed. As the weapon was hauled out, he could see the flickering shadows of the rastans as they prepared to shatter the door to pieces rather than push their way through. Other rastans began to hack at the walls and the sound of repetitive chopping was the only thing that Bevel could hear over his own screams. He covered his ears and closed his eyes. He did not want to see the inevitable.

And then everything stopped. All was silent. The chopping had stopped, the door no longer shook, and there was nothing but faded light shining through the jagged slits in the walls. Bevel wondered if this is what death was like until he realized exactly what had happened. They were gone. It had worked. Leaning his hand back, he kissed the pillar and slowly stood himself back up. He poked his eye through the nearest axe hole and looked outside.

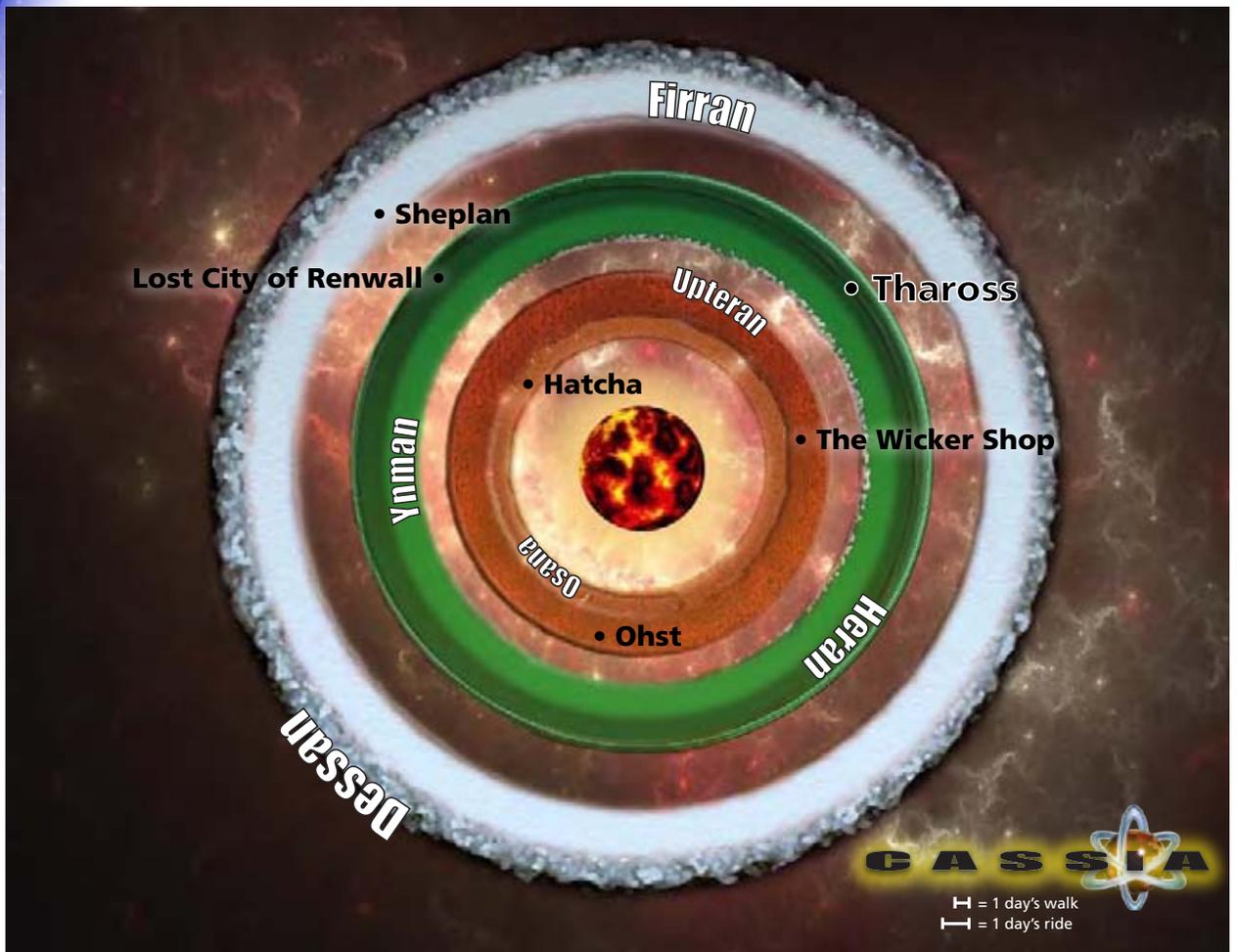
All of the rastans were gone. In the sky overhead, the First Ring of Might and its facing realm of Upteran was in full view, behind the white puffy clouds and deep blue sky of Ynman, the realm in which Bevel stood. A flock of birds in the sky came into view, flying towards the passing ring, and Bevel watched as they suddenly blinked out of view, teleported to the other realm. Just as the rastans had been. The cabin was a waylock, a Cassian-made structure designed to protect anyone inside from the teleportative powers of a passing ring. With the rastans stuck outside the waylock, they had no choice but to return from whence they came, leaving Bevel safely inside...

To die from his poisoned wound.

A day came when Tyrolar the Wanderer was granted a kingdom unto himself by his Mother, a realm that he could shape in his own image and prove his worth. In the days that passed, the Wanderer took great delight in shaping the aspects and realities of his world, but like all travelers, his mind began to drift and wanderlust set in. Content with his task, Tyrolar set about to inspect the works of his brothers and sisters, leaving the realm of Cassia as it stands today.

Cassia (pronounced *cab-see-ab*) is a dominion of three rings forever rotating around an illuminated globe at its center. Each ring rotates on a different axis from the others, passing over or under each other on a regular basis. The speed of these rings is not rapid, but fast enough that a person standing in one spot will be able to watch the nearest ring pass overhead once per day for no more than half-an-hour.

The most remarkable quality of the Three Rings is their magical power over the people and creatures of Cassia: as two rings pass each other, all mobile living objects teleport between the two rings. This means that a human standing on the Upper Second Ring as the Third Ring passes overhead will suddenly find himself standing on the Lower Third Ring. To avoid constant teleportation between Rings, many Cassians have created *waylocks* – simple structures centered with a pillar dug deep into the earth acting as a grip on the building's permanent Realm.



Osana, the Inner First Ring: located directly in line with the Orb, it is an arid, desert layer of extreme heat

Upteran, the Outer First Ring: tropical savanna, many wild animals and perfect hunting ground, many rare plants and species; light reflecting off the Lower Second Ring and Lower Third Ring provides basic light source to this layer

Ynman, the Inner Second Ring: farmland/plains; a common waypoint for other travelers to Cassia

Heran, the Outer Second Ring: temperate forest; reflecting light from the Lower Third Ring does provide a moonlight effect, but this layer is particularly dim, if not totally dark during half of the day

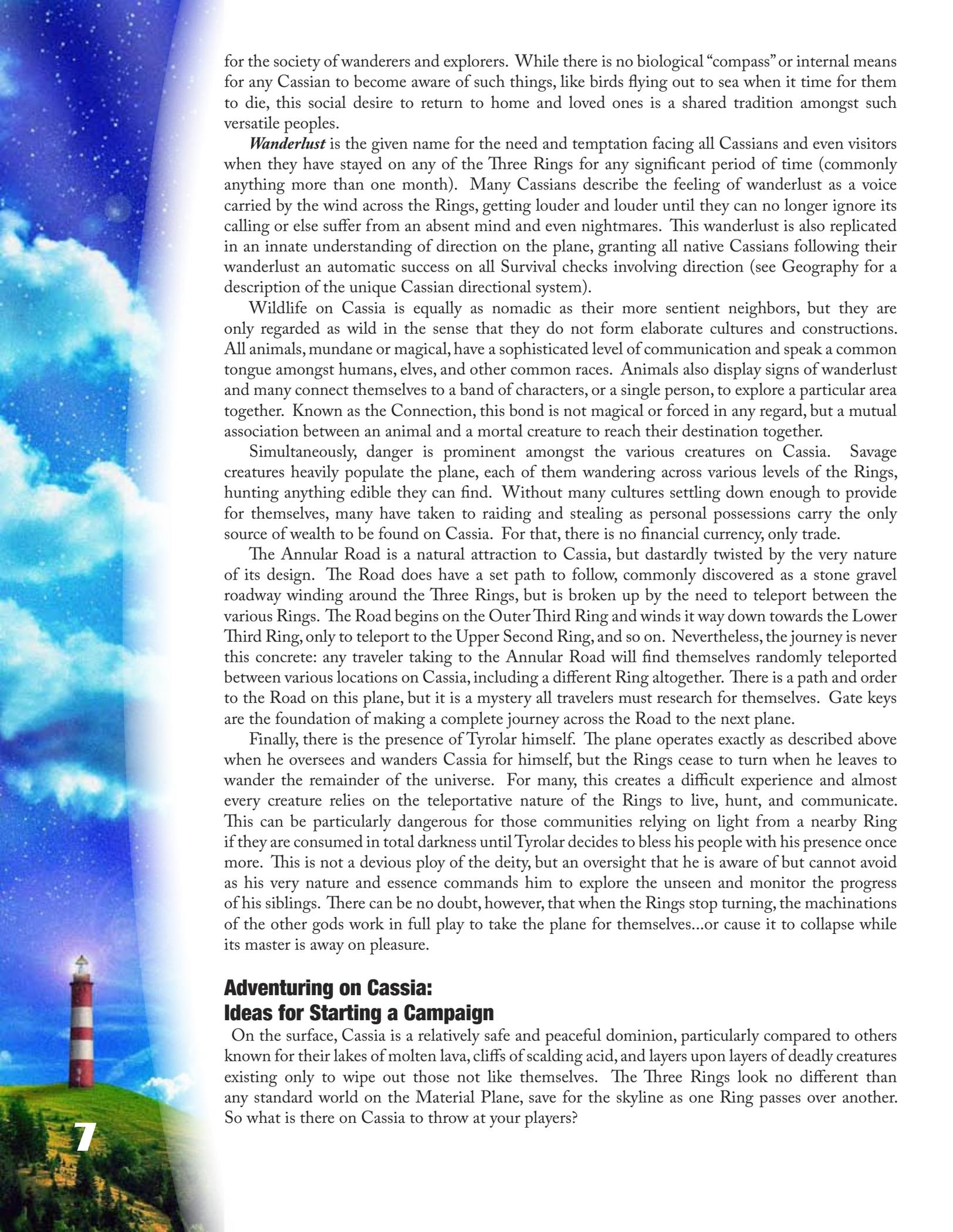
Firran, the Inner Third Ring: arctic and cold; light will still touch this realm, but less frequently than on the other rings

Dessan, the Outer Third Ring: desolate and frigid; there is no light touching this realm

Living on the Three Rings: A Brief Overview

Cassia is a fully functioning and lively plane; there is little that cannot be walked upon and explored, for the nature of the plane and its people demands to seek out all corners (or angles) of the Three Rings to complete their life cycle. Cassia is a world dedicated to the pursuit of the open road and would be the first dominion in the Astral Sea to not only accept travelers on its path, but would even be willing to carry on with them simply for the sake of the experience.

Matching the image of their deity, the citizens of Cassia are wanderers. Few are able to contain their wanderlust enough that they settle into a community, or even a single homestead. That is not to say that homes or businesses are never found, but they are run by a family, each of them taking turns to tend their responsibilities and then wander the plane in search of new sites and experiences. Life to a Cassian is measured in the number of experiences they have survived and stories they are able to tell from it. All Cassians have an equally strong urge to express their experiences through writing, poetry, and art. A regular tradition for a Cassian is to return to the place of his birth (no matter how remote) once every ten years and again for his inevitable death, an ironic trait

The background of the page features a vertical beam of light that starts from a starry night sky at the top and shines down onto a lighthouse on a grassy hill at the bottom. The lighthouse is red and white striped with a white top. The sky is dark blue with white stars, and the clouds are white and fluffy. The hill is green with some trees and a path leading to the lighthouse.

for the society of wanderers and explorers. While there is no biological “compass” or internal means for any Cassian to become aware of such things, like birds flying out to sea when it time for them to die, this social desire to return to home and loved ones is a shared tradition amongst such versatile peoples.

Wanderlust is the given name for the need and temptation facing all Cassians and even visitors when they have stayed on any of the Three Rings for any significant period of time (commonly anything more than one month). Many Cassians describe the feeling of wanderlust as a voice carried by the wind across the Rings, getting louder and louder until they can no longer ignore its calling or else suffer from an absent mind and even nightmares. This wanderlust is also replicated in an innate understanding of direction on the plane, granting all native Cassians following their wanderlust an automatic success on all Survival checks involving direction (see Geography for a description of the unique Cassian directional system).

Wildlife on Cassia is equally as nomadic as their more sentient neighbors, but they are only regarded as wild in the sense that they do not form elaborate cultures and constructions. All animals, mundane or magical, have a sophisticated level of communication and speak a common tongue amongst humans, elves, and other common races. Animals also display signs of wanderlust and many connect themselves to a band of characters, or a single person, to explore a particular area together. Known as the Connection, this bond is not magical or forced in any regard, but a mutual association between an animal and a mortal creature to reach their destination together.

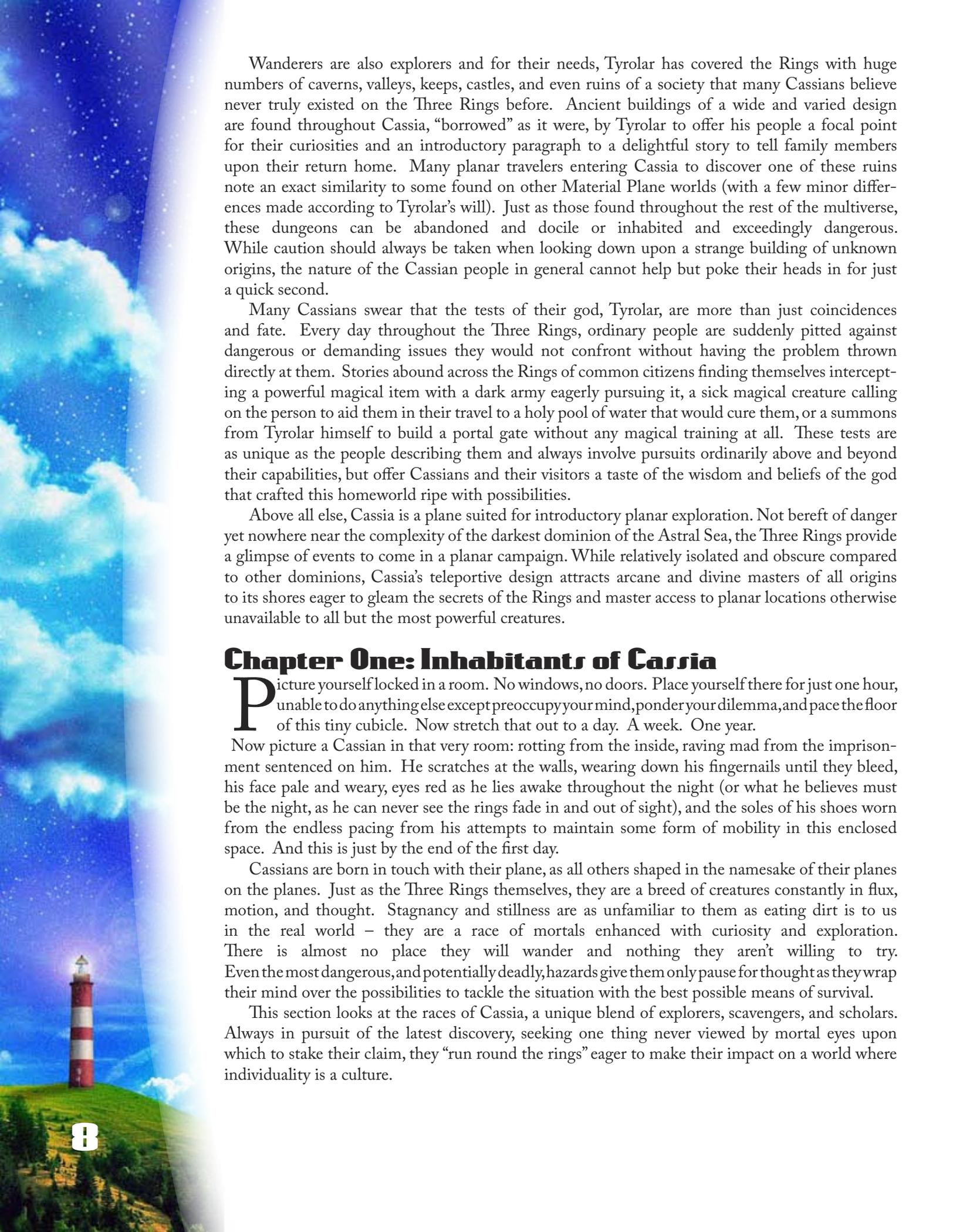
Simultaneously, danger is prominent amongst the various creatures on Cassia. Savage creatures heavily populate the plane, each of them wandering across various levels of the Rings, hunting anything edible they can find. Without many cultures settling down enough to provide for themselves, many have taken to raiding and stealing as personal possessions carry the only source of wealth to be found on Cassia. For that, there is no financial currency, only trade.

The Annular Road is a natural attraction to Cassia, but dastardly twisted by the very nature of its design. The Road does have a set path to follow, commonly discovered as a stone gravel roadway winding around the Three Rings, but is broken up by the need to teleport between the various Rings. The Road begins on the Outer Third Ring and winds it way down towards the Lower Third Ring, only to teleport to the Upper Second Ring, and so on. Nevertheless, the journey is never this concrete: any traveler taking to the Annular Road will find themselves randomly teleported between various locations on Cassia, including a different Ring altogether. There is a path and order to the Road on this plane, but it is a mystery all travelers must research for themselves. Gate keys are the foundation of making a complete journey across the Road to the next plane.

Finally, there is the presence of Tyrolar himself. The plane operates exactly as described above when he oversees and wanders Cassia for himself, but the Rings cease to turn when he leaves to wander the remainder of the universe. For many, this creates a difficult experience and almost every creature relies on the teleportative nature of the Rings to live, hunt, and communicate. This can be particularly dangerous for those communities relying on light from a nearby Ring if they are consumed in total darkness until Tyrolar decides to bless his people with his presence once more. This is not a devious ploy of the deity, but an oversight that he is aware of but cannot avoid as his very nature and essence commands him to explore the unseen and monitor the progress of his siblings. There can be no doubt, however, that when the Rings stop turning, the machinations of the other gods work in full play to take the plane for themselves...or cause it to collapse while its master is away on pleasure.

Adventuring on Cassia: Ideas for Starting a Campaign

On the surface, Cassia is a relatively safe and peaceful dominion, particularly compared to others known for their lakes of molten lava, cliffs of scalding acid, and layers upon layers of deadly creatures existing only to wipe out those not like themselves. The Three Rings look no different than any standard world on the Material Plane, save for the skyline as one Ring passes over another. So what is there on Cassia to throw at your players?



Wanderers are also explorers and for their needs, Tyrolar has covered the Rings with huge numbers of caverns, valleys, keeps, castles, and even ruins of a society that many Cassians believe never truly existed on the Three Rings before. Ancient buildings of a wide and varied design are found throughout Cassia, “borrowed” as it were, by Tyrolar to offer his people a focal point for their curiosities and an introductory paragraph to a delightful story to tell family members upon their return home. Many planar travelers entering Cassia to discover one of these ruins note an exact similarity to some found on other Material Plane worlds (with a few minor differences made according to Tyrolar’s will). Just as those found throughout the rest of the multiverse, these dungeons can be abandoned and docile or inhabited and exceedingly dangerous. While caution should always be taken when looking down upon a strange building of unknown origins, the nature of the Cassian people in general cannot help but poke their heads in for just a quick second.

Many Cassians swear that the tests of their god, Tyrolar, are more than just coincidences and fate. Every day throughout the Three Rings, ordinary people are suddenly pitted against dangerous or demanding issues they would not confront without having the problem thrown directly at them. Stories abound across the Rings of common citizens finding themselves intercepting a powerful magical item with a dark army eagerly pursuing it, a sick magical creature calling on the person to aid them in their travel to a holy pool of water that would cure them, or a summons from Tyrolar himself to build a portal gate without any magical training at all. These tests are as unique as the people describing them and always involve pursuits ordinarily above and beyond their capabilities, but offer Cassians and their visitors a taste of the wisdom and beliefs of the god that crafted this homeworld ripe with possibilities.

Above all else, Cassia is a plane suited for introductory planar exploration. Not bereft of danger yet nowhere near the complexity of the darkest dominion of the Astral Sea, the Three Rings provide a glimpse of events to come in a planar campaign. While relatively isolated and obscure compared to other dominions, Cassia’s teleportive design attracts arcane and divine masters of all origins to its shores eager to gleam the secrets of the Rings and master access to planar locations otherwise unavailable to all but the most powerful creatures.

Chapter One: Inhabitants of Cassia

Picture yourself locked in a room. No windows, no doors. Place yourself there for just one hour, unable to do anything else except preoccupy your mind, ponder your dilemma, and pace the floor of this tiny cubicle. Now stretch that out to a day. A week. One year.

Now picture a Cassian in that very room: rotting from the inside, raving mad from the imprisonment sentenced on him. He scratches at the walls, wearing down his fingernails until they bleed, his face pale and weary, eyes red as he lies awake throughout the night (or what he believes must be the night, as he can never see the rings fade in and out of sight), and the soles of his shoes worn from the endless pacing from his attempts to maintain some form of mobility in this enclosed space. And this is just by the end of the first day.

Cassians are born in touch with their plane, as all others shaped in the namesake of their planes on the planes. Just as the Three Rings themselves, they are a breed of creatures constantly in flux, motion, and thought. Stagnancy and stillness are as unfamiliar to them as eating dirt is to us in the real world – they are a race of mortals enhanced with curiosity and exploration. There is almost no place they will wander and nothing they aren’t willing to try. Even the most dangerous, and potentially deadly, hazards give them only pause for thought as they wrap their mind over the possibilities to tackle the situation with the best possible means of survival.

This section looks at the races of Cassia, a unique blend of explorers, scavengers, and scholars. Always in pursuit of the latest discovery, seeking one thing never viewed by mortal eyes upon which to stake their claim, they “run round the rings” eager to make their impact on a world where individuality is a culture.

Mortal Races

As with any recognized plane, there are sentient, mortal creatures capable of construction, literature, philosophy, and war that create the culture of selection for players to choose from. It is these chosen races, shaped in the image and fashion of Tyrolar himself, that wander the Three Rings in search of that undiscovered country.

Cassian

Wanderlust is a calling to a Cassian (pronounced *cab-see-abn*): they hear the wind not as a hiss past their ear, but a voice summoning them over the next hill. A mobile and insightful breed of near-humans, they are as varied as their primal cousins, but as wise as the elves.

Cassians are not the sole race on the Three Rings, as their racial name would suggest, but they are certainly the dominant one. Taking to the lifestyle of the open road and the unseen path, they have elevated themselves beyond mere exploration to create technology and magic aiding their pursuit. It is the Cassians who created waylocks to trap their buildings on a single ring, thereby allowing them to establish concrete rest stations and commercial businesses upon which they can rely. They are one of the few creatures on Cassia who can point to any form of stability in their culture, even if it is minor compared to many others across the Annular Road. They take their lifestyle quite seriously and make a point of embracing their wanderlust as a divine experience rather than a compulsion of the senses.

A Cassian appears similar to a human, yet it is impossible to find one out of shape, let alone obese. Tall and slender, they are so incessantly active, both physically and mentally, that their bodies withstand a great deal of abuse and endurance. Males are generally longhaired and sharp-eyed, while females are mindful and quick. All Cassians bear the birthcircle on their left or right temple, depending on which is their dominant hand, marking the Ring on which they were born – an essential mark for all Cassians as they all return to the place where they were born when they die. Should they be unable to complete the journey under their own power, the birthcircle provides another Cassian who should find him enough information to complete the journey for him. Fashion is relegated to tying their hair back in knots, multilayered cloaks that fold over to create a pant and vest combination, and bootless feet hardened by the travels of the open road. They are talkative and courteous, eager to share stories and events of the path behind them over a bark of weedpint (an intoxicating drink derived from the sap of trees).

CASSIAN RACIAL TRAITS

Average Height: 5'7" – 6'4"

Average Weight: 135-190 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom

Size: Medium

Speed: 6 squares

Vision: Normal

Languages: Common, choice of one other

Skill Bonuses: +2 Endurance, +2 Nature

Adaptation: Choose one untrained skill. Once per day, you can re-roll a failed skill check with that skill.

Extra Teleport: You can teleport one additional square whenever you teleport using a class power.

Tough It Out: You gain a +1 bonus to your Fortitude, Reflex, or Will defense. When you gain a level, you may choose to switch this bonus to a different defense.

Wanderlust: You cannot remain idle for long. After 30 days of remaining within the same location, ranging in size from a cabin to a town, you must make a DC 15 Endurance check after an extended rest. Failure will inflict a cumulative -1 penalty to all mental ability scores (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) as you feel the need to “walk the rings” and explore something outside of your present community. Once your penalty reaches -5, you slip into a coma until you are physically

removed from your community by another person. If you engage in her wanderlust, the penalties are instantly removed within 24 hours.

Determined Focus: You can use *determined focus* as an encounter power.

Determined Focus

Cassian Racial Power

Your people have existed on the Three Rings for countless generations against all odds. With a deep breath, you shurg off the effects of battle and step forward with vigor.

Encounter

Immediate Reaction **Personal**

Trigger: You use your second wind.

Effect: You regain the use of an encounter power.

Rastan

To call the Rastan (pronounced *rah-stan*) evil is misguided; they are merely a product of their experiences and that means raiding, pillaging, and hoarding. While their cousins, the Cassians, have learned to work together in aid of their own pursuit of the exploration, the Rastan never bothered themselves with such details. Why work out deals and arrangements when you can simply take what you want and move on? Why create technology when you can rip it from someone's corpse? This is nothing new in the universe and even the blessed Cassians themselves participated every now and then (even if they will never admit to it)—the Rastan merely embraced their talent for bloodshed and developed a culture around it.

Rastan are similar to Cassians, save for their more savage appearance. Rugged, angry faces scowl at anyone making eye contact with them. Bloodstains are never wiped from their bodies, distinguishing which Rastan have seen the most combat in their short lifetimes, and dark circles are drawn around their eyes to give them a skeletal appearance. They prefer wearing sharp, pointed objects along their armor and clothing, such as bone and metal fragments. While swords and crossbows are found amongst a Rastan horde, bludgeoning weapons embedded with bits of glass, spikes, and barbed wire are their weapons of choice.

Rastan warriors, collectively known as hordes, use swarm tactics in their raids of Cassian waypoints and caravans. Tactics are not their strong point, but some of their greatest leaders have taken to strategy and warfare in ambitious raids against some of the largest settlements on the Three Rings. Courage in battle is the ultimate means of respect within any horde (and there is an untold number of them across Cassia), no matter what race they belong to. Fights to the death within the horde are common, but not necessary. Only matters of revenge for a fallen comrade, theft, or coventry of another's mate demand a fight to the death. Otherwise, first blood or unconsciousness will suffice.

In an unusual twist, Rastan hordes have a code of honor beyond the raids: lying is strictly forbidden by their credo. They are extremely communicative and open with each other, sharing their disagreements with horde commanders over raiding strikes and expressing love for their immediate family. Rastan mates are eternal partners, never taking to bed with another after one is killed in battle. In the event of a Rastan male falling in battle, his wife will take his place in future raids while other females close to her help in the raising of her child. This is mainly due to the fact that raids exist on a "keep what you take" principle, but this is not written in stone within a horde. Children unable to participate in raids are not left to fend for themselves when both parents have fallen, and are adopted by another family in the horde.

Rastan also display a strange fear of death, to the point that their language (a series of sharp hisses) does not have a word for "death." Instead, they "fall" or "pass beyond the Rings". They are, by no means, unintelligent and naïve to the nature of their world and the gods walking among them, but accepting the concept of death seems to invoke an ultimate defeat. There is no talk of an afterlife in Rastan culture, just an acceptance that the fallen will never be seen again.

RASTAN RACIAL TRAITS

Average Height: 5'4" – 6'0"

Average Weight: 140–225 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Strength, +2 Charisma

Size: Medium

Speed: 6 squares

Vision: Normal

Languages: Common, Rastan

Skill Bonuses: +2 Intimidate, +2 Nature

Horde Training: You can flank an opponent so long as you and an ally stand adjacent to the target.

Rastan Weapon Proficiency: You gain proficiency with the longbow.

Wanderlust: You cannot remain idle for long. After 30 days of remaining within the same location, ranging in size from a cabin to a town, you must make a DC 15 Endurance check after an extended rest. Failure will inflict a cumulative -1 penalty to all mental ability scores (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) as you feel the need to “walk the rings” and explore something outside of your present community. Once your penalty reaches -5, you slip into a coma until you are physically removed from your community by another person. If you engage in her wanderlust, the penalties are instantly removed within 24 hours.

Wicked Visage: You are trained in Intimidate.

Fearful Strike: You can use *fearful strike* as an encounter power.

Fearful Strike

Rastan Racial Power

A rastan does not die in battle alone.

Encounter

Minor Action Personal

Requirement: Your hit points must equal 5 + your Constitution modifier or less but must be higher than 0.

Effect: Add you Charisma modifier to all damage until the end of the encounter.

Faesen

If all the dominant races of Cassia were considered a family, then the Faesen would be the favorite child. Blessed by Tyrolar with the gift of natural teleportation, they are the envy of all sentient creatures on the Three Rings and they know it. If anything, they flaunt it, which is likely the reason why so few of them exist anymore.

Faesen are slightly shorter and fuller than their brethren with dull, almost grayed, skin and white hair growing no more than a couple inches long on their head, leaving the rest of their body smooth and uncovered. Their clothing is bland and loose with no special attention given to cultural symbols, jewelry, or tattoos at all. While they would prefer to be the center of attention, the stigma passed down to them by the events of the past force them to hide in the background.

All Faesen have the innate ability to teleport by absorbing the energies of a passing Ring once per day. As a nearby Ring passes over their current location, a Faesen can focus himself into a locked position and intake the mystical energies rather than automatically teleport into the next Ring. This is a process requiring concentration for the entire fifteen-minute period in which the Passing occurs and creates the ability to store teleportation magic within their bodies.

Few Faesen group together to form a society, as physical intimacy is strictly frowned upon by their kind. Sexual relations do not involve any contact at all: a male teleports his seed into the female to create an offspring, which is then teleported from the womb in six month's time. Afterwards, a Faesen youth will spend only the next ten years traveling alongside his mother before she takes off in the middle of the night and leaves him to fend for himself.

Perhaps because they were already ostracized for their innate powers or a modicum of truth stands behind the myth, many Faesen believe one of their own is the blessed guardian of the Torrus (see below), the mystical book of Tyrolar's journeys. Even those supposing this claim to be false believe one of them is destined to discover the True Book and present it to the rest of the Three Rings, returning the Faesen race to glory and dignity once more.

FAESEN RACIAL TRAITS

Average Height: 5'0" – 5'7"

Average Weight: 110 – 165 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom

Size: Medium

Speed: 6 squares

Vision: Low-light

Languages: Common, choice of one other

Skill Bonuses: +2 Arcana, +2 Insight

Blind Passage: You do not need line of sight when you teleport.

Teleportation Pool: Whenever you are exposed to the passing of a Ring, you can absorb its energy as a pool of points. Every time you stand within line of sight of a passing Ring and are subject to teleportation, you gain 1d4 + your Wisdom modifier teleportation points. Each point equals one square you can teleport to a maximum of half your speed. You may choose not to collect teleportation points and pass to the next Ring.

Wanderlust: You cannot remain idle for long. After 30 days of remaining within the same location, ranging in size from a cabin to a town, you must make a DC 15 Endurance check after an extended rest. Failure will inflict a cumulative -1 penalty to all mental ability scores (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) as you feel the need to "walk the rings" and explore something outside of your present community. Once your penalty reaches -5, you slip into a coma until you are physically removed from your community by another person. If you engage in her wanderlust, the penalties are instantly removed within 24 hours.

Hevean

Calling a Hevean (pronounced *beb-vay-an*) a halfling is an insult... now that the Heveans have learned what a halfling is. They may have the same stature, build, and curious nature of those inquisitive primal creatures, but there are two things a Hevean has beyond them: patience and an uncanny ability to cause incredible harm to someone who has insulted them.

As far as populace goes, the Heveans are few and far between in comparison to other sentient creatures on Cassia – while they certainly outnumber the Faesen, their number is difficult to keep track of like so many things on a wandering plane. What distinguishes them enough to include them on a list of dominant members of the plane is their memory. All Heveans have photographic memories and this makes them both handy and dangerous. There is no such thing as a Hevean map or book because everything is retained in memory. While everyone on the Three Rings believe this memory to be eternal, the Heveans understand that only so much information can be stored into their brains for so long before it must be replaced by another useful fact of survival. Hevean brain development is so enhanced, they are able to specifically select exact memories and remove them from recollection, replacing them with a new memory of their choice. The replacement information can only be placed at the exact moment it is experienced, so a wandering Hevean learns to trust her instincts and decipher meanings and clues she believes come from Tyrolar himself.

This is one of the greatest contradictions of the race: they are highly superstitious and religious. All good things are a sign of Tyrolar's will to see them along the path, while all misfortunes are a sign of the god's displeasure at their choices. Hevean campfires are started with prayers; meals are cooked over gracious offerings thrown into the fire; difficult decisions are not made without meditation on the teachings of Tyrolar; and sleep is not permissible unless thanks is given

to the divine Almighty for allowing them the chance to live for yet another day. Insulting Tyrolar is an insult to a Hevean himself and questioning the god's plan and purpose is a slap across the face. They also decry the belief in the Torrus and announce that any god with the power to endow the Heveans with precise memory could not be bothered with writing down passages on paper. The teachings of Tyrolar exist in memory alone and were only written down by the Cassians under the false context of divinity.

Since they are just as prone to wanderlust as the next person on Cassia, Heveans earn a living sharing what they have learned. And buying a "Heaven slip" does not come cheap. Some of the more deceitful members of this race will sell false information for a quick coin to those who have offended Tyrolar or Hevean culture, but their beliefs will always cause them to counteract such treachery with a good deed.

HEVEAN RACIAL TRAITS

Average Height: 3'10" – 4'5"

Average Weight: 70 – 90 lb.

Ability Scores: +2 Constitution, +2 Intelligence

Size: Small

Speed: 6 squares

Vision: Low-light

Languages: Common, choice of two others

Skill Bonuses: +2 History, +2 Religion

Certain Recollection: Roll twice whenever you make a monster knowledge check and use the highest roll.

Origin Master: Choose one of the following origins: aberrant, elemental, fey, immortal, or shadow. You gain a +1 to all defenses against creatures of this origin.

Wanderlust: You cannot remain idle for long. After 30 days of remaining within the same location, ranging in size from a cabin to a town, you must make a DC 15 Endurance check after an extended rest. Failure will inflict a cumulative -1 penalty to all mental ability scores (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) as you feel the need to "walk the rings" and explore something outside of your present community. Once your penalty reaches -5, you slip into a coma until you are physically removed from your community by another person. If you engage in her wanderlust, the penalties are instantly removed within 24 hours.

Memory Lock: You can use *memory lock* as an at-will power

Memory Lock

Hevean Racial Power

After a quick glance, you have recited the item to memory.

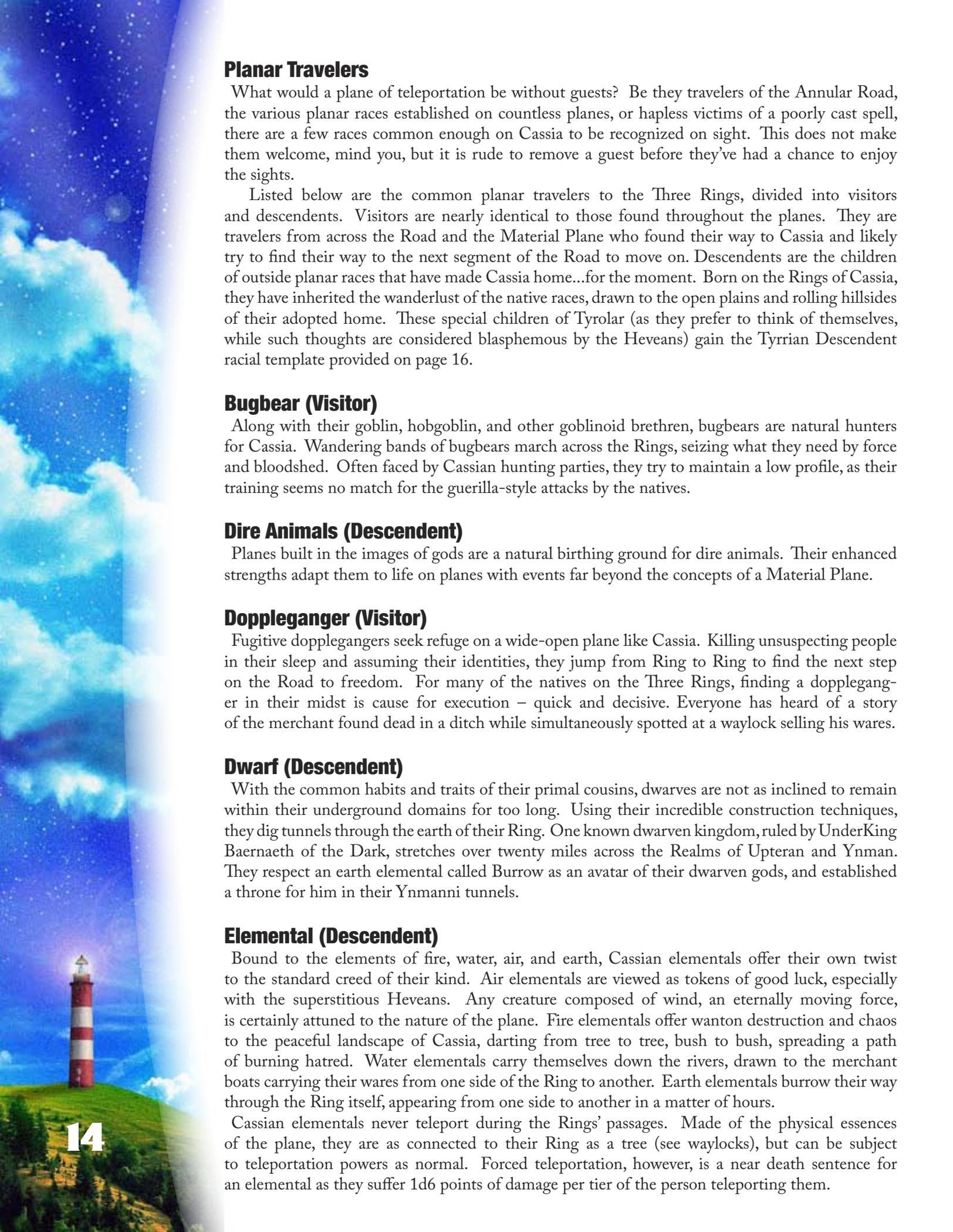
At-Will

Minor Action **Personal (special)**

Requirement: You must be able to see the target.

Target: One creature or object

Effect: You have a photographic memory of the target. At any point, you can recite a complete description of the target, including text from a single page of a book, as a minor action. You can memorize a number of targets equal to twice your Intelligence modifier and can erase a single memory as a free action.



Planar Travelers

What would a plane of teleportation be without guests? Be they travelers of the Annular Road, the various planar races established on countless planes, or hapless victims of a poorly cast spell, there are a few races common enough on Cassia to be recognized on sight. This does not make them welcome, mind you, but it is rude to remove a guest before they've had a chance to enjoy the sights.

Listed below are the common planar travelers to the Three Rings, divided into visitors and descendents. Visitors are nearly identical to those found throughout the planes. They are travelers from across the Road and the Material Plane who found their way to Cassia and likely try to find their way to the next segment of the Road to move on. Descendents are the children of outside planar races that have made Cassia home...for the moment. Born on the Rings of Cassia, they have inherited the wanderlust of the native races, drawn to the open plains and rolling hillsides of their adopted home. These special children of Tyrolar (as they prefer to think of themselves, while such thoughts are considered blasphemous by the Heveans) gain the Tyrrian Descendent racial template provided on page 16.

Bugbear (Visitor)

Along with their goblin, hobgoblin, and other goblinoid brethren, bugbears are natural hunters for Cassia. Wandering bands of bugbears march across the Rings, seizing what they need by force and bloodshed. Often faced by Cassian hunting parties, they try to maintain a low profile, as their training seems no match for the guerilla-style attacks by the natives.

Dire Animals (Descendent)

Planes built in the images of gods are a natural birthing ground for dire animals. Their enhanced strengths adapt them to life on planes with events far beyond the concepts of a Material Plane.

Doppelganger (Visitor)

Fugitive doppelgangers seek refuge on a wide-open plane like Cassia. Killing unsuspecting people in their sleep and assuming their identities, they jump from Ring to Ring to find the next step on the Road to freedom. For many of the natives on the Three Rings, finding a doppelganger in their midst is cause for execution – quick and decisive. Everyone has heard of a story of the merchant found dead in a ditch while simultaneously spotted at a waylock selling his wares.

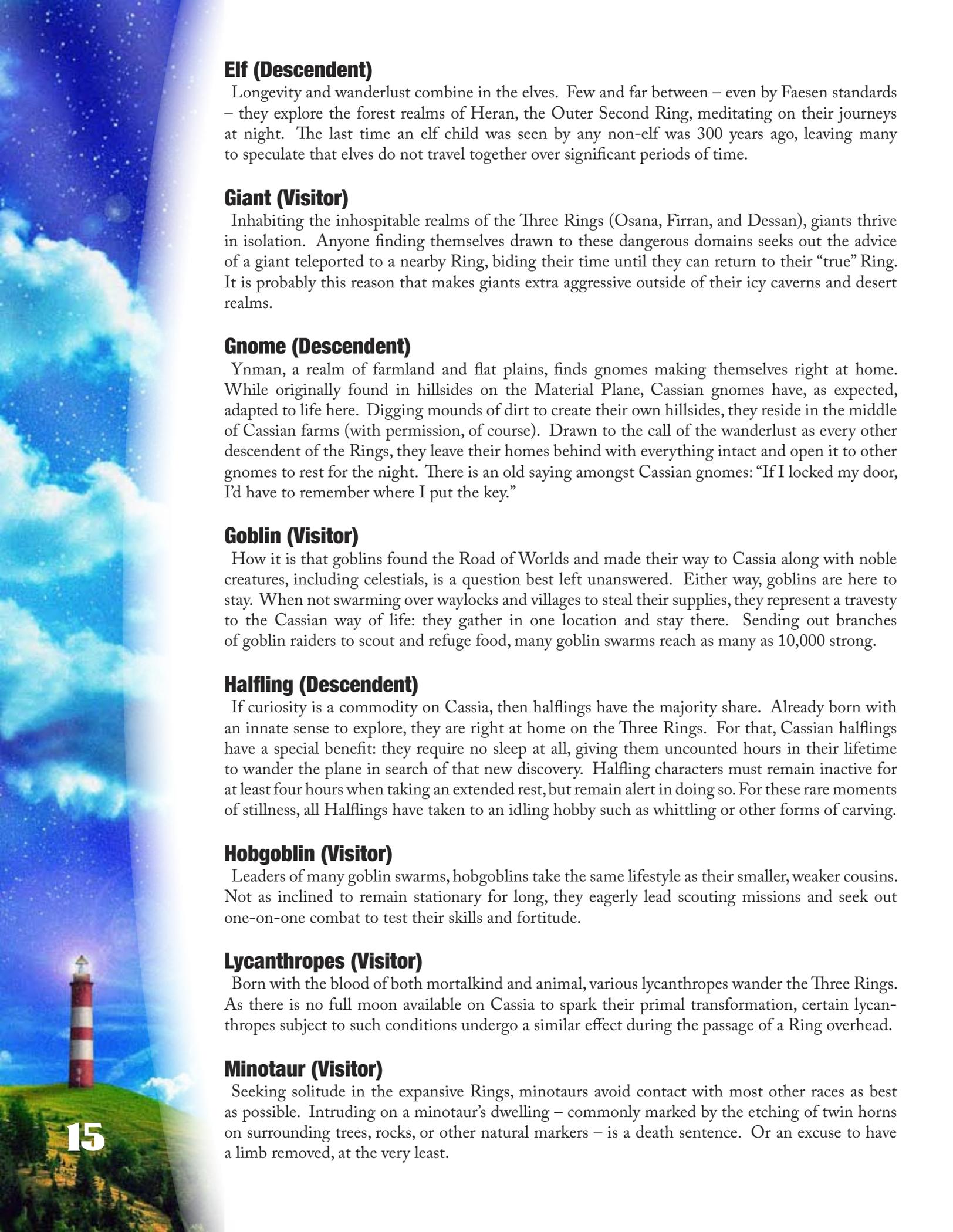
Dwarf (Descendent)

With the common habits and traits of their primal cousins, dwarves are not as inclined to remain within their underground domains for too long. Using their incredible construction techniques, they dig tunnels through the earth of their Ring. One known dwarven kingdom, ruled by UnderKing Baernaeth of the Dark, stretches over twenty miles across the Realms of Upteran and Ynman. They respect an earth elemental called Burrow as an avatar of their dwarven gods, and established a throne for him in their Ynmanni tunnels.

Elemental (Descendent)

Bound to the elements of fire, water, air, and earth, Cassian elementals offer their own twist to the standard creed of their kind. Air elementals are viewed as tokens of good luck, especially with the superstitious Heveans. Any creature composed of wind, an eternally moving force, is certainly attuned to the nature of the plane. Fire elementals offer wanton destruction and chaos to the peaceful landscape of Cassia, darting from tree to tree, bush to bush, spreading a path of burning hatred. Water elementals carry themselves down the rivers, drawn to the merchant boats carrying their wares from one side of the Ring to another. Earth elementals burrow their way through the Ring itself, appearing from one side to another in a matter of hours.

Cassian elementals never teleport during the Rings' passages. Made of the physical essences of the plane, they are as connected to their Ring as a tree (see waylocks), but can be subject to teleportation powers as normal. Forced teleportation, however, is a near death sentence for an elemental as they suffer 1d6 points of damage per tier of the person teleporting them.



Elf (Descendent)

Longevity and wanderlust combine in the elves. Few and far between – even by Faesen standards – they explore the forest realms of Heran, the Outer Second Ring, meditating on their journeys at night. The last time an elf child was seen by any non-elf was 300 years ago, leaving many to speculate that elves do not travel together over significant periods of time.

Giant (Visitor)

Inhabiting the inhospitable realms of the Three Rings (Osana, Firran, and Dessan), giants thrive in isolation. Anyone finding themselves drawn to these dangerous domains seeks out the advice of a giant teleported to a nearby Ring, biding their time until they can return to their “true” Ring. It is probably this reason that makes giants extra aggressive outside of their icy caverns and desert realms.

Gnome (Descendent)

Ynman, a realm of farmland and flat plains, finds gnomes making themselves right at home. While originally found in hillsides on the Material Plane, Cassian gnomes have, as expected, adapted to life here. Digging mounds of dirt to create their own hillsides, they reside in the middle of Cassian farms (with permission, of course). Drawn to the call of the wanderlust as every other descendent of the Rings, they leave their homes behind with everything intact and open it to other gnomes to rest for the night. There is an old saying amongst Cassian gnomes: “If I locked my door, I’d have to remember where I put the key.”

Goblin (Visitor)

How it is that goblins found the Road of Worlds and made their way to Cassia along with noble creatures, including celestials, is a question best left unanswered. Either way, goblins are here to stay. When not swarming over waylocks and villages to steal their supplies, they represent a travesty to the Cassian way of life: they gather in one location and stay there. Sending out branches of goblin raiders to scout and refuge food, many goblin swarms reach as many as 10,000 strong.

Halfling (Descendent)

If curiosity is a commodity on Cassia, then halflings have the majority share. Already born with an innate sense to explore, they are right at home on the Three Rings. For that, Cassian halflings have a special benefit: they require no sleep at all, giving them uncounted hours in their lifetime to wander the plane in search of that new discovery. Halfling characters must remain inactive for at least four hours when taking an extended rest, but remain alert in doing so. For these rare moments of stillness, all Halflings have taken to an idling hobby such as whittling or other forms of carving.

Hobgoblin (Visitor)

Leaders of many goblin swarms, hobgoblins take the same lifestyle as their smaller, weaker cousins. Not as inclined to remain stationary for long, they eagerly lead scouting missions and seek out one-on-one combat to test their skills and fortitude.

Lycanthropes (Visitor)

Born with the blood of both mortalkind and animal, various lycanthropes wander the Three Rings. As there is no full moon available on Cassia to spark their primal transformation, certain lycanthropes subject to such conditions undergo a similar effect during the passage of a Ring overhead.

Minotaur (Visitor)

Seeking solitude in the expansive Rings, minotaurs avoid contact with most other races as best as possible. Intruding on a minotaur’s dwelling – commonly marked by the etching of twin horns on surrounding trees, rocks, or other natural markers – is a death sentence. Or an excuse to have a limb removed, at the very least.

Purple Worm (Visitor)

Many Cassians talk of a tremor, deep in the earth, when they pass over the savannas of Upteran, a sign of a purple worm on the hunt. Worse is the account of a purple worm attacking during the passage of a Ring – burrowing up to the surface of one realm, only to appear instantly in another where an unsuspecting traveler happens to stand.

Trolls (Descendent)

Suited to numerous climates, trolls found a suitable home in the various realms of Cassia. Even should they find themselves passing onto the striking heat of Osana or the unbearable chill of Dessan, the incredible recovery rate allows them to sustain themselves anywhere they find themselves. Similar to minotaurs by habit and reputation, they prefer the isolation of such a wide-open plane, but will actively hunt flesh out of desire rather than necessity.

Tyrrian Descendent Racial Template

Those races created outside of Cassia, but taken to its offerings and giving birth to offspring are labeled as “Tyrrian-born”, meaning they have been chosen by Tyrolar to remain and feel his call in their ears draw them over the next hill. In doing so, they gain the wanderlust trait, provided below, and discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter. Otherwise, they remain identical as the original ancestors.

Wanderlust: You cannot remain idle for long. After 30 days of remaining within the same location, ranging in size from a cabin to a town, you must make a DC 15 Endurance check after an extended rest. Failure will inflict a cumulative -1 penalty to all mental ability scores (Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma) as you feel the need to “walk the rings” and explore something outside of your present community. Once your penalty reaches -5, you slip into a coma until you are physically removed from your community by another person. If you engage in her wanderlust, the penalties are instantly removed within 24 hours.

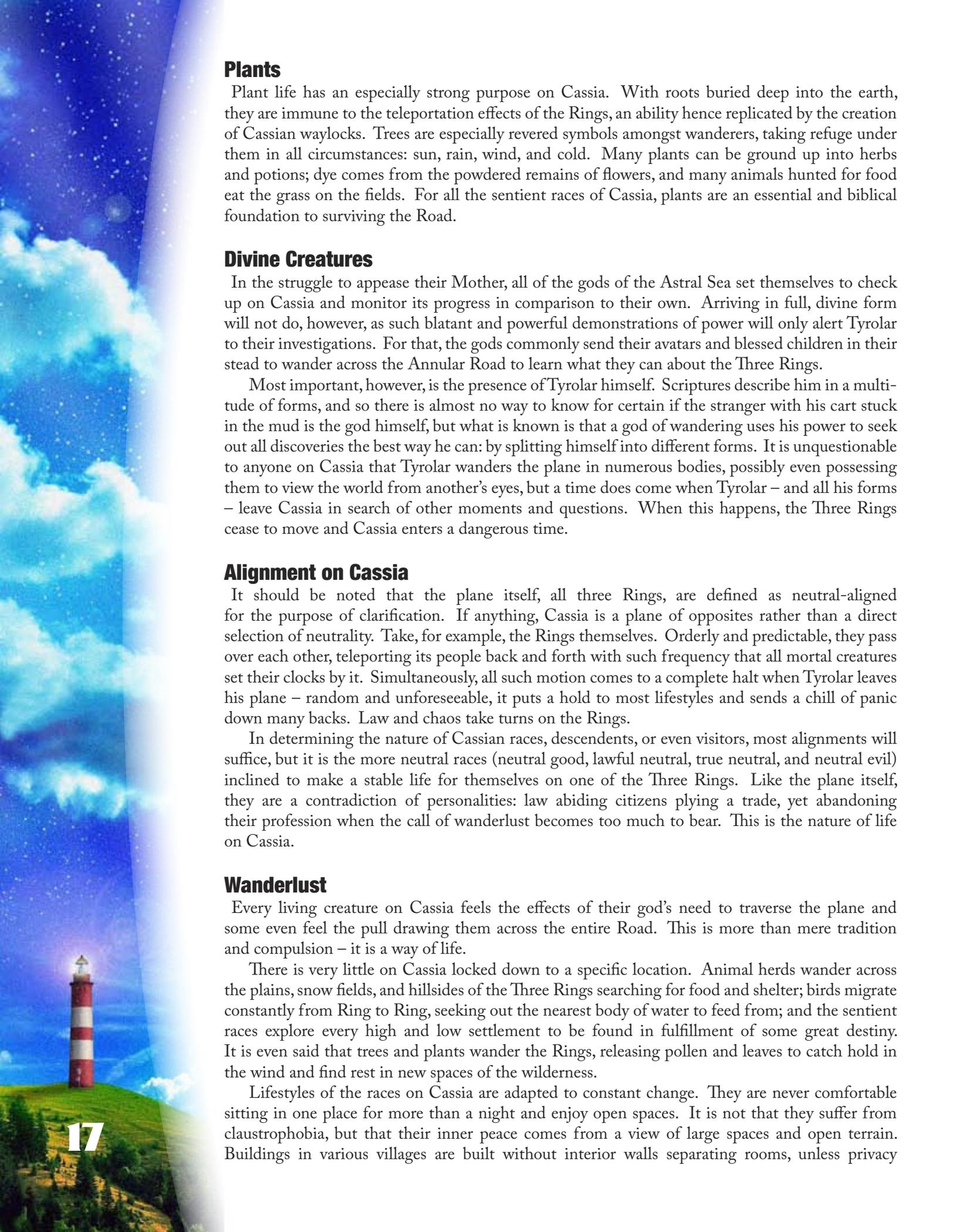
Animals

Non-magical creatures, such as wolves, bears, birds, and giant versions of these creatures, frequent Cassia in great numbers. They are all nomadic in nature, content to wander the realms in search of food and shelter, frequently moving on without ever looking back. Many of them have adapted to life between two realms as the passing of a Ring commonly leaves them suddenly teleported to a different terrain.

Birds are especially common creatures on the Three Rings and greatly respected by its natural races. Their total freedom of movement allows them to take to the skies and travel all direction before them, rather than just those available to be walked, climbed, or swam across. It is for this reason that rituals of flight are second most popular amongst spellcasters, after minor incantations that create food, water, or ignore penalties of starvation and thirst.

The most alarming difference between a common animal on Cassia and those found on almost all other worlds is language. Animals can speak the Common tongue as if they were born with it. In fact, they almost are. By the desire of Tyrolar, all creatures born on his plane have the ability to communicate with each other and share their exploits and warnings with those passing through.

Without any oceans in any of the Rings, aquatic life is restricted to those suited for life in rivers and lakes.



Plants

Plant life has an especially strong purpose on Cassia. With roots buried deep into the earth, they are immune to the teleportation effects of the Rings, an ability hence replicated by the creation of Cassian waylocks. Trees are especially revered symbols amongst wanderers, taking refuge under them in all circumstances: sun, rain, wind, and cold. Many plants can be ground up into herbs and potions; dye comes from the powdered remains of flowers, and many animals hunted for food eat the grass on the fields. For all the sentient races of Cassia, plants are an essential and biblical foundation to surviving the Road.

Divine Creatures

In the struggle to appease their Mother, all of the gods of the Astral Sea set themselves to check up on Cassia and monitor its progress in comparison to their own. Arriving in full, divine form will not do, however, as such blatant and powerful demonstrations of power will only alert Tyrolar to their investigations. For that, the gods commonly send their avatars and blessed children in their stead to wander across the Annular Road to learn what they can about the Three Rings.

Most important, however, is the presence of Tyrolar himself. Scriptures describe him in a multitude of forms, and so there is almost no way to know for certain if the stranger with his cart stuck in the mud is the god himself, but what is known is that a god of wandering uses his power to seek out all discoveries the best way he can: by splitting himself into different forms. It is unquestionable to anyone on Cassia that Tyrolar wanders the plane in numerous bodies, possibly even possessing them to view the world from another's eyes, but a time does come when Tyrolar – and all his forms – leave Cassia in search of other moments and questions. When this happens, the Three Rings cease to move and Cassia enters a dangerous time.

Alignment on Cassia

It should be noted that the plane itself, all three Rings, are defined as neutral-aligned for the purpose of clarification. If anything, Cassia is a plane of opposites rather than a direct selection of neutrality. Take, for example, the Rings themselves. Orderly and predictable, they pass over each other, teleporting its people back and forth with such frequency that all mortal creatures set their clocks by it. Simultaneously, all such motion comes to a complete halt when Tyrolar leaves his plane – random and unforeseeable, it puts a hold to most lifestyles and sends a chill of panic down many backs. Law and chaos take turns on the Rings.

In determining the nature of Cassian races, descendents, or even visitors, most alignments will suffice, but it is the more neutral races (neutral good, lawful neutral, true neutral, and neutral evil) inclined to make a stable life for themselves on one of the Three Rings. Like the plane itself, they are a contradiction of personalities: law abiding citizens plying a trade, yet abandoning their profession when the call of wanderlust becomes too much to bear. This is the nature of life on Cassia.

Wanderlust

Every living creature on Cassia feels the effects of their god's need to traverse the plane and some even feel the pull drawing them across the entire Road. This is more than mere tradition and compulsion – it is a way of life.

There is very little on Cassia locked down to a specific location. Animal herds wander across the plains, snow fields, and hillsides of the Three Rings searching for food and shelter; birds migrate constantly from Ring to Ring, seeking out the nearest body of water to feed from; and the sentient races explore every high and low settlement to be found in fulfillment of some great destiny. It is even said that trees and plants wander the Rings, releasing pollen and leaves to catch hold in the wind and find rest in new spaces of the wilderness.

Lifestyles of the races on Cassia are adapted to constant change. They are never comfortable sitting in one place for more than a night and enjoy open spaces. It is not that they suffer from claustrophobia, but that their inner peace comes from a view of large spaces and open terrain. Buildings in various villages are built without interior walls separating rooms, unless privacy



is required in places such as a hostel or inn. Even then, most people prefer to sleep outside when the weather is decent.

All sentient races feel the effects of wanderlust and suffer painful effects for ignoring it (as described in the various racial abilities sections above). Those few villages and business requiring a stable location, and held down by a waylock are run by entire families or sets, groups of like-minded individuals agreeing to run an operation in turn. While one person or a pair of them set themselves up in a waylocked building – from an inn to a stable or even a smithy – the others spread their wings across the region and wander about. Commonly, anywhere from six to eighteen people in a set will have such an arrangement, requiring someone to remain for no more than a single month before they are relieved. As Cassians are the only race likely to establish such operations, they are the self-described originators of a set, although a many Heveans have set up “memory banks” to provide a stable access to the facts gathered by the Heveans traveling across the Three Rings. Recognizing the value of a set, they have taken to the same practice to make ends meet.

Rastans are tribal and pitch camp as a whole. Whereas many races prefer individuality to a community, the Rastans all move together for protection and tranquility. There is no singular individual deciding on their new direction, but a gathering of respected, war-weary elders drawing on the needs of the horde to survive. Younger Rastans act as scouts, staying ahead of the horde in search of a riverbank, cave, or Cassian village to attack, using the task as a rite of passage to prove their worth to the horde.

Feeling the Need to Wander

When wanderlust hits someone, it is obviously present. Commonly beginning as vivid dreams of an open field, a passing Ring, or visions of Tyrolar calling out to them from across a wide-open space, the lust quickly expands into hallucinations of voices speaking to them in the wind, tremors in the hand, and poor concentration. After one month of remaining in one place, which can range from any location to which the person views constantly over that period of time, the need to travel becomes compulsive and eats away at their physical bodies.

To understand the need to wander, someone must first comprehend that it is a need, not a desire. It is said that one event, discovered by a Hevean decades ago and passed down from person to person ever since, truly details the importance of wanderlust to the survival on the Three Rings. Apparently, the Hevean found a Cassian tied to a tree, his eyes forced open by two cloth bands wrapped over his eyelids, staring onto a mountainside in the distance. Dead for some time, the Hevean cut him down and prepared to make the journey to return him home using the birthing on his forehead, making note of the symptoms he suffered over the course of two months strapped to the tree. His wrists were severely burned from struggling against his bonds, his pants had fallen down his waist from the extreme weight loss, and his hair had fallen out, pooled around his feet. The story always concludes the same way: strapped around the Cassian’s neck was a *filling wrap*, a magical item that indefinitely sustains its wearer against hunger and thirst.

Developing Wanderlust as an Outsider

Travelers to Cassia are not immune to wanderlust after a time. As the energies of the Three Rings surround them and they pass from one ring to the next time and time again, the need to haul their pack over the next valley captures them just as deeply as any native race.

Any non-native player character living on Cassia for thirty days or more will begin to suffer from the symptoms of wanderlust at the same rate as a native Cassian beginning on the day after their thirtieth day on the Three Rings.

As Told by the Torrus: Cassian Spirituality

Legend speaks of a tome containing the journal of Tyrolar himself, a biblical account of his crafting of the Three Rings and uncounted dealings with various infamous wanderers of Cassia. Known simply as the Torrus, these recollections exist within mainstream Cassian culture as a spiritual guide to life on the unexplored path. Many tales are told as if read from the pages of the Torrus yet there are few who openly admit to ever seeing such a document. Its sanctity is so revered that claiming to have seen – let alone touched – the Torrus is grounds for execution (a rare act within most Cassian societies save for the Rastan).

A handful of monasteries exist on Cassia dedicated to the Creator of the Rings, each holding their only copy of The Book of Torrus, stories and popular myths believed to come from the actual Torrus. Each copy is considered a genuine account of the true book and remains under strict guard by the clerics who reside within these monasteries. All clerics of Tyrolar have read the Book of Torrus once and no more – to touch its pages more than once is considered a sin of gluttony.

Chapter Two: The Rings of Cassia

Hovering in a void of black, untouched by stars, swirling gases, or any astrological symbols of the gods, are the Three Rings of Cassia. Turning around the solar mass known only as Tyssa (pronounced *tie-zba*), they are the representatives of the perfect order of life as designed by its god, Tyrolar. Each ring is perfectly shaped, seemingly unscarred by those somehow able to survive the vacuum of the Void to watch over it, with each outer Ring larger than its former. They revolve steadily around Tyssa, passing over each other at certain peaks of the day, the clouds and atmosphere of each Ring seen in motion as plants, civilizations, and creatures of all shapes and sizes carry on their existence upon this masterwork of divine ingenuity.

This section covers the physical landscape of Cassia, describing the details, both natural and constructed, to be found there, along with the technical considerations for using the locations of the Three Rings in your campaign. These details are but a start to a long list of sites possible within a plane such as Cassia and are merely intended as a starting point to open up your own imagination in developing your personal campaign setting where the ground beneath your feet never remains the same.

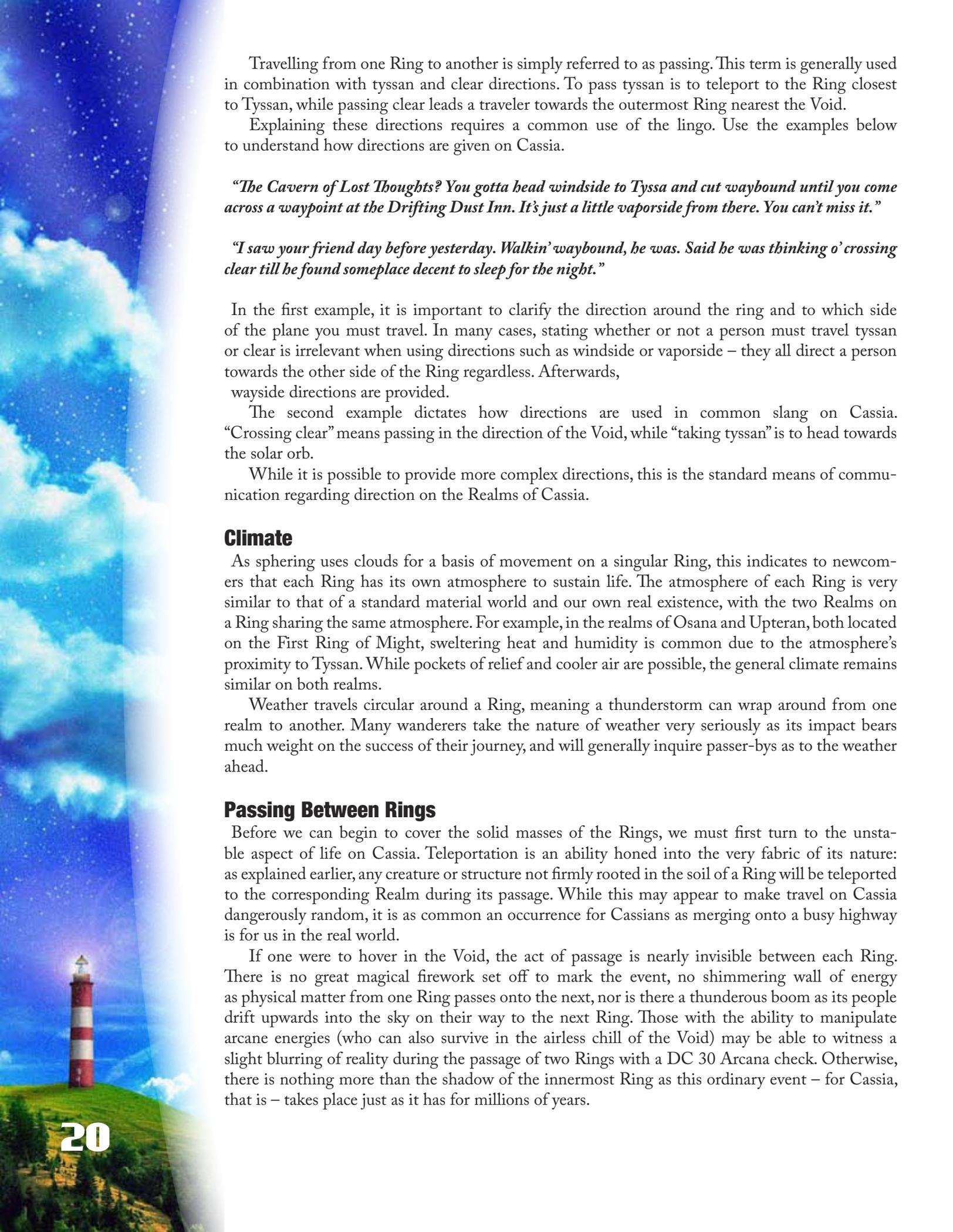
Cassian Directions

Polar directions are not applicable on Cassia; they are instead replaced with a means known as *sphering*. All Cassian-born races are considered naturally trained in understanding and providing spherical directions, while it does take a bit of time and practice for visitors to comprehend. There are no skills required for a character to learn sphering.

First, a person must understand their location in relation to Tyssa, the solar orb of the plane. Facing the orb is called *tyssan* (*tie-zan*) while the direct opposite is called *clear* (a connection to the Void in which the traveler walks towards). *Facing* refers to the direction a person faces while staring straight towards the sky.

Next, consideration on the exact direction of the Ring is required. While a traveler can easily head tyssan towards the next Realm, there are still two sides of the current Ring on which he can walk to get to the same destination. Clouds on each Ring orient in one direction around the diameter of the Ring, even though the wind may change direction slightly, offering all a solid sense of direction around the Ring. To wander with the clouds is to head *windside*, while the opposite is to head *vaporside*.

Finally, there is the orientation of a location on the same axis of the Ring but further along than the current location. For example, two sites may remain on the same degree on the same Realm with one further to one side than the other. A similar concept to north-and-south is used for this direction: *wayward* and *waybound*. This direction is completely artificial and conceived by the Cassians during their initial creation of waypoints: each waypoint's door faces wayward to designate that direction. Walking in the opposite direction of this marker means heading waybound.



Travelling from one Ring to another is simply referred to as passing. This term is generally used in combination with tyssan and clear directions. To pass tyssan is to teleport to the Ring closest to Tyssan, while passing clear leads a traveler towards the outermost Ring nearest the Void.

Explaining these directions requires a common use of the lingo. Use the examples below to understand how directions are given on Cassia.

“The Cavern of Lost Thoughts? You gotta head windside to Tyssa and cut waybound until you come across a waypoint at the Drifting Dust Inn. It’s just a little vaporside from there. You can’t miss it.”

“I saw your friend day before yesterday. Walkin’ waybound, he was. Said he was thinking o’ crossing clear till he found someplace decent to sleep for the night.”

In the first example, it is important to clarify the direction around the ring and to which side of the plane you must travel. In many cases, stating whether or not a person must travel tyssan or clear is irrelevant when using directions such as windside or vaporside – they all direct a person towards the other side of the Ring regardless. Afterwards, wayside directions are provided.

The second example dictates how directions are used in common slang on Cassia. “Crossing clear” means passing in the direction of the Void, while “taking tyssan” is to head towards the solar orb.

While it is possible to provide more complex directions, this is the standard means of communication regarding direction on the Realms of Cassia.

Climate

As sphering uses clouds for a basis of movement on a singular Ring, this indicates to newcomers that each Ring has its own atmosphere to sustain life. The atmosphere of each Ring is very similar to that of a standard material world and our own real existence, with the two Realms on a Ring sharing the same atmosphere. For example, in the realms of Osana and Upteran, both located on the First Ring of Might, sweltering heat and humidity is common due to the atmosphere’s proximity to Tyssan. While pockets of relief and cooler air are possible, the general climate remains similar on both realms.

Weather travels circular around a Ring, meaning a thunderstorm can wrap around from one realm to another. Many wanderers take the nature of weather very seriously as its impact bears much weight on the success of their journey, and will generally inquire passer-bys as to the weather ahead.

Passing Between Rings

Before we can begin to cover the solid masses of the Rings, we must first turn to the unstable aspect of life on Cassia. Teleportation is an ability honed into the very fabric of its nature: as explained earlier, any creature or structure not firmly rooted in the soil of a Ring will be teleported to the corresponding Realm during its passage. While this may appear to make travel on Cassia dangerously random, it is as common an occurrence for Cassians as merging onto a busy highway is for us in the real world.

If one were to hover in the Void, the act of passage is nearly invisible between each Ring. There is no great magical firework set off to mark the event, no shimmering wall of energy as physical matter from one Ring passes onto the next, nor is there a thunderous boom as its people drift upwards into the sky on their way to the next Ring. Those with the ability to manipulate arcane energies (who can also survive in the airless chill of the Void) may be able to witness a slight blurring of reality during the passage of two Rings with a DC 30 Arcana check. Otherwise, there is nothing more than the shadow of the innermost Ring as this ordinary event – for Cassia, that is – takes place just as it has for millions of years.

Times of Passage

If a creature stands in one specific point on a Ring, they will only pass onto the next Ring once and cannot cross back for one hour, regardless of arrangement. That is the nature of passage. However, the creatures of Cassia are far too mobile to remain still for any period of time, let alone an entire day, and so it is possible to pass more than once, but this would require an exceptional amount of physical travel to occur. As a general rule, a creature will only pass from one Ring to another once per day unless they enter another Realm on the opposite side of the Ring.

For ease of use in your campaign, use the chart below to determine the approximate time of passage from one Realm to another. For descriptions on these Realms, see the Realms of Cassia section below for details. As they are not adjacent to any other Realms, Osana and Dessan do not have passage times provided.

First Realm	Second Realm	Approx. Time of Passage
Upteran	Ynman	11 AM + 1d6 hours
Heran	Firran	2 PM + 1d8 hours

Warp Sickness

Teleporting is never an easily digestible matter, particularly when passing from one Ring to the next. Even those born on the plane are never fully able to handle the internal pressure of passage, while they do become somewhat dulled to its effects in time. When a creature teleports between Rings, they must make a DC 12 Constitution check to avoid feeling nauseous and become fatigued for the next six hours. If the creature is teleported again while they are fatigued, they become weakened for one hour (after which they can make a save throw once every 30 minutes until succeeded). These conditions are only applicable for teleportations occurring during the passage of two Rings and not during those induced by powers.

A common herb for dealing with the stress of passage can be found in the *jesszan seed*, a tiny dropping scattered from the brown leaves of these massive trees. Jesszan seeds caught in a strong wind blow across the landscape to plant more jesszan trees, but Cassians learned long ago that crushing them into a fine powder and snorting it within two minutes of passage will allow the inhalee complete immunity from warp sickness. The only setback is the extreme addictive properties of the seed: if used more than three times per day, there is a possibility of the inhalee suffering a -1 penalty to all Charisma-based rolls unless further ingestion of the powdered seed is taken at least once every six hours. Failure to do so will cause the inhalee to suffer from delusions and paranoia as the hallucinogenic properties of the seed enter their bloodstream heavily. Once this damage occurs, the inhalee is considered addicted and must go through withdrawal – three successive nights without the powder and a DC 20 Constitution check will remove the Charisma penalties and allow the inhalee to overcome his addiction.

Warp Pools

Marking the constant battle between order and chance are warp pools, random events of teleportation found throughout Cassia. While passing is a natural occurrence as regular as clockwork, falling into a warp pool can happen at any time to any traveler. It is the most frequent cause of unwanted teleportation to the Realm of Upteran and Dessan.

To the naked eye, *warp pools* are invisible and bound between a series of objects to form a border. For example, a simple doorway can become a warp pool, or even a thin crawlspace between a fallen tree trunk and the ground itself. Detecting the presence of a warp pool requires a character to be trained in Arcana. They are not seen so much as smelled, picked up as a wicked odor of burnt acorns. Various magical and mundane items able to detect warp pools are common throughout Cassia.

Breaking the border of a warp pool is a guaranteed means to destroying it. Walking directly into a warp pool automatically causes the target to teleport through another linked warp pool on another Ring. For the GM, this involves a random dice roll using the chart below to determine the Realm of destination for the unlikely traveler. Determining if a character will be subject to a warp pool requires some bad luck: any character rolling a natural 1 for any dice roll has a 10% chance of encountering a warp pool within the next 24 hours.

The Realms of Cassia

There are six Realms on the Three Rings, one for each of the inner Rings and one for each of the outer Rings. Two of these Realms, Osana and Dessan, feature some of the most desolate and volatile landscapes found on the Annular Road, combined with the fact they are not prone to passage as they are not neighbored by another ring. Each is described in order of their proximity to Tyssa, heading clear from Osana to Dessan.

The Three Rings are granted names based on tests offered its residents by the creation of Tyrolar, as believed to be told in the Torrus. While these tests are not taken literally or philosophically by the people of Cassia, their intention on mortal travelers is never lost in their culture and myths. Many legends of famous wanderers involve feats of endurance and hardship based on the difficulties of each Ring, so marked by their names.

The First Ring of Might lies closest to Tyssan and is dubbed such for its near impossible heat and pressure on the mortal body. The Inner Realm of Osana is a wasting desert, and even the Outer Realm of Upteran is nothing to laugh at with its tropical jungles of vicious wildlife and poisons. Surviving the tests of the First Ring involve a sturdy constitution, strong arms, and a bit of ignorance to one's plight.

The Second Ring of Insight is the most hospitable and common residence for many in Cassia, and so the tests faced by those of stories and legends have been social. Dealing with so many conflicting cultures, bartering wars, and quests made in the name of love are common exams on the Second Ring. The Inner Realm of Ynman provides fertile plains for many to farm, leaving many families to settle a homestead here to provide food and shelter for their breed; the Outer Realm of Heran finds a temperate forest across its entire dimensions, fresh with vast wildlife and plantlife, source of inspiration for much study and those deep in the touch of wanderlust.

The Third Ring of Faith is difficult to understand until one has been there, huddling under the nearest rock for protection against the biting wind, a shivering mass seeking heat from one's own body. It is said that a person cannot understand their belief in divinity until you have come close to death by cold, committing no action other than thought as your body lies unable to move other than shivering to death. The Inner Realm of Firran appears livable and many races take to the arctic sprawl quite naturally, but the Outer Realm of Dessan is as desolate as can be without any light at all to offer relief. It is here that the nature of opposites becomes clear, with Dessan's deadly chill contrasting the horrid heat of Osana.

Communities: While fewer than most other planes and dominions, various communities dot the landscape of Cassia. This section details some of the most populace and useful communities on the six Realms, including the dominant players likely to be found...most of the time.

Survival Conditions: Each Realm contains a subsection detailing technical information (i.e. save throws, skill checks, etc.) characters must make on a regular or conditional basis to survive the basic elements of the six Realms of Cassia.

Osana, the Inner Realm of the First Ring of Might

Pressed against the searing heat of Tyssa, Osana (pronounced *oh-sabna*) is not for the faint of heart or light of constitution. There is no vegetative life in sight for two reasons: one, there is never any moisture to allow them survival; and two, because there is no reason to ground anything in the soil against passage.

Sand reaches as far as the eye can see. The wind cuts sharply across any unprotected face and there is nothing but searing heat and scorching light bearing down on any traveler to this Realm. Sandstorms are one of the most frequent dangers on Osana, particularly sandgulf, huge waves of crashing sand created by solar flares on Tyssan. Various reptiles survive quite naturally, feeding on insects that flourish in the basking heat, which in turn feed on the parched corpses of those unlucky enough to wind up here. Otherwise, there is no life to be found. If you did not bring enough food or water with you, you will not find any more to buy, salvage, or steal.

The borderlands with Upteran provide rocky deserts with large stones rising from the sand to protect travelers from wind, which can actually break skin during a sharp sandstorm. Wildlife is slightly more common here, but the scorching heat of Tyssan is no easier here.

Within days of the nearest settlement, bare trees, stripped of their leaves and bark, twisted by the constant winds of the desert, point towards the nearest relief. Known as death trees, they have no special power but symbolize the ever-wasting power of Osana.

Communities: There are not enough people living on Osana to develop a community, but there are outposts set up by those benefitting from a desert realm: criminals-in-hiding, wayward races from desert homeworlds, and crazed miners desperate to believe riches beyond belief lie deep within the scorching sands of the Ring. One of the easiest to find outposts is Hatcha, a gathering of various refugees banded together in the belief that suffering creates subjugation.

Living on a physical world conceived and constructed by a god does offer a humble appreciation for your home. Retreating from the solar heat within shelters painted white to reflect the powerful rays of Tyssa, they gather daily in the centre courtyard (which is nothing more than a sand covered opening between the shelters) to listen to the words of their prophet, Flyri Ontiapoa, a tiefling messenger warden of Tyrolar (see the Messenger specialist class). Preaching the need of endurance and survival in the face of near impossible odds, Flyri leads the people of Hatcha through prayers and feats of physical difficulty in the name of their god. Each shelter is built on skids specifically designed to be pulled across the sand by aid of imported bulls, mules, and other mounts.

Survival Conditions: The heart of Osana is sandy desert. Without any night to offer relief, the desert is always 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more, and so all characters must make a DC 15 + 1 per additional hour Endurance check or suffer 1d4 points of fire damage. During the midday hours, this damage rate increases to a similar check every 30 minutes for the same effect.

A rare, yet possible, fate is known as *rupturing*. The constant heat of the orb on the mortal body can cause internal organs to burst and kill travelers should they roll a natural 1 on three successive Endurance checks. Without any fluids to drink, the chances increase to a natural 1 or 2. If the character suffers from any other condition (meaning they are pushing themselves too hard while already suffering from heatstroke), the chances increase by an additional level, meaning that an exhausted character without any water to drink will suffer from rupturing after three successive rolls of 1, 2, or 3 on their Endurance checks. When a character ruptures, they take 2d10 points of fire damage per tier plus ongoing 5 fire damage as an internal organ, commonly the kidneys or liver, bursts from the extreme heat.

Upteran, the Outer Realm of the First Ring of Might

Combining the deadly heat of Osana with the rich wildlife of the Second Ring, Upteran is no less dangerous than anything else offered on the Ring of Might. Plantlife becomes surprisingly rich, benefiting from the moisture of occasional rains and adapting to the heat of the Ring. One thing grows and flourishes in plentitude here: poison. Many of the snakes, mammals, and plantlife on Upteran produce their own toxins to kill prey and protect their nests, meaning that a single bite is all that is required for someone to fall...permanently.

Animal life far outnumbers sentient life here, but there are many established waypoints and communities on Upteran to make the journey, intentional or not, worthwhile. Many farmers from nearby Ynman purchase *ashroot*, the chopped pieces of a particular tree, and *weedbush* as sources of food for their livestock, while using natural pesticides created from the various poisons of the jungles of this Realm to ward off unwanted pests attracted to their crops.

Just like any jungle, there is constant danger from the elements and wildlife. Disease is rampant for those unable to handle the journey and the jungles abound with insects of all shapes and sizes, many with a particular taste for blood. Herds of grazing animals pass here and make use of the tasty plants and become food for the carnivorous packs scattered throughout.



Communities: The sale of Osana's poisons is very lucrative across the Road, regardless on intention or alignment. The Wicker Shop is a business focused exclusively on the sale of native poisons and rumours abound that its owner, Jarek PureBlood, runs a network of assassins for the right price. Over the counter, Jarek sells any number of poisons and curative potions using powders and liquids found on Osana. Under the counter, Jarek has been seen frequenting company with any number of suspected assassins, rogues, and various figures willing to take a life for a price. No matter the target, Jarek is a businessman and cares little for the impact of his sales – as far as he's concerned, there's money to be made in a business that few are willing to touch.



Many villages take to the trees as ground-based predators and extremely unstable mud makes building a shelter on the ground extremely dangerous. The largest tree-village is Ohst, named after the grand treant that watches over its people and leads them as their shaman. All food is hunted and crops grown with the express permissions of the treant, but the people are free to continue their lives in the peace and protection of a powerful creature of the jungle.

Survival Conditions: Poisons of all types are found here and many of them are contact-based. For each day of travel on Upteran, there is a 5% chance of a contact poison from a tree leaf infecting a character by scratching or dripping its poison. Fully clothed characters without any exposed flesh (save for the face) have this chance reduced to 3% per day. This chance accounts for other dangerous factors such as insect bites, food poisoning, and other possibilities while on Upteran. Many natural predators of Upteran develop a strong immunity or resistance to poisons to avoid such dangers.

Upteran Venom

Level 5 Poison

A viscous, green liquid causing convulsions and wicked pain.

Poison • 250 gp

Attack: +5 ve Fortitude; ongoing 5 poison damage and slowed (save ends both); the target suffers aftereffects if it cannot make the saving throw within 3 rounds

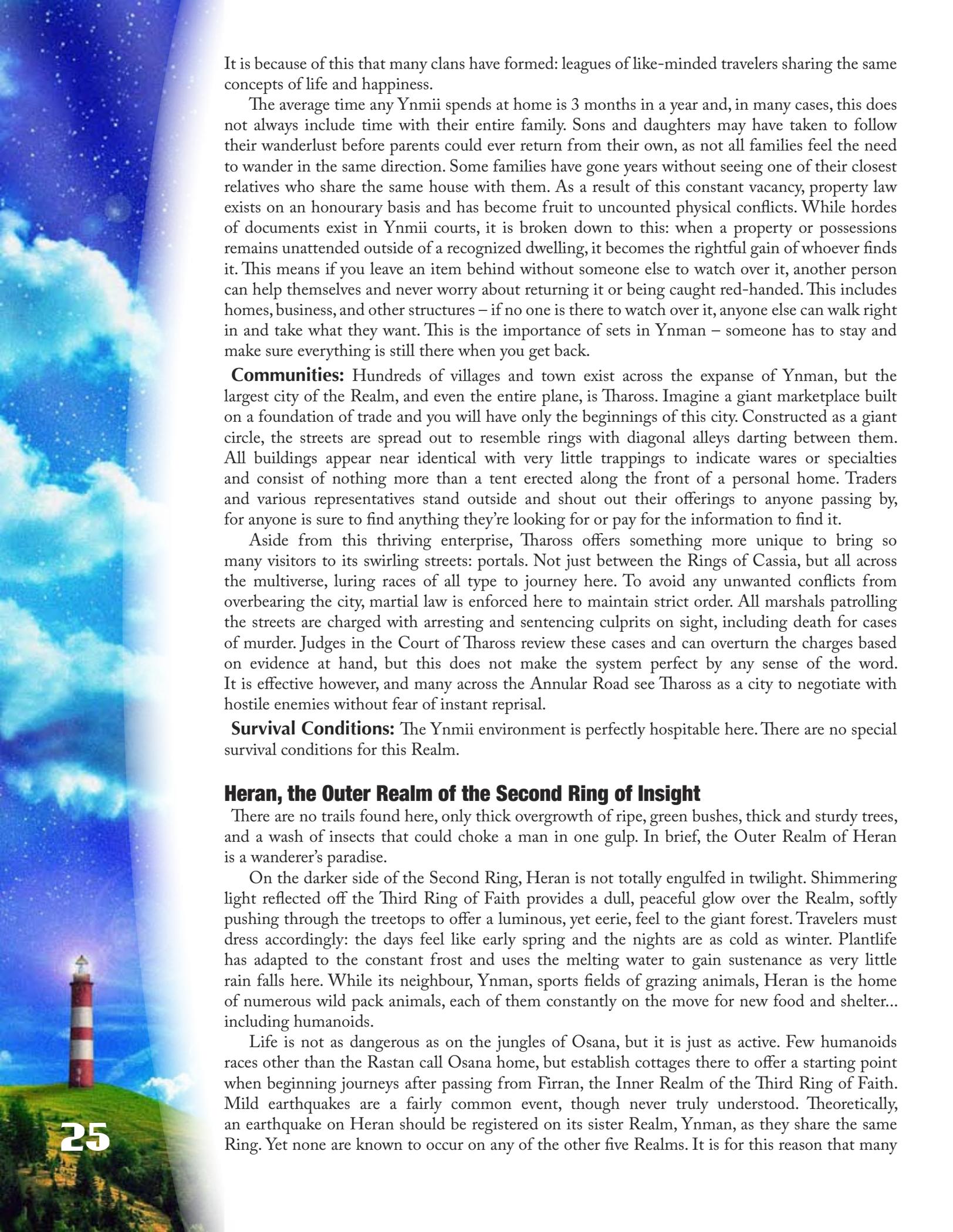
Aftereffects: The target is blinded (save ends)

Ynman, the Inner Realm of the Second Ring of Insight

Arriving on the Inner Realm of Ynman can be deceptive: rolling farmlands with fields of wheat and corn stands in stark contrast to the poisons of Upteran and the sweltering heat of Osana, but the cooling breeze and warm solar light of this Realm make this the most populated layer of Cassia. In doing so, it creates its own sets of adventure and danger for a Realm on the Ring of Insight.

Dominated by farms, homesteads, and various businesses run by sets of families and associates, it is also the Realm with the highest number of common paths and legends of grand exploits. All manner of native races call Ynman their home and set it as the shining example of perfection in all of the Three Rings. Rain is frequent yet scattered; solar light is warm yet shaded by frequent clouds and passage of the First Ring of Might; and civilization is peaceful yet motivated.

Culture is the cause of almost all strife on Ynman, hence many scholars and clerics of Tyrolar consider such challenges to be tests of focus and dedication. As each person wanders across the plane in search of a deeper meaning, it is the lessons they have learned and the message they carry with them that stands out against all others. Ynmii are not overbearing zealots by any means, but the need to be recognized as an individual is crucial to the mental survival of everyone here.



It is because of this that many clans have formed: leagues of like-minded travelers sharing the same concepts of life and happiness.

The average time any Ynmii spends at home is 3 months in a year and, in many cases, this does not always include time with their entire family. Sons and daughters may have taken to follow their wanderlust before parents could ever return from their own, as not all families feel the need to wander in the same direction. Some families have gone years without seeing one of their closest relatives who share the same house with them. As a result of this constant vacancy, property law exists on an honorary basis and has become fruit to uncounted physical conflicts. While hordes of documents exist in Ynmii courts, it is broken down to this: when a property or possessions remains unattended outside of a recognized dwelling, it becomes the rightful gain of whoever finds it. This means if you leave an item behind without someone else to watch over it, another person can help themselves and never worry about returning it or being caught red-handed. This includes homes, business, and other structures – if no one is there to watch over it, anyone else can walk right in and take what they want. This is the importance of sets in Ynman – someone has to stay and make sure everything is still there when you get back.

Communities: Hundreds of villages and town exist across the expanse of Ynman, but the largest city of the Realm, and even the entire plane, is Thaross. Imagine a giant marketplace built on a foundation of trade and you will have only the beginnings of this city. Constructed as a giant circle, the streets are spread out to resemble rings with diagonal alleys darting between them. All buildings appear near identical with very little trappings to indicate wares or specialties and consist of nothing more than a tent erected along the front of a personal home. Traders and various representatives stand outside and shout out their offerings to anyone passing by, for anyone is sure to find anything they're looking for or pay for the information to find it.

Aside from this thriving enterprise, Thaross offers something more unique to bring so many visitors to its swirling streets: portals. Not just between the Rings of Cassia, but all across the multiverse, luring races of all type to journey here. To avoid any unwanted conflicts from overbearing the city, martial law is enforced here to maintain strict order. All marshals patrolling the streets are charged with arresting and sentencing culprits on sight, including death for cases of murder. Judges in the Court of Thaross review these cases and can overturn the charges based on evidence at hand, but this does not make the system perfect by any sense of the word. It is effective however, and many across the Annular Road see Thaross as a city to negotiate with hostile enemies without fear of instant reprisal.

Survival Conditions: The Ynmii environment is perfectly hospitable here. There are no special survival conditions for this Realm.

Heran, the Outer Realm of the Second Ring of Insight

There are no trails found here, only thick overgrowth of ripe, green bushes, thick and sturdy trees, and a wash of insects that could choke a man in one gulp. In brief, the Outer Realm of Heran is a wanderer's paradise.

On the darker side of the Second Ring, Heran is not totally engulfed in twilight. Shimmering light reflected off the Third Ring of Faith provides a dull, peaceful glow over the Realm, softly pushing through the treetops to offer a luminous, yet eerie, feel to the giant forest. Travelers must dress accordingly: the days feel like early spring and the nights are as cold as winter. Plantlife has adapted to the constant frost and uses the melting water to gain sustenance as very little rain falls here. While its neighbour, Ynman, sports fields of grazing animals, Heran is the home of numerous wild pack animals, each of them constantly on the move for new food and shelter... including humanoids.

Life is not as dangerous as on the jungles of Osana, but it is just as active. Few humanoids races other than the Rastan call Osana home, but establish cottages there to offer a starting point when beginning journeys after passing from Firran, the Inner Realm of the Third Ring of Faith. Mild earthquakes are a fairly common event, though never truly understood. Theoretically, an earthquake on Heran should be registered on its sister Realm, Ynman, as they share the same Ring. Yet none are known to occur on any of the other five Realms. It is for this reason that many

scholars and mages journey to Heran to study these unnatural events in the hopes of discovering their cause and purpose, but a major theory abounds, lead by a planar historian known only as the Absolution – a neutral-gendered faesen cleric of Tyrolar whose words have attracted a large following of worshippers and non-believers alike for his discovery of the Lost City of Renwall (see Communities below).

The Absolution's claim is that Heran is in a state of flux, a sign that each Realm of Tyrolar's word is constantly in change as befitting a god of travel. Each earthquake is, in fact, the Realm altering to suit the new desires of its master god. Therefore, the Absolution's league of clerics explores the forest in search of signs of changes, to document and possibly predict what the new Realm of Heran shall become.

Communities: As mentioned above, the Lost City of Renwall is the foundation for the growing belief in the revival of Heran. Set in the midst of a deep valley, hundreds of stone ruins rise out of the ground. Words alone do not describe the importance of this discovery and how it proves the Absolution's theory, except that these ancient structures were not present even five years ago. They literally stick out of the earth, with grass and trees undisturbed, as if the world around them melted aside and solidified. Even inside these ruins, the grass grows as if these structures had existed as a natural part of the wilderness. As the years pass by, the Absolution and his people swear that these ruins are rising further and further out of the earth, leaving them to claim that this ancient city once existed as it stood and was buried by the ever-changing rise and fall of the soil, now sinking back to its original position to expose this society long since gone.

Renwall is a major archaeological study in the works, as many travel from across the planes to discover the origins and downfall of this lost civilization. Many other native races make a pilgrimage to Renwall in their travels, eager to seek out their ancient relatives and witness the rumors for themselves.

Survival Conditions: Wilderness encounters are more frequent in his populated Realm. When the GM rolls on any standard wilderness encounter chart, he must re-roll any blank results (i.e. "no encounters") and multiply the number of creatures encountered by two.

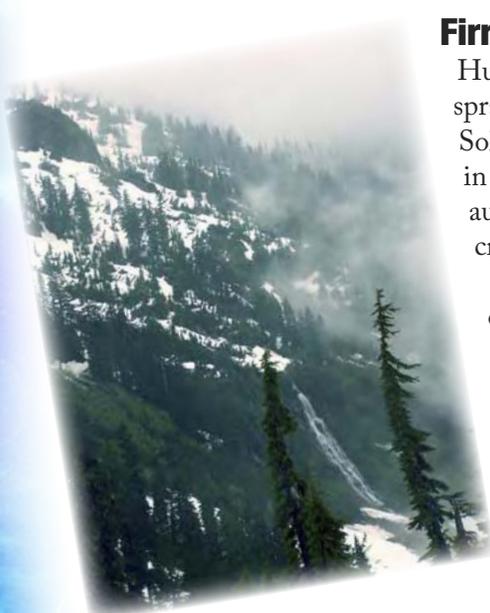
Earthquakes are not a serious danger to travelers, but are a fact of life on Heran. Once per week, there is a 10% chance of the players being caught in a mild earthquake during an encounter and must make a DC 15 Athletics check to remain on their feet or fall prone.

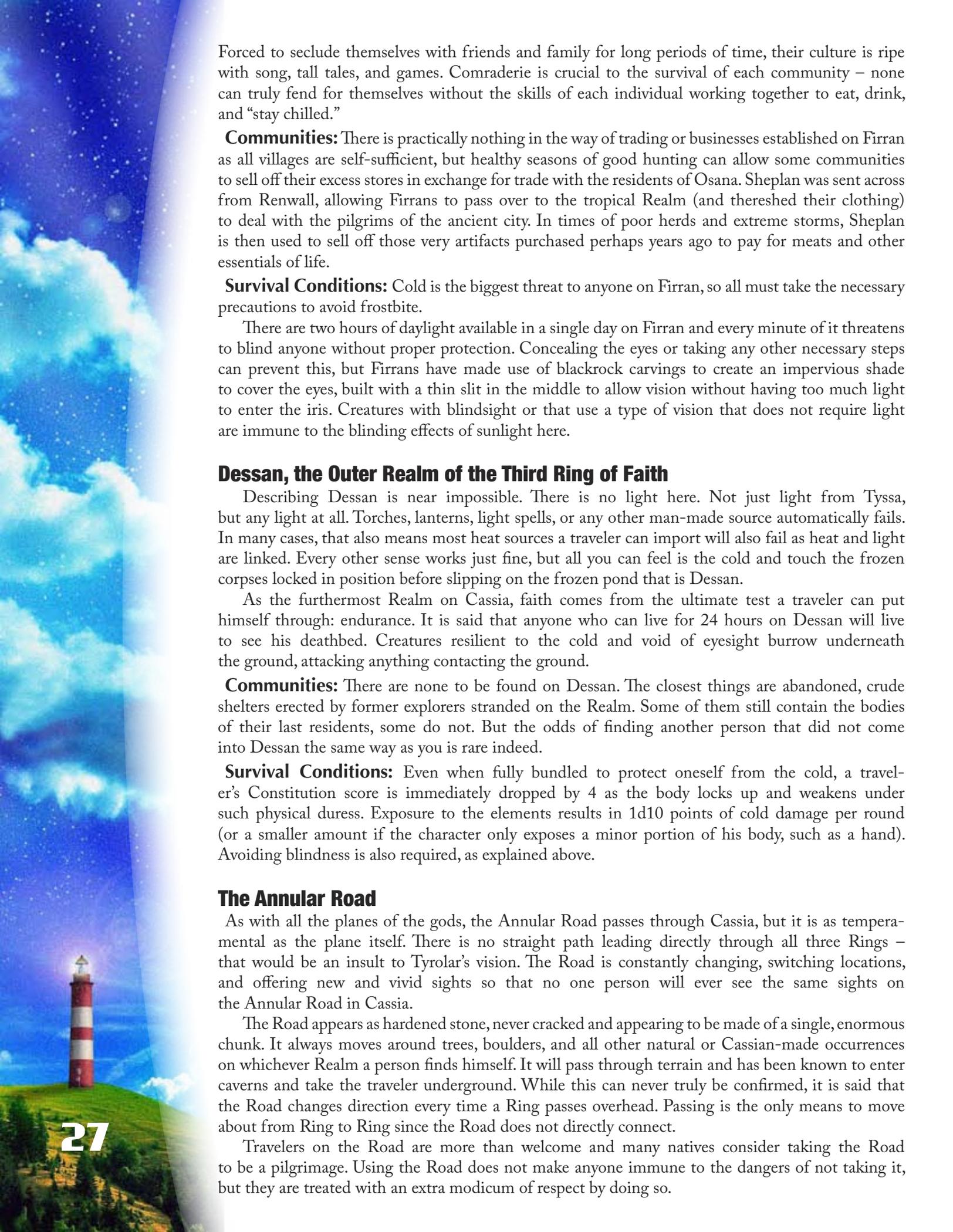
Firran, the Inner Realm of the Third Ring of Faith

Huddled in the dark for the bulk of the day, Firran is an arctic sprawl of snow-capped mountains, ice flows, and frosted caves. Solar light is an enemy here: almost the entire Realm is covered in a layer of ice, meaning that any brilliant light creates a blinding aura that could permanently destroy the eyes of any unprotected creature.

Civilization still exists on Firran for good reason: the purity of its water. While not magical by any means, there is a natural curative property to the melted ice of the Realm, exported across the Great Road for its treatment of various minor ailments and refreshing properties to travelers and adventurers. Any person who drinks at least one cup of Firran water once per day can benefit from a free healing surge or make a save throw as a free action – not enough to fight off death or exhaustion, but helpful to thousands of thankful drinkers across the Road.

Homes along the wide reaches of the Realm are domed, windowless shelters of *blackrock*. The rock features a hardened shell, near crystallized by eons in the searing light of Tyssa that is impossible to chisel through, but remarkably soft on the inside. Well protected against the dangerous elements of daylight and taking in the air and moisture offered by the deep soil underneath the blackrock homes, many residents of Firran settle themselves quite comfortably.





Forced to seclude themselves with friends and family for long periods of time, their culture is ripe with song, tall tales, and games. Comraderie is crucial to the survival of each community – none can truly fend for themselves without the skills of each individual working together to eat, drink, and “stay chilled.”

Communities: There is practically nothing in the way of trading or businesses established on Firran as all villages are self-sufficient, but healthy seasons of good hunting can allow some communities to sell off their excess stores in exchange for trade with the residents of Osana. Sheplan was sent across from Renwall, allowing Firrans to pass over to the tropical Realm (and thershed their clothing) to deal with the pilgrims of the ancient city. In times of poor herds and extreme storms, Sheplan is then used to sell off those very artifacts purchased perhaps years ago to pay for meats and other essentials of life.

Survival Conditions: Cold is the biggest threat to anyone on Firran, so all must take the necessary precautions to avoid frostbite.

There are two hours of daylight available in a single day on Firran and every minute of it threatens to blind anyone without proper protection. Concealing the eyes or taking any other necessary steps can prevent this, but Firrans have made use of blackrock carvings to create an impervious shade to cover the eyes, built with a thin slit in the middle to allow vision without having too much light to enter the iris. Creatures with blindsight or that use a type of vision that does not require light are immune to the blinding effects of sunlight here.

Dessan, the Outer Realm of the Third Ring of Faith

Describing Dessan is near impossible. There is no light here. Not just light from Tyssa, but any light at all. Torches, lanterns, light spells, or any other man-made source automatically fails. In many cases, that also means most heat sources a traveler can import will also fail as heat and light are linked. Every other sense works just fine, but all you can feel is the cold and touch the frozen corpses locked in position before slipping on the frozen pond that is Dessan.

As the furthestmost Realm on Cassia, faith comes from the ultimate test a traveler can put himself through: endurance. It is said that anyone who can live for 24 hours on Dessan will live to see his deathbed. Creatures resilient to the cold and void of eyesight burrow underneath the ground, attacking anything contacting the ground.

Communities: There are none to be found on Dessan. The closest things are abandoned, crude shelters erected by former explorers stranded on the Realm. Some of them still contain the bodies of their last residents, some do not. But the odds of finding another person that did not come into Dessan the same way as you is rare indeed.

Survival Conditions: Even when fully bundled to protect oneself from the cold, a traveler's Constitution score is immediately dropped by 4 as the body locks up and weakens under such physical duress. Exposure to the elements results in 1d10 points of cold damage per round (or a smaller amount if the character only exposes a minor portion of his body, such as a hand). Avoiding blindness is also required, as explained above.

The Annular Road

As with all the planes of the gods, the Annular Road passes through Cassia, but it is as temperamental as the plane itself. There is no straight path leading directly through all three Rings – that would be an insult to Tyrolar's vision. The Road is constantly changing, switching locations, and offering new and vivid sights so that no one person will ever see the same sights on the Annular Road in Cassia.

The Road appears as hardened stone, never cracked and appearing to be made of a single, enormous chunk. It always moves around trees, boulders, and all other natural or Cassian-made occurrences on whichever Realm a person finds himself. It will pass through terrain and has been known to enter caverns and take the traveler underground. While this can never truly be confirmed, it is said that the Road changes direction every time a Ring passes overhead. Passing is the only means to move about from Ring to Ring since the Road does not directly connect.

Travelers on the Road are more than welcome and many natives consider taking the Road to be a pilgrimage. Using the Road does not make anyone immune to the dangers of not taking it, but they are treated with an extra modicum of respect by doing so.





"Even in the darkness of Dessan, when all light ceases to exist, I can feel the energies of my Ring and the presence of Tyrolar standing behind me."

THE Messenger

A SPECIALIST CLASS

The revolving rings of Cassia carry more than religious significance to a select few adventurers and wanderers – they are a source of incredible divine power. Messengers are the chosen disciples of Tyrolar and they carry his word across the Rings not through sermon, but deed. In mastering the teachings of the Traveler, a messenger has felt the touch of the Three Rings in ways beyond those of his fellow Cassians. Some, in fact, turn to the solar power of Tyssa as their guiding force and revere it as the purest representation of their deity.

Messengers exhibit their piety through dedication to a particular Ring (or Tyssa itself) and become more capable while standing on their chosen aspect. Their prayers vary according to this choice, known as their *curve*, and grant divine influence best suited to their path in life. All this drives their quest to explore all corners of Cassia and discover the grand purpose Tyrolar has set out for them.

Prerequisites: Must worship Tyrolar; training in Endurance, Nature or Religion.

What Is A Specialist Class?

While each class provided in the D&D game provides a generic role and purpose for any party, there are moments and campaigns where a specific touch of flavor is required or desired. Specialist classes are an option for augmenting your existing character in new directions without drastically altering the core design of the class.

When you choose a specialist class, you can select from any of the optional class features and powers to substitute those already provided in your original class selection. For example, you can choose from one of the messenger's at-will powers in addition to your ranger at-will powers. So long as you meet the prerequisites of the specialist class and choose at least one specialist class feature to replace an existing feature from your original class, you are now a specialist. From this point on, you can select any powers, feats, and other resources designed for the specialist class. This includes multiclass and hybrid characters.

You can select a specialist class at any time in the campaign provided your GM has approved this option. Once you substitute at least one class feature with a specialist class feature, you are now considered a specialist. You do not gain an additional number of powers, feats, or other statistical accounts through specializing. You are also restricted to one specialty at one time. Should you choose to change your specialty, you must replace all of your specialist class features with your new specialist class.



Combining Power Sources: Many specialists use a specific power source (such as the divine power source for the messenger) but this does not place a restriction on your character's power selection. You can gain the benefits of a divine specialist class feature with another power source from any other class.

Using the Multiclass Option: Specialists may not be a viable option for all campaigns and some GMs may find them overpowering as initially designed. For that reason, multiclass feats are presented as an option in the Feats section at the end of this article. You can replace the requirements for specialist selection with the given feats functioning as multiclass feats.

Specialist Traits

Messengers carry more than just a biblical story; they have learned to master the energies of the Three Rings to their own benefit through a deep, spiritual connection to a single Ring of their choice (or to the solar orb powering it all, Tyssa). Through this connection, they can maintain certain resistances and abilities as they travel further away from their chosen Ring. While standing on their chosen Ring, they are impressively capable of great feats of endurance and teleportation.

Additional Roles: Controller/Leader. Seekers of the lost and stranded, messengers protect those unattuned to Cassia's massive energies through their incredible manipulation of teleportation. Mastering the mystical art of instant travel, they can relocate targets across the battlefield, induce the sickness of wanderlust on them, and introduce elements of their curve in combat. Simultaneously, they use their divine influence to aid fellows injured by the sword and spell by granting healing surges, temporary hit points, and additional protection from harm.

Power Source: Divine.

Messenger Class Features

Choose at least one of the following class features. Each class feature you choose must replace an existing feature from your primary class (e.g. cleric) and cannot be used with any class features given under the Restrictions listed below.

NOTE: All messengers gain the Curve of Power class feature and do not have to swap out a class feature from their primary class.

Banishment

When you make an attack against a target's Fortitude, Reflex, or Will defense, you may choose to attack their AC instead with any class attack power and teleport the target to the closest Ring as an immediate reaction for a number of rounds equal to your curve modifier (see Curve of Power). The target returns at the start of its next available turn and acts normally. You can only do this once per encounter.

At 11th level, any ongoing damage caused by the target ceases when the target is teleported. When the target returns, so does the ongoing damage. While the target is gone, anyone afflicted by the target's ongoing damage continues to make saving throws as normal and a successful saving throw removes any further ongoing damage when the target returns.

At 21st level, you automatically remove 10 ongoing damage when the target is teleported to another Ring. Should any additional ongoing damage remain, any allies affected by it can continue to make saving throws as before.

Curve of Power

All messengers align themselves with a particular Ring or the solar orb, Tyssa, to gain their power. Choose either a single Ring of Cassia (the First Ring of Might, the Second Ring of Insight, or the Third Ring of Faith) or the solar orb, Tyssa. You have a spiritual bond to this Ring or Tyssa and gain power according to your choice, called a curve. Various prayers may also include additional benefits and conditions based on your curve.

Each curve lists an ability in brackets, known as your curve modifier. This modifier is equal to the ability score modifier listed here and can be used for a wide variety of additional effects to your class features and prayers.

The First Ring of Might - Constitution

The Second Ring of Insight - Charisma

The Third Ring of Faith - Wisdom

Tyssa - Strength

Standing Ring: If you stand on your chosen Ring when using a power with this additional effect, you gain the benefit(s) listed here. If you chose Tyssa, choose a single Ring and use that as your chosen ring for this bonus effect. You cannot select a new Ring until one week later.

Special: All messengers gain the Curve of Power class feature automatically.

Path of Enlightenment

You gain additional benefits based on your curve (see Curve of Power above).

The First Ring of Might: Whenever you roll a critical hit, you gain temporary hit points equal to one-half your level plus your curve modifier. While standing on the First Ring of Might, you can stack temporary hit points to a maximum amount equal to 10 + your level.

The Second Ring of Insight: Once per day, you can deduct a number of points from one your defenses equal to one-half of your curve modifier and apply it to another defense until the end of the encounter. For example, a messenger with a Charisma score of 18 can switch 2 points from his AC and move it to his Will defense. While standing on the Second Ring of Insight, you can replace up to your full Charisma modifier on up to two defenses. Therefore, the same character can reduce his AC by 4 and add +2 to his Fortitude and Reflex defenses.

The Third Ring of Faith: When you are bloodied, take your second wind, or use a healing surge, you can use a free action to make a saving throw to end one condition. If you have no condition affecting you, a successful saving throw will automatically nullify a single future condition placed on you before the end of the encounter. While standing on the Third Ring of Faith, you may choose to gain resistance to a single damage type of your choice equal to your curve modifier until the end of the encounter with a successful saving throw. If you already have a condition affecting you, the saving throw must be used to remove the condition. You can only have one stored saving throw – they cannot be stacked.

Tyssa: When you are pushed, pulled, or slid, you gain a number of squares you can teleport equal to the amount of forced movement as a move action effective at the start of your next turn. In addition, you can pool your teleportation over the course of a day and expend them simultaneously so long as the total squares teleported does not exceed your speed. If you use a racial or class power that nullifies any forced movement, you can still add those squares to your teleportation pool. This pool returns to 0 after an extended rest.

Quick Stand

You can use a minor action to stand yourself or an ally from prone. The ally must be within a number of squares equal to your curve modifier. If you are on your curve, you can stand from prone as a free action.

Tear the Veil

You can give your melee and ranged attacks additional reach or range by creating two rifts in space: one rift before your square and another before the target's square. You can select a single at-will or encounter power for this feature but you must treat it as either an encounter or daily power until your next rest. Therefore, an at-will power becomes an encounter power until you take a short rest or an encounter power becomes a daily power until you take your extended rest.

Any melee attack power gains the reach of an additional square and can ignore cover; ranged powers increase their range by a number of squares equal to your curve modifier; area, blast and burst powers increase their range by a number of squares equal to one-half of your curve modifier.

Restriction: You cannot apply any bonus damage through this class feature, such as Hunter's Quarry.

Warp Space

When you roll the highest number on a die to determine damage on a single target, you can teleport yourself or one adjacent ally up to 5 squares to an unoccupied square adjacent to the target as a free action. You can only do this once per round.

Messenger Powers

Calling on the might of Tyrolar and the energies of the Three Rings, messenger powers are called prayers.

Level 1 At-Will Prayers

Flanking Switch

Messenger Attack 1

While your opponent recovers from the last blow, you teleport to this flank and seize the opportunity.

At-Will • Divine, Teleportation, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Target: One creature

Prerequisite: You must be adjacent to the target.

Effect: You teleport to a flanking, unoccupied square adjacent to the target.

Attack: Curve modifier vs AC

Hit: 1[W] + curve modifier damage

Damage increases to 2[W] + curve modifier damage at 21st level.

Second Ring of Insight: You gain combat advantage against the target until the end of your next turn. If you already have combat advantage, you gain a +1 power bonus to attack and damage rolls.

Hindrance

Messenger Attack 1

Your enemy becomes enveloped in a haze and finds it difficult to hit its mark.

At-Will • Divine, Implement, Psychic

Standard Action **Ranged** 10

Target: One creature

Attack: Curve modifier vs Will

Hit: 1d8 + curve modifier psychic damage and target suffers a -1 penalty to attack rolls until the end of your next turn

Damage increases to 2d8 + curve modifier damage and the penalty increases to -2 at 21st level.

Third Ring of Faith: You can inflict cumulative penalties to the target's attack rolls.

Penetrate Armor

Messenger Attack 1

Your attack creates a gap in the target's armor and exposes him to further harm.

At-Will • Divine, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Curve modifier vs AC

Hit: 1[W] + curve modifier damage and the target suffers a -1 penalty to AC until the end of your next turn
Damage increases to 2[W] + curve modifier damage at 21st level.

First Ring of Might: You can inflict cumulative penalties to the target's AC.

Rescue the Wounded

Messenger Attack 1

You step forward, deliver a powerful attack and teleport your comrade out of harm's way.

At-Will • Divine, Teleportation, Weapon

Standard Action **Melee** weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Strength vs AC

Hit: 1[W] + Curve modifier damage

Damage increases to 2[W] + curve modifier damage at 21st level.

Effect: You can teleport an ally within a number of squares equal to your curve modifier up to 2 squares as a minor action.

Tyssa: You can teleport your ally a number of squares equal to your curve modifier.

Level 1 At- Encounter Prayer

Warp the Ground Messenger Attack 1
While everything remains normal, your enemies believe the ground beneath them is fading from existence.

Encounter • Divine, Illusion, Psychic
Standard Action Area 2 within 10 squares
Target: Any enemies within the area
Attack: Curve modifier vs Will
Hit: 2d6 psychic damage and the target grants combat advantage until the end of your next turn

Level 1 At- Daily Prayer

Share the Pain Messenger Attack 1
Where your opponent feels agony, your allies feel vigor and renewal.

Daily • Divine, Healing, Implement
Standard Action Melee 1
Target: One creature
Attack: Curve modifier vs Fortitude
Hit: 3d6 + curve modifier damage
Effect: You can distribute an amount of damage inflict on the target as hit points to any allies within a close burst 5. This amount cannot exceed the ally's healing surge value.
Miss: Half damage and a single ally within the burst can use a healing surge.
Standing Ring: You or an additional ally you can see uses a healing surge.

Level 2 Utility Prayer

Distant Boost Messenger Utility 2
Why climb when you can teleport?

Daily • Divine, Teleportation
Move Action Personal
Prerequisite: You have to make an Athletics check to climb, jump, or swim.
Effect: You teleport up to one-half your speed as if you made a successful Athletics check.

Level 3 Encounter Prayer

Retaliation Messenger Attack 3
No one shall touch your allies. Not without dire consequences.

Encounter • Divine, Implement
Immediate Reaction Ranged 5
Trigger: An enemy makes a successful melee or ranged attack against an ally.
Target: The triggering enemy
Attack: Curve modifier vs Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + curve modifier damage and the target is marked by the triggering ally

Level 5 Daily Prayer

Full Burn Messenger Attack 5
The power of Tyssa is at your command!

Daily • Divine, Fire, Implement, Radiant
Standard Action Close blast 3
Target: All enemies in the blast
Attack: Curve modifier vs Reflex
Hit: 1d8 fire damage and 5 ongoing radiant damage
Miss: Half damage
Tyssa: You can use this power as a close blast 5.

Level 6 Utility Prayer

Burst of Mobility Messenger Utility 6
Tyrolar grants his subjects freedom, dignity... and mobility!

Daily • Divine
Move Action Personal
Effect: You can shift a number of squares equal to your curve modifier.
Standing Ring: If you end your turn adjacent to an ally, that ally can shift an additional 2 squares as a move action before the end of your next turn.

Level 7 Encounter Prayer

Dessan's Bite Messenger Attack 7
A beam of cold, swirling winds open from your hands and expose your enemies to a wave jagged shards of ice.

Encounter • Cold, Divine, Implement
Standard Action Ranged 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Curve modifier vs Reflex
Hit: 2d8 + curve modifier cold damage
Third Ring of Faith: All squares adjacent to the target are considered difficult terrain until the end of your next turn.

Level 9 Daily Prayer

Final Outcome Messenger Attack 9
The target now remains under your control; you choose whether or not he shall flee or reposition himself.

Daily • Divine, Weapon
Standard Action Melee weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Curve modifier vs AC
Hit: 3[W] + curve modifier damage
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you can prevent the target from performing a single move action as an immediate interrupt.
Miss: Half damage and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Level 10 Utility Prayer

Blessings of Tyrolar Messenger Utility 10
Through the Traveler's grace, you can invigorate the wounded like never before.

Daily • Divine, Healing

Free Action Melee 1

Target: You or one ally

Effect: When you use a healing power on the target, they can re-roll a failed attack roll or saving throw before the end of the encounter. If they succeed, they gain temporary hit points equal to your curve modifier.

Level 13 Encounter Prayer

Whip of Upteran Messenger Attack 13
Weeds rush from the ground and run up your legs, extending to a long vine growing from your hand dripping deadly poison.

Encounter • Divine, Implement, Poison

Standard Action Melee 2

Target: One creature

Attack: Curve modifier vs AC

Hit: 1d8 + curve modifier poison damage and you push, pull, or slide the target 1 square

Sustain: Move

First Ring of Might: You can grab the target with a +2 power bonus. Once grabbed, the target grants combat advantage and suffers an additional 1d4 poison damage per round.

Level 15 Daily Prayer

Alternate Messenger Attack 15
With great effort, you cause your enemies to disappear and quickly reappear disoriented.

Daily • Divine, Implement, Psychic, Teleportation

Standard Action Close burst 5

Target: Any enemies within the burst

Attack: Curve modifier vs Will

Hit: 3d8 + curve modifier psychic damage

Effect: The target teleports and does not return until the start of the next round. When he does, he must re-roll initiative and continue acting in this new order. If the new result is higher, it automatically defaults back to the original result. Any previous ongoing damage and conditions caused by the target end as soon as this new round begins.

Miss: Half damage and the target is stunned until the start of your next turn.

Level 16 Utility Prayer

Natural Immunity Messenger Utility 16
Your travels have exposed you to tremendous dangers and granted you incredible resistance.

Daily • Divine

Minor Action Melee 1

Target: You or one ally

Effect: The target gains resistance equal to your curve modifier as defined by your curve until the end of the encounter.

First Ring of Might: Fire

Second Ring of Insight: Poison

Third Ring of Faith: Cold

Tyssa: Necrotic

Standing Ring: Your resistance is equal to twice your curve modifier.

Level 17 Encounter Prayer

Touch of Wanderlust Messenger Attack 17
All of the side effects, none of the benefits!

Encounter • Divine, Weapon

Standard Action Melee or Ranged weapon

Target: One creature

Attack: Curve modifier vs AC

Hit: 3[W] + curve modifier damage and the target is stunned (save ends)

Effect: For every round in which the target does not make his saving throw, he suffers a -1 penalty to attack rolls, AC and speed to a maximum equal to your curve modifier. Once he has made the saving throw, he can act on his next available turn with this penalty in place. At the start of every following turn, the penalty is reduced by one until it is removed.

Level 19 Daily Prayer

Crashing Fall Messenger Attack 19
Your enemy disappears from sight, only to reappear high in the air. His screams are cut off by his impact on the rocky ground.

Daily • Divine, Implement, Teleportation

Standard Action Ranged 10

Target: One creature

Attack: Curve modifier vs Will

Hit: The target is teleported 40 feet above his square and falls for 4d10 damage.

Miss: The target is teleported 20 feet above his square and falls for half damage.

Standing Ring: Choose another square within 5 squares of the target's original position. The target lands on that new square.

Level 22 Utility Prayer

Rift Shield

Messenger Utility 22

You tear open the fabric of reality around you and banish the foul energy elsewhere.

Daily • Divine, Implement, Teleportation

Immediate Interrupt **Personal**

Trigger: An enemy makes a successful attack against you.

Effect: You resist damage equal to 15 + your curve modifier from the attack.

Standing Ring: Make a secondary attack against the triggering target.

Secondary Attack: Curve modifier vs Reflex

Hit: The triggering attack hits the target and inflicts damage equal to your resistance.

Level 23 Encounter Prayer

Enclosure

Messenger Attack 23

The earth rises around your enemy and encases its legs in solid, unbreakable stone.

Encounter • Divine, Implement, Summoning

Standard Action **Area** 1 within 10 squares

Target: One creature

Attack: Curve modifier vs Fortitude

Hit: 4d10 + curve modifier damage and the target is immobilized (save ends)

Secondary Effect: The target suffers ongoing damage equal to your curve modifier until it makes its saving throw.

Level 25 Daily Prayer

Unleash Minions

Messenger Attack 25

A small platoon of earthen humanoids surround your enemies and beat them down with fists of rock.

Daily • Divine, Healing, Summoning, Zone

Standard Action **Area** 5 within 15 squares

Target: Any creature within the area

Effect: You create a number of minions equal to your curve modifier. They can affect any target within the zone created by this power but cannot leave it. Each minion can take a standard and move action on your turn and use your melee basic attack against an adjacent enemy to inflict damage equal to 10 + your curve modifier. They can also provide cover for any ally when positioned correctly. When destroyed, one ally within 2 squares of the minion gains temporary hit points equal to twice your curve modifier.

Sustain: Standard

Level 27 Encounter Prayer

Vision of Tyrolar

Messenger Attack 27

The illuminant figure of a humanoid bathed in white light tears a path through the battle and aids your fellows.

Encounter • Divine, Healing, Implement, Radiant

Standard Action **Area** wall 5 within 10 squares

Target: Any creature within the wall

Attack: Curve modifier vs AC

Hit: 3d8 radiant damage and any allies in the wall can use a healing surge

Second Ring of Insight: You can sustain this power with a standard action until the illuminant figure takes damage from area, blast, or burst attacks equal to your Charisma score. Each additional attack you make must originate from the last square of the previous round. Allies can only receive the use of one healing surge from this power.

Level 29 Daily Prayer

Wall of Cassia

Messenger Attack 29

The ground swells and a massive wall of terrain from your curve rises before you, blocking attacks and spreading out your enemies before you unleash its true power.

Daily • Divine, Fire, Healing, Implement, Poison

Standard Action **Close** wall 5

Effect: You create a wall of terrain related to your curve (see below). The wall provides total cover and slides any creature on its path by 1 square and knocks them prone. Each wall allows you to use individual squares as an attack against a single target. Once that square has been used to attack, it no longer exists as part of the wall and does not provide total cover.

First Ring of Might: The wall is made of sandstone and has resist 10 and 30 hit points per square. As a standard action, you can send 1 square of the wall hurling towards a single target within 5 squares (curve modifier vs AC; 2d8 damage and the target is immobilized (save ends)).

Second Ring of Insight: The wall is made of poisonous thorns and has 40 hit points per square. As a standard action, you cause 1 square to attack as a close burst 1 (curve modifier vs AC; 2d6 poison damage).

Third Ring of Faith: The wall is made of solid ice and has 40 hit points per square and immune cold. As a standard action, you cause 1 square to melt and grant an adjacent ally the use of a healing surge.

Tyssa: The wall is made of fire and grants resist 15 and immune fire to any adjacent ally. As a standard action, you can launch 1 square of the wall as a fireball to a single target within 5 squares (curve modifier vs AC; 2d8 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire)

Sustain: Minor

New Feats

The prayers of the messenger swell and change like the positions of the Rings and they have learned to increase their connection to Tyrolar with time, patience, and experience.

Aid the Fallen

Prerequisite: Messenger, Quick Stand class feature

Benefit: You can teleport a prone ally within 5 squares to any square adjacent to you as a minor action.

Armor of Movement

Prerequisite: Messenger

Benefit: You gain a +1 feat bonus to AC and Reflex until the end of your next turn when you teleport.

Chosen of Tyrolar

Prerequisite: Messenger, 21st level

Benefit: Once per encounter, you can teleport a number of squares equal to your speed as a move action.

Element of Surprise

Prerequisite: Messenger

Benefit: You gain a +1 feat bonus to melee attack rolls immediately following a move action using teleportation which lasts until the end of your next turn. This bonus increases to +2 at 11th level and +3 at 21st level.

Elite Messenger

Prerequisite: Messenger, 11th level

Benefit: You can teleport one additional square when you use a teleporation power.

Punishment

Prerequisite: Messenger, Banishment class feature

Benefit: When the target of your Banishment class feature returns to combat, it suffer psychic damage equal to your curve modifier. This damage increase to 5 + your curve modifier at 11th level and 10 + your curve modifier at 21st level.

Specialist Feats: An Optional System for Multiclassing

For some, specialist classes as presented are overpowered and break the mold set down by multiclassing feats given in the *4E Player's Handbook*. These feats given below are an optional means to incorporate specialist classes in your campaign as a series of multiclass feats.

Adept Training

Prerequisite: Specialization

Benefit: You can replace the listed ability score modifier on a specialist power with another ability score modifier of your choice.

Special: You can select this feat multiple times and substitute the ability score modifier on another specialist power.

Master Specialist

Prerequisite: Specialization

Benefit: You can exchange one power from your primary class to a similar power from your specialist class. This substituted power must be the same level, frequency (at-will, encounter, or daily) and type (attack or utility).

Special: You can select this feat multiple times and substitute another power from your specialist class.

Past Lesson

Prerequisite: Specialization

Benefit: You can substitute one of your primary class features for a specialist class feature. You can only use a primary class feature chosen for elimination when you become a specialist. Once you have used your substituted primary class feature, you cannot use your specialist class feature until after an extended rest.

For example, if you substituted your Ritual Caster class feature as a cleric for the Path of Enlightenment messenger class feature, you can use this feat to regain the use of Ritual Caster until your next extended rest. During this time, you do not have Path of Enlightenment.

Specialization

Prerequisites: You must meet the conditions of your chosen specialist class.

Benefit: Choose a specialist class and replace one of your primary class features with one from your chosen specialist class.



by Michael Evans

Review:

Two Soundscapes by Sonic Legends: “Prosperous Tavern” & “Vampire Castle”

“Music makes my world go round...”

Lovebugs (2001)

Music and soundtracks are just something we humans love to add to all our forms of entertainment. From plays to opera and musical theatre, from movies to television shows and even cartoons, music just seems to complete the entertainment experience.

Even video games these days have fantastic scores that, when coupled with the computer generated images on the screen, can totally transport us into other realms of existence. Personally, I remember the Morrowind soundtrack from Bethesda Softworks haunting me for days at a time, running through my head as I went about my daily tasks and reminding me how much I couldn't wait to get off work and play again. And I am not ashamed to admit that the musical score from the introductory movie to Blizzard's WoW Expansion, Wrath of the Lich King, raised the hairs on the back of my neck when Arthas called the dracolich up from the ice.

So with music being such a big part of every other form of entertainment we enjoy, shouldn't it be a part of our tabletop gaming experience?

So recently, while scouring through RPGNow looking for new supplements, I happened to come across a company that is doing just that: bringing the magic of musical accompaniment to the Gaming Table.

Sonic Legends has released over 20 “soundscape” products to enhance a wide variety of games, from heroic fantasy, to science fiction, and even horror. With such straightforward titles as Forest Journey, Alien City Ruins, Dark Ritual, and Elven City at Night, these tracks are designed to loop endlessly in the background of a gaming session, to help set the mood and ambiance of whatever game they accompany.

After listening to a few samples, I was totally hooked and wanted to learn more. So I contacted Sonic Legends to see what I could learn about the composer and designer of these soundscapes, Erika Lieberman.



So where did you study music and composition?

I studied Music Technology/Scoring for film and Multimedia at New York University. I also studied harp with Muriel Denoix.

And how long have you been composing? Have you worked on other projects before starting Sonic Legends?

I've been composing for about 15 years. Other projects have included various folk groups and small ensembles such as Renaissance Trio Mince Pye, [the] Celtic folk group, The Reelies, and currently renaissance/early baroque trio Sweet Amaryllis.

I've composed music for various films and TV shows, including feature *Guiana 1838*, TruTV's "Til Death Do Us Part" starring John Waters, and various short films. I've also worked as a primary harpist and music director for various Shakespeare companies.

What instruments or gear do you use to create your soundscapes?

I am a Logic Pro girl all the way! I use lots of different virtual instrument/sample libraries depending on the sounds I want, but generally speaking for strings I like Sonic Implants, for winds and brass Dan Dean. East-West Symphonic Choirs are also a favorite, as is Motu's Ethno Instrument. I'm also a big fan of Nine Volt Audio's Taiko edition - great drums for battle music.

I have a proud collection of ethnic folk instruments that I like to use too - I strongly feel that adding one or two live instruments to a piece infuses it with humanity and emotion, and greatly minimizes that "electronic" feel.

And of course I tend to use my harp whenever I can. I play a Blevins Encore 34 string harp in cherry wood.

What are your influences? Do you play games, or perhaps read to get ideas for the scores?

As for inspiration, I get it from a lot of places. I play D&D (not as often as I like), and get a lot of ideas for new soundscapes just from participating in games. After all, if we could use it then it's likely that someone else can too!

I'm also involved in a local vampire LARP, and I get inspiration from there as well. Movies, of course, are a huge inspiration for me since my roots are in film music. I just saw *Avatar* for the second time, and now I'm dying to write a "Forest People" soundscape, though I'm not sure how useful that would be in terms of gaming. It would be really fun to write though!

Fantasy books by authors like Charles de Lint, Jim Butcher, Terry Brooks, Neil Gaiman, Terry Pratchett and Jacqueline Carey also inspire me.

Another big inspiration comes from our publishing partners. For example, we just released soundscapes for Crafty Games newest Fantasy Craft adventure, *The Cleansing of Black Spur*, a couple of weeks ago. When we have copies of these fabulous new adventures in front of us, it makes it really easy to "score" them. And it's really fun to then see them being played with the music that has been designed especially for them. We sell the soundscapes for these games in discounted bundles on drivethrurpg.com and rpgnow.com, and gamers are responding very well to them. It's pretty exciting!

Do you work alone, or do you have an ensemble of musicians?

I have some extraordinarily talented composers working with me: Christy Carew, a film/television composer from Los Angeles; Jack Walker, a film/television composer from the Washington DC area (who is also a really fantastic GM!); Mike Trapp, a very talented composer and wicked electric guitar player; John Ollsin, who specializes in our more otherworldly, ambient type stuff; Mike Worth, who recently won an Emmy award for some of his orchestration work in television; and several other really talented artists. Occasionally I also have a live musician record something. For example, I used the gorgeous ethereal vocals of Jennifer Lindsay in my soundscape “Vampire Castle”. I’ll probably recruit the talents of my cellist and flute player from my trio at some point as well.

Aside from that, we’ve had so much incredible support from the gaming community. It’s amazing how many people have lent us their talents when we needed them!

Our consultant and writer, Will Thrasher, has been incredibly helpful, as has one of our primary sound designer/foley artists, John Cullen. A friend of mine created our webstore, and many artists from the Deviant Art Community have given us permission to use their beautiful work to illustrate our website. I especially appreciate these people because it’s a labor of love for them, and they work hard and give us great results.

Soundscapes: “Prosperous Tavern” & “Vampire Castle”

Artist: Erika Lieberman

Additional Vocals: Jennifer Lindsay (Vampire Castle)

Illustration: Illusion de Vivre (Vampire Castle) & Amir (Prosperous Tavern)

Publisher: Sonic Legends

Year: 2009

Media: mp3

Cost: \$2.99 per soundscape

“Prosperous Tavern” and “Vampire Castle” are mp3 soundscapes, musical scores with sound effects, designed to be used with any game system, including Dungeons & Dragons 4e. They are each approximately 10 minutes in length, and can be set to loop continuously throughout a game session, providing “mood” music and sound ambiance to enhance gameplay.

The production quality of the two soundscapes reviewed for this piece are exceptional, consisting of a blend of music and various sound effects that are beautifully layered, and just fascinating to hear. The MP3’s are easy to use, and can be handled on any computer or mp3 player. Each of the soundscapes is about 10-11 megabytes in size.

“Prosperous Tavern” should come with a warning to Dungeon Masters: “Your Players may spend more time listening to this track than to you when you first play it!” It is an absolutely mesmerizing blend of sounds. Over a constant susurrus of background voices, laughing, chatting and generally carrying-on can be heard a variety of sound effects, including clinking coins, pouring ale, coughs, laughter, clanking tankards, and a group of bards playing violin, flute, and harp. About five minutes into the piece, which runs 9 minutes 47 seconds, can be heard what I swear sounds like a fist-fight, with a bit of cheering after bit for the victor. Frankly, it’s such a complex blend of music and sounds, that you’ll undoubtedly hear something different every time you listen to it!

“Vampire Castle” on the other hand is considerably more like a musical soundtrack in nature, although there are still plenty of sound effects to add dimension to the soundscape. This is truly an eerie piece to listen to, and would be spectacular to be used along with any adventure involving the forces of the malevolent undead. It is elegant and very complex, moving through several phases throughout its 9:07 minute runtime.



The soundscape opens with a sinister whispering and an ethereal singing, which is rather ghostly and siren-like. This I must assume is the work of Ms. Lindsay as the Composer mentioned during the interview. The whole piece transitions to violins, with the faint sounds of a metal gate opening and echoing footsteps in the background. There are occasional claps of thunder to add to the overall intimidation factor, before the soundscape changes again into a dirge of driving violins over which harpsichord and chimes are heard, and sounds of wind gusts, rainfall, more footsteps, and even squeaking bats fade in and out of the score. Finally, it moves into a crescendo of full orchestration and drums in a sinister climax, culminating in a pipe organ playing to which the faint howls of wolves (or worse!) echo in the background. The piece closes with the same creepy whispering and ethereal singing, allowing the soundscape to loop back to the beginning with a minimal of disruption in ambiance.

In the final analysis, the two soundscapes, “Prosperous Tavern” and “Vampire Castle” by Sonic Legends are simply brilliant, and would enhance any gaming session in which they were used. The combination of music and sound effects is very original, would make for an excellent backdrop of sound to set the mood, and allow any Dungeon Master to quickly transport their Players into some other, wondrous realm. Each soundscape is very modestly priced at only \$2.99, making it feasible for any group to pitch in and purchase high quality music and sound effects for their game. Given the size of a typical gaming group, if each member donated just one dollar per session, they could very quickly build up a library of soundscapes to use for almost any type adventure.

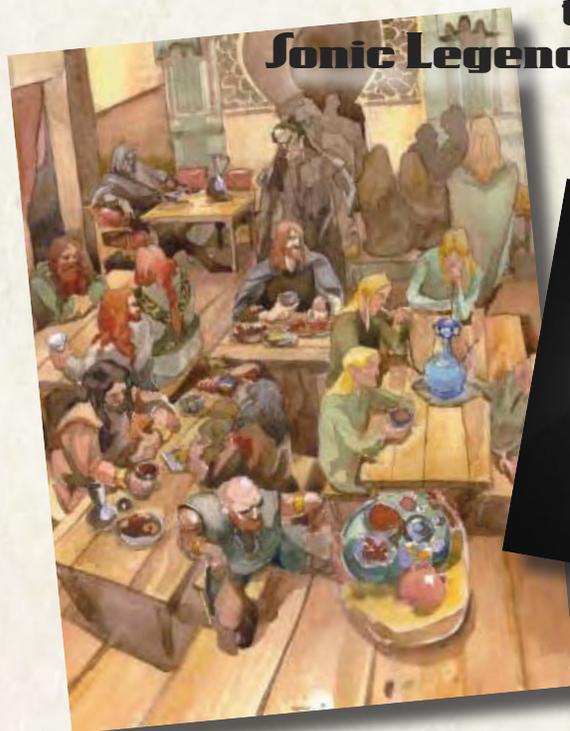
Sonic Legends has done an outstanding job of filling a market-niche that has been too long ignored by most gaming companies, and in so doing, have placed yet another multimedia tool into the hands of Dungeon Masters to take their games to a new and amazing level.

Sonic Legends’ Soundscapes are available from their website at <http://www.sonic-legends.com/> or from OBS sites like RPGNow.com and DriveThruRPG.com.

Author’s Note: The Author received a complimentary copy of the two soundscapes in MP3 format from which the review was written.

I would like to thank the artists at Sonic Legends for providing the opportunity to review these two soundscapes, and I wish them the best of luck with their future releases.

**Click on either cover below
to listen to a sample of
Sonic Legends’ Prosperous Tavern
or Vampire Castle...**



Kapre

Written by Billy Recio. Edited by Philip Corpuz. Artwork by John Corpuz.

The image that most people have of the kapre is that of a giant smoking an enormous roll of tobacco while enthroned on a tree. These giants have an affinity with the trees of the forest, and impossibly heavy as these creatures are, they have a knack for balancing themselves on even the most seemingly fragile branches.

Like all giants, the kapres tower over other humanoids. Their hairy skin ranges from dark brown to pitch black, and their skin is wrinkled and tough as bark. A few people who do not bother to look up sometimes mistake the legs of a kapre for a tree trunk.

The most distinctive feature of the kapre however is the enormous cigar that no self-respecting kapre goes without. Whether sticking out of its yellowed teeth or held in its arms as a smoldering bludgeon, the enormous roll of tobacco surrounds the kapre with an otherworldly haze. Some say that the smoke robs a person of their memories, while others see the smoke as much a part of the kapre as its limbs. Whatever the truth, it cannot be denied that the cigar and its smoke have magical properties.

Kapre Mythos

Any discussion regarding the kapre begins with its cigar. Every kapre encountered possesses one of these enormous rolls of tobacco, though its appearance varies among individuals. Sometimes, the cigar is said to be as large as the trunk of a banana tree, with the kapre's lips wide enough to puff on it. Others have been known to appear like as innocuous as a regular cigar (scaled to a giant's size), until it transforms into a large flaming bludgeon when the kapre needs a



Kapres and tikbalangs are often at odds with one another.

weapon. In one instance, it was not even a cigar at all but an enormous pipe carved from the mystical trees of the *Realm of Kalikasan*.

Whatever form it takes, the kapre's cigar and its magical nature makes it sought after by eccentric collectors and adventurers. Frequently however, they are sorely disappointed when they get their hands on these items. If they killed the kapre to get to the cigar, they find that it stops

Kapres in Your Game

The kapre is part of the Buan Campaign Setting, a project by Nosfecatu Publishing that aims to translate elements of Philippine Mythology into the 4E Dungeons and Dragons game. While tailored for that campaign setting in particular, we present these elements in a manner that will allow any Gamemaster to incorporate them in their own respective game worlds.

The kapre, in particular, work well in games that feature deep forests that are connected to the realms of the fey. When using them in your games, think of how these creatures tend to interact with the other fey giants - the Fomorians and their Cyclops servitors (see the D&D 4E MONSTER MANUAL). Unlike

these creatures, kapres are not necessarily malicious. Are they working in direct opposition to the fomorians, or have they been duped into joining forces with them? If you are going with the former, then consider kapres as creatures who suspect all they encounter to be allies of the fomorians. If going for the latter, perhaps the kapres are the weak link in the alliance of giants, for they don't enjoy the evil things that they are made to do.

For more information on the Buan Campaign Setting, check out **Tikbalang: Guardians of Kalikasan**, which is available in your favorite pdf stores. Or better yet, visit us at <http://nosfecatu.blogspot.com/>.

burning with the kapre's death, and the brand's magical properties are lost. If stolen, they find that the smoldering tobacco is indeed enchanted, but it eventually burns out like any lit cigar. As such, hunting a kapre for its cigar rarely pays off.

However, a kapre does possess the power to willingly give its cigar to a friend. When gifted in this way, the enchantment holds, and the cigar is not consumed, simply smoldering along like a perpetual cigar. The kapre itself does not seem to suffer from the loss in any way – it always seems to have an extra cigar hidden inside what little clothes it is wearing.

Aside from their cigars, the kapre are also known for their affinity with the trees of the forest. They are able to pass through trees as though they were nought but air. Kapres have also developed the ability to lounge on top of trees without their weight snapping even the thinnest of branches. Kapres have been known to favour lounging above balet, banyan, and ancient mango trees.

Unlike their tikbalang neighbors however, kapres are not in the habit of expelling trespassers. They are not as territorial as the equine fay, however they are very protective of the trees in their haunts, and anyone who does harm these trees risks the ire of these giants.

The territorial nature of the tikbalangs usually puts them at odds with the kapre. It doesn't help that fey crossings, which the tikbalangs are sworn to protect, usually manifest around old trees. Tikbalangs thus actively push kapre away from these places, while the kapre themselves are anything but pushovers.

Such arguments between the two fey races are best viewed as sibling rivalries. Rarely do such confrontations end in fatalities, and when the fey *Realm of Kalikasan* is threatened, they usually set aside their differences to face a common threat.

New Monsters

Kapres are often viewed as a threat, even if they actually aren't in most cases. When assaulted, however, it meets its puny adversaries head-on. It shows no mercy to those that have no regard for the trees that it considers as its home.

Kapre Tactics

The kapre likes to watch the battle for a round or two, typically hiding behind some cluster of trees. When it shows itself, it will inhale deeply and open up with its *Fumigate* attack, catching as many opponents as possible. It makes no further effort to hide once it joins combat, and loses itself in melee against a worthy opponent. It doesn't exhale its smoke ring unless a flying opponent is pestering it.

Kapre	Level 15 Brute	
Large fey humanoid (giant)	XP 1200	
Initiative +8	Senses Perception +12; low-light vision	
Fey Smoke aura 2 (requires Cigar Club); enemies that start their turn in the aura grant combat advantage to the Kapre. The kapre has concealment while Fey Smoke is active (see also <i>Fumigate</i>)		
HP 180; Bloodied 90		
AC 27; Fortitude 29, Reflex 24, Will 27		
Speed 8, <i>Affinity with Trees</i> (see below)		
Ⓢ Cigar Club (standard; at-will) ⚡ Fire, Weapon		
Reach 2; +18 vs. AC; 1d10 + 7 damage, and ongoing 10 fire damage.		
☞ Smoke Ring (standard; at-will) ⚡ Fire		
Requires Cigar Club. Ranged 10. +16 vs Fortitude. 1d10 + 5 fire damage, and the target is considered slowed when using its fly speed until the end of the kapre's next turn.		
⬅ Fumigate (standard; encounter) ⚡ Fire		
Requires Cigar Club; Close blast 3; +14 vs. Fortitude; 4d10 + 5 fire damage. <i>Miss</i> : Half damage. Special : The kapre's <i>Fey Smoke</i> aura becomes nonfunctional, and it cannot activate it until the end of its next turn.		
Affinity With Trees		
A kapre has the phasing quality when moving through trees. It can also end its movement in a space occupied by a tree, standing on one of its branches. In addition, a kapre has cover from all enemies as long as it is adjacent to, or sharing the space of, a tree.		
Alignment Unaligned	Languages Elven, Giant	
Skills Intimidate +12, Stealth +13		
Str 24 (+14)	Dex 13 (+8)	Wis 20 (+12)
Con 20 (+12)	Int 8 (+6)	Cha 10 (+7)
Equipment Cigar Club		

Kapre Titan

Kapre titans are bigger than their kapre siblings, and have developed a better understanding of the smoke magics inherent in their kind. They are now one with their smoke, their forms only barely visible behind the grey curtain. Only the light of their cigar is clear through the smoke.

Kapre Titan Tactics

Like the kapre, the kapre titan prefers to observe the battle if it is not yet already visible. It first finds the best way to unleash its *Fumigate Memories* attack. It is also more patient than other kapres. They rely on their Fey Smog to gain the upper hand, and prefer to hide when it is non-functional.

Kapre Titan**Level 18 Elite Lurker****Huge fey humanoid (air, giant)****XP 4000****Initiative** +16 **Senses** Perception +15; low-light vision

Fey Smog aura 2 (requires kapre's cigar); enemies that start their turn in the aura are dazed until the start of their next turn. The kapre titan has concealment while Fey Smog is active (see also *Fumigate Memories*, below).

HP 192; **Bloodied** 96**AC** 32; **Fortitude** 32, **Reflex** 31, **Will** 30**Resist** insubstantial

Saving Throws +2

Speed fly 8 (hover), *Affinity with Trees* (see below), phasing**Action Points** 1⊕ **Slam** (standard; at-will)

Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage.

⊕ **Choking Assault** (standard; at-will)

Requires a free hand; Reach 3; +23 vs. AC; 1d12 + 8 damage, and the target is grabbed (until escape). In addition, the target cannot use second wind while it is grabbed.

⊖ **Fumigate Memories** (standard; recharge ☹️) ☹️ **Fire, Psychic**

Requires Kapre's cigar; Close blast 5; +19 vs. Will; 3d10 + 6 fire and psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).

First Failed Save: The target is dominated (save ends) **Special:** The kapre titan's *Fey Smog* aura becomes nonfunctional, and it cannot activate it until *Fumigate Memories* is recharged.**Memory Fuel** ☹️ **Fire**

The kapre titan deals an additional 2d8 fire damage with its melee attacks against enemies it has combat advantage against.

Affinity with Trees

A kapre titan can end its movement in a space occupied by a tree, floating on one of its branches. A kapre has cover from all enemies as long as it is adjacent to, or sharing the space of, a tree, and can become hidden when a tree provides cover.

Alignment Unaligned**Languages** Elven, Giant**Skills** Intimidate +16, Stealth +21**Str** 26 (+17)**Dex** 25 (+16)**Wis** 22 (+15)**Con** 23 (+15)**Int** 11 (+8)**Cha** 14 (+11)**Equipment** Kapre's Cigar

Encounter Groups

Kapres have an affinity with trees, and it is not uncommon for them to ally with treants. Sometimes, other fey creatures have been known to be on good terms with kapres. The most insidious amongst their kind ally with their more evil giant kin.

Level 16 Encounter (7100 xp)☹️ 2 cyclops warriors (level 16 minion, see the *D&D 4E**Monster Manual*)

☹️ 3 kapres (level 15 brute)

☹️ 1 treant (level 16 elite controller, see the *D&D 4E Monster Manual*)**Level 18 Encounter (10400 xp)**☹️ 1 bralani of autumn winds (level 19 controller, see the *D&D 4E Monster Manual*)☹️ 2 fire giants (level 18 soldier, see the *D&D 4E Monster Manual*)

☹️ 1 kapre titan (level 18 elite lurker)

GM Toolkit

The kapre is a richly-detailed monster that is easy to incorporate in a game. As they have a particular connection to trees, reviewing the rules for placing trees as outdoor terrain, which is found in the *D&D 4E DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE*, is suggested. The unique nature of the kapre is better felt when you are familiar with how to use this terrain feature.

We have also included rules for the balete tree, one of the preferred abodes of the kapre, below. The hanging roots that surround it are difficult to maneuver, but touching it makes spells and evocations more powerful

Balete Tree

"The balete or banyan tree is considered a focal point of mystical energy in folklore. Its tall branches, vines, and aerial roots are often held to be the lairs of kapre, tik-balang, and other fey creatures."

The balete tree occupies one square and functions as a big tree. In addition, all squares adjacent to it are considered Fonts of Power (see the *D&D 4E Dungeon Master's Guide*) for powers with the arcane or primal keywords. These squares are also difficult terrain.

In addition, the balete's thick vine fronds and aerial roots can sometimes take hold away from the central trunk. These outrunners can be treated as extensions of the main tree. They can reach as far as five squares away from the core of the tree, and where they reach the ground, they count as a single square of cover that also functions as a font of power.

The Kapre's Cigar

The kapre's cigar might be an interesting magical item for your players. They were designed to be liked to a kapre's life force in order to avoid a potential abundance of magical items that might result from facing many such creatures in succession. The exact nature of its powers is left to you, but it is suggested to have powers associated with fire, concealment, or invisibility. You can also make it a consumable item, with the act of consuming it roleplayed as the consumption of the cigar. You can also treat the item as having more than one use or charge – perhaps the item can be used 5 times before being depleted. ☹️



The Perilous Secrets of Wilford Manor

EXCLUSIVE
PREVIEW



Preview
Edition



The
DOOMBRINGER
Saga

~INTRODUCTION~

"No... oh no... but it's not possible!" Lady Caelynneth cried out, clutching at her long auburn tresses as she tore her gaze from shimmering pool.

The images of the Mystic Sages floating serenely in the enchanted waters scattered like shadows before the lighted lamp as the Ritual to calling them to consultation came to an abrupt end. Their terrible message had been delivered, confirming the discovery that the seeress prayed was false.

Sobbing uncontrollably, Caelynneth grabbed up her star charts, and staggered back to her desk, her beautiful fey visage wracked by terror and grief. Her hands shook as they pulled the stopper from the vial of crimson ink, but she stilled them through willpower alone, lest her Working be marred.

From outside the heavy oak door of her Scrying Room, concerned voices called her name, followed by frantic knocking then pounding. But the Lady scarcely heard them as she scribbled on the parchment charts, illuminating in a series of blood red glyphs the cosmic horror she had uncovered.

Her ears did not hear the final crash that tore the great iron-bound door from its hinges. Nor did she hearken to her would-be rescuers as they came rushing in to save her. Gazing at the star chart one final time through tear soaked eyes, the essence of all that once was Lady Caelynneth reeled back from that final terrible truth, and fled shrieking into some deep, dark corner of her mind.

The servants found their Lady prostrate beside her writing desk, the red-tipped quill still clutched in her hand. Her beautiful fey eyes, ensnared by madness and horror, gazed up through the skylight dome at the shimmering stars... or perhaps at the darkness between them.

The Perilous Secrets of Wilford Manor Preview Edition

WRITTEN & DESIGNED BY
Michael Evans

COVER & INTERIOR ART
Robert Kusiak

PLAYTESTING
Robert "Graves" Kusiak, Brett "Risa" Painter, Pam "Neyllia" Painter,
Chris "Marlett" Gail, and Paul "Gimak" Mansfield

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~THE DOOMBRINGER SAGA~

You hold in your hands a Preview of the First Chapter of a world-shaking epic saga! Between these pages lies a story in which the Characters in your Campaign can decide the fate of not only the World, but also the fates of the mystical Realms of the Feywild, and the gloom-shrouded Expanse of the Shadowfell!

“The Perilous Secrets of Wilford Manor” is designed as a Starting Adventure for five 1st Level Player-Characters, however, by using the suggestions in the appendix, it can be adapted for up to six 2nd Level Player-Characters, as needed. It is generically designed to fit into almost any world setting of your choosing, with little modification. As Dungeon Master, you can choose to use this module as a stand-alone, or can be used in conjunction with future releases to form a titanic story arc that will determine if your heroes can save the Three Worlds from certain annihilation!

~DM'S BACKGROUND~

One (or more) of the Player-Characters have received a summons to meet with Earl Owain Gifford at his estate. The Characters may all know each other, or may have been summoned there as individuals or small groups to meet with the Earl regarding an important matter. If the party is not acquainted, this is an opportunity to have the Characters meet and join forces for a common cause.

Earl Owain has summoned the Characters together in the hopes of finding out what happened to his son, Tulwen. Those Characters who received a written summons know of Tulwen through some direct interaction, be it socializing, military service, or some other way. It is recommended that elements from the Player-Characters' backgrounds be used to create a story in which Tulwen may have played a favorable part.

Tulwen had been sent over a week ago to the small village of Wilford, twenty or so miles from town. The mayor of Wilford has recently stopped paying the rent and taxes. As the village is under the Earl's demesne, he sent Tulwen to try and find out the reason why the taxes, which are not overly burdensome, are not being paid. There is a bit of urgency, as the yearly Royal Accounting will soon take place, and the lapse came to the notice of the King. Since the young heir of the Earl is well-known to champion in the causes of the down-trodden, it was decided that he would be sent as a mediator.

The House of Gifford is well known for their kindness and generous nature, and they are among the more popular noble families with the common folk. It would be hard to imagine that, given the family's reputation, the villagers would attempt to harm Tulwen. Fearing

some foul play, perhaps by enemies or forces unknown, Earl Owain has called the Characters together to investigate.

The Earl suggests that perhaps the adventurers might take a walk out to Wilford and see what happened to Tulwen. He even claims he would grant them a boon for seeing to it that his son is safe.

Noble Boons: A Noble Boon is a favor, that can be collected in either goods or services. Typically, a boon's "goods" value is equal to about 10% of the Total Monetary Treasure for the Treasure Parcels at that Level. Double that amount if the boon is taken out in services.

Example: A 1st Level Character would likely be able to request that the Earl grant him a gift, such as a horse, or a fine piece of armor. In services, it might be more valuable, such as having an expensive fine waived, or be given a letter of recommendation to use to gain favor from another noble, or even to be sent on another quest that will result in fame and potential wealth.

Note: If you choose not to play with Noble Boons in your campaign, the Earl will simply offer each Character a reward of 50 gold coins for the safe return of his son.

~PLAYER BACKGROUND~

Read or paraphrase to the Characters:

You receive an invitation to the home of the Earl of Gifford, which comes as a bit of a surprise, since it comes from the Earl himself and not his son, Tulwen, with whom you are acquainted. You make your way to the estate at the appointed hour, and are shown into a large study to meet with Earl Owain.

The Earl, a robust and regal man older man, sits behind a massive desk of carved oak, and invites you to be seated. He gazes at each of you in turn, as if searching for faces for something, and it is difficult to meet his eyes.

“My son, Tulwen, with whom some of you are acquainted, has gone... missing,” he states flatly, his deep voice low and tense. “I fear something may have happened to him, for he is nearly a week overdue in returning.”

The Earl rises and comes around the desk to stand before you, moving with the ease of a fighting man. But his powerful shoulders slump when, despite his great dignity, and he lets forth a weary sigh.

The Earl fixes you with a sad stare and says, “I would require... no, I ask you, as Tulwen's friend... to go and find out what happened to my son.”

~Spoiler Notice~

If you are a Player, it is recommended you stop reading here. The remaining information is for Dungeon Masters, and reading further into this preview will reveal plot information.

Roleplay Opportunity: You are free to impart as much or little information from the DM' Background as you see fit, based upon the questions asked by the Characters. The Earl is honest and forthright, but will not tolerate impertinence. He will stress the importance of being discrete when acting as his agents, but also will promise to reward those faithful to the House of Gifford.

~THE VILLAGE OF WILFORD~ & ~WILFORD MANOR~

Adventure Synopsis: After traveling all day to Wilford, the Adventurers will meet with some townspeople at the local inn, *The Fairy in the Glen*. They will find the villagers closed-mouth and a little fearful, as they question them about Tulwen's whereabouts.

The Heroes soon learn that the brave young nobleman went to investigate a band of strange monks that have taken up residence at the Wilford Manor. Baron Wilford and his family have not been seen since the monks came, almost ten years ago.

The monks terrorize the villagers regularly, and exact a heavy tithe of their food and money. Those who complain have been known to disappear, and all attempts to send word to the Earl have met with failure. The monks seem to know all that goes on in the village, and the messengers are never seen again.

~PREVIEW ENCOUNTER~

Backstory: The Heroes will have had two encounters before this point in the adventure, and will have just achieved a Milestone.

The first encounter was with a group of gray robed men and women at the manor stables which sit alongside the muddy track leading to the manorhouse. They attempted to ambush the adventurers, and fought fanatically to the death.

The second encounter will occur shortly after the Heroes enter the manor, and find the Great Hall has been turned into a dormitory of sorts:

This was the Great Hall of the Manor, once used to entertain guests. Now it looks like a dormitory, with crude cots and straw mattresses lining the walls. Satchels and backpacks hang from the ends of some of the cots. Dying embers smolder and pop in a fireplace to the south.

More of the gray robed monks have attacked the Heroes in the dormitory with no provocation, and the end of the second encounter signals the first Milestone in the adventure. The Characters have received an Action Point as they have taken their Short Rest - which they will definitely be needing, because their last battle has not gone unnoticed!

~THE DARKEST OF SOULS~

Encounter: Level 2—XP 625

- The Shadow Prophet
- 1 Human Cultist Thug
- 1 Human Cultist Novice
- 1 Human Cultist Minion

As the Characters complete their rest, and begin to search the dormitory, and the bodies of the slain monks, the Shadow Prophet will be coming down from the floor above the Great Hall to investigate.

Setup: As the Characters begin their search among the bodies and pallets in the Great Hall, read or paraphrase the following:
The robed fanatics lay strewn on the floor and you begin to search the room. The hairs on the back of your neck rise as you get the uneasy feeling that you are not alone in this part of the manor.



- **Perception (DC 15):** To detect the sneaking cultists coming down the spiral staircase from above. (Note: Remember to factor in the distance to the base Perception DC—see DMG for details)
- **Failure:** Those Characters that fail the roll are *surprised* during the first round of combat.

Doombringer Cult Thug **Level 3 Soldier**Medium natural humanoid XP 150**Initiative** +5 **Senses** Perception +1**HP** 47; **Bloodied** 23
AC 18; **Fortitude** 16; **Reflex** 15; **Will** 14
Speed 6⊕ **Scythe** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

Reach 2; +10 vs AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and target is marked; the thug may only have one active mark at a time.

⊕ **Reaping Slash** (standard; recharge ☹ ☹) • **Weapon**

Reach 2; +9 vs AC; 1d8 + 3 damage, and Thug shifts 1 square to make a second attack at a new target; Reach 2; +9 vs. AC; 1d8+3 damage.

⊕ **Scythe Sweep** (standard; encounter) • **Weapon**

Reach 2; +8 vs AC; 1d10 + 3 damage, and target is knocked prone.

Fanaticism (no action; at-will)

A Doombringer cultist gains +2 to Will defense while at least two other cult members are within 5 squares of it

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common,**Skills** Intimidate +7, Religion +6, Stealth +8**Str** 16 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 11 (+1)
Con 15 (+3) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)**Equipment** Cloth Robes, Scythe, Leather Armor**Doombringer Cult Novice** **Level 2 Skirmisher**Medium natural humanoid XP 125**Initiative** +6 **Senses** Perception +2**HP** 37; **Bloodied** 18
AC 16; **Fortitude** 14; **Reflex** 15; **Will** 14
Speed 6⊕ **Sickle** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+6 vs AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and Novice shifts 1 square.

↘ **Sling** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

Ranged 10/20; +7 vs AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.

⊕ **Bloody Slash** (standard; encounter) • **Weapon**

+5 vs AC; 1d6 + 3 damage, and ongoing 3 bleeding (save ends) and slowed until beginning of Novice's next turn; Novice shifts 1 square.

Fanaticism (no action; at-will)

A Doombringer cultist gains +2 to Will defense while at least two other cult members are within 5 squares of it

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common,**Skills** Arcana +6, Religion +6, Stealth +9**Str** 12 (+2) **Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 12 (+2)
Con 13 (+2) **Int** 10 (+1) **Cha** 12 (+2)**Equipment** Cloth Robes, Sickle, Sling, Sling Bullet x10**Doombringer Cult Shadow** **Level 4 Elite Artillery**
ProphetMedium shadow humanoid XP 350**Initiative** +6 **Senses** Perception +4**HP** 84; **Bloodied** 42
AC 18; **Fortitude** 15; **Reflex** 17; **Will** 18
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1⊕ **Silver-handled Sickle** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+11 vs AC; 1d6 + 4 damage.

↘ **Shadow Orb** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic**

Ranged 10; +9 vs Reflex; 1d10 + 4 necrotic damage.

↘ **Tenebrous Spray** (standard; recharge ☹ ☹) • **Necrotic**

Close blast 3; +9 vs Fortitude; 1d8 + 4 necrotic damage and blinded until start of prophet's next turn.

↘ **Chains of Darkness** (standard; encounter) • **Shadow, Force**

Ranged 10; +9 vs Reflex; 1d10 + 4 force damage; target is held immobilized until the end of the prophet's next turn

Deathly Wings (immediate interrupt; encounter) • **Necrotic**

Trigger: The prophet is hit by an attack. Effect: Until the end of the prophet's next turn, it gains +1 to all defenses, and any creature in an adjacent square takes 1d6 necrotic damage

Shadowshroud (minor; encounter) • **Illusion, Shadow**

The prophet is invisible until the end of its next turn, or until it attacks.

↘ **Gathering Shadows** (minor; encounter) • **Illusion, Shadow**

Close burst 1; this power creates a zone of darkness that remains until the end of the prophet's next turn. It blocks line of sight for all except the prophet, and anyone in the zone is blinded.

Taint of the Shadowfell (immediate reaction; at-will)

When first bloodied, the prophet's shadowshroud power will refresh.

Fanaticism (no action; at-will)

A Doombringer cultist gains +2 to Will defense while at least two other cult members are within 5 squares of it

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common, Deep Speech**Skills** Arcana +9, Religion +9, Stealth +11**Str** 15 (+4) **Dex** 18 (+6) **Wis** 14 (+4)
Con 12 (+3) **Int** 15 (+4) **Cha** 18 (+6)**Equipment** Cloth Robe, Silver-handled Sickle**As combat begins, read or paraphrase the following:***More robed monks rush at you from the spiral staircase to the west. And behind them comes one other, cloaked in darkness as though the very shadows themselves were part of his attire.*

Doombringer Cult Minion

Level 2 Minion

Medium natural humanoid

XP 31

Initiative +1

Senses Perception +1

HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.

AC 15; Fortitude 14; Reflex 11; Will 11

Speed 6

⊕ **Sickle** (standard; at-will) • **Weapon**

+5 vs AC; 4 damage

Fanaticism (no action; at-will)

A Doombringer cultist gains +2 to Will defense while at least two other cult members are within 5 squares of it

Alignment Evil

Languages Common,

Skills Arcana +5, Religion +5, Stealth +6

Str 14 (+3)

Dex 10 (+1)

Wis 10 (+1)

Con 12 (+2)

Int 9 (+0)

Cha 11 (+1)

Equipment Cloth Robe, Sickle

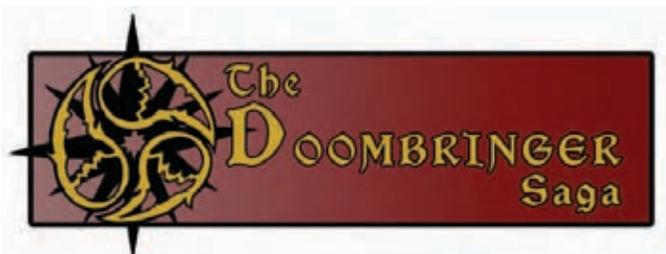
Starting Placement: The heroes have placement in the eastern half of the room. The cultists start in the spiral staircase's alcove. The Shadow Prophet is still on the staircase itself.

Lighting: The fireplace in the south provides dim lighting to the eastern two-thirds of the room. The windows in this room are boarded over on the outside of the manor.

Difficult Terrain: a square containing a bedroll or pallet is considered *difficult terrain*.

Tactics: The Thug and Minion will attempt to enter the room quickly and engage the party, charging at surprised opponents, if possible. The Novice will snipe from the western room, and using his sling for as long as possible from the partial cover granted by the interior wall, but will move to attack when the moment is right.

Tactics (cont.): The Shadow Prophet will enter following his servants, using them as shields whenever possible. He will utilize his *shadowshroud* and *gathering shadows* abilities to maintain an optimal ranged attack position.



Read or paraphrase the following when the Shadow Prophet is defeated: *The dark sorcerer collapses with a wailing cry, and a dark and shadowy form, with gaping maw and claw-like hands rises up out of the corpse. It advances upon you with hate-filled eyes.*

Read or paraphrase the following as the Players prepare for another battle: *But as this vile shadow thing swells up, and reaches for you with shadowy talons, it hesitates, shuddering, and glances over its shoulder in fear. A strong wind seems to blow past you, or perhaps it flows from you. The dark entity recoils, as clots of darkness tear away from its form to slam into the southwest corner of the room, crackling with the bruised violet hue of unleashed necrotic energy. In only a few moments, the entity has dissolved, leaving only its horrible outline etched upon the stone wall.*

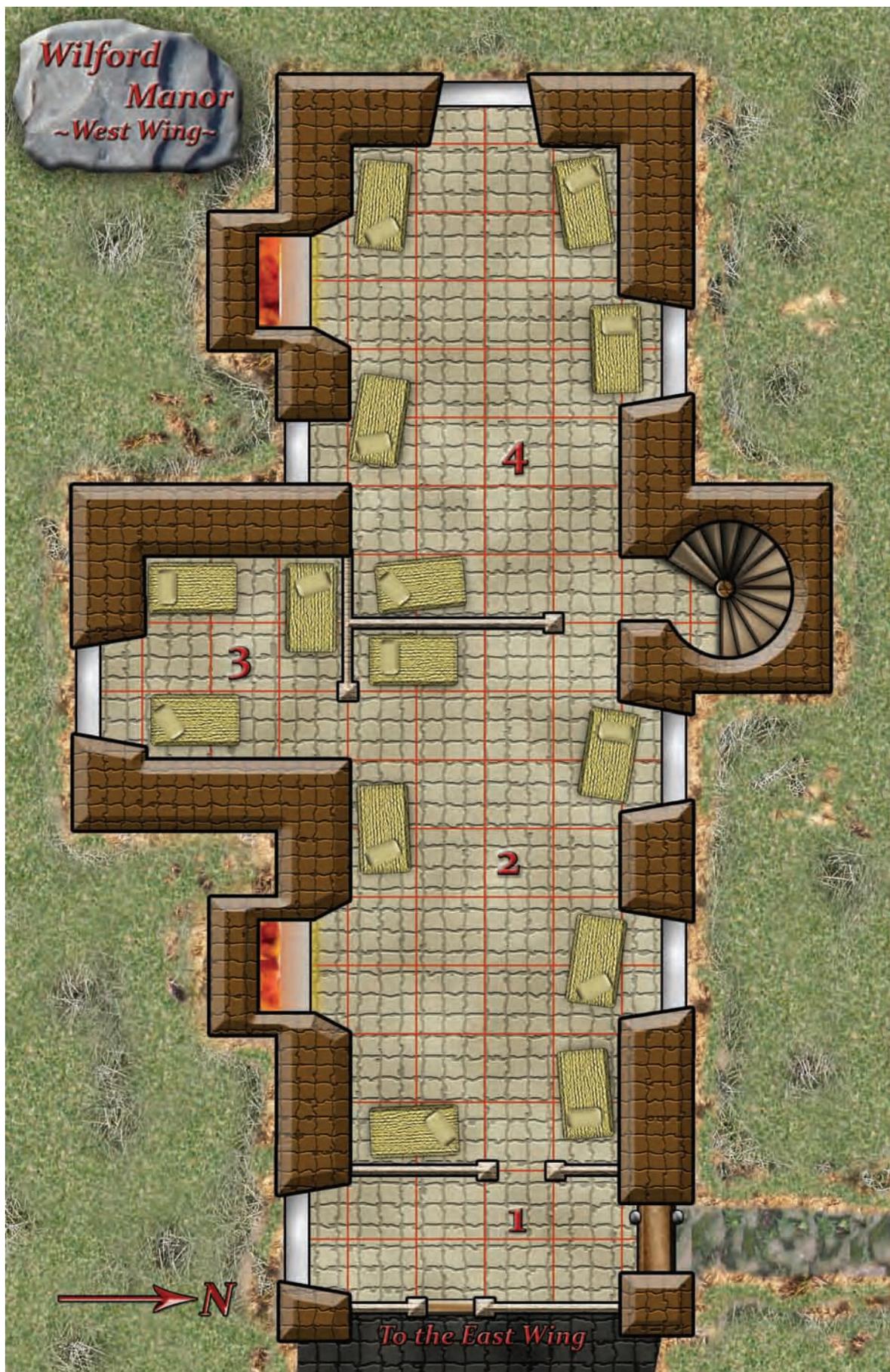


~CONCLUSION~

We hope you have enjoyed this Preview of “The Perilous Secrets of Wilford Manor”, and we would love to hear what you think. Please send any feedback, comments, or questions you have about this upcoming product to: Support@neuroglyphgames.com

The Doombringer Saga's first adventure, “The Perilous Secrets of Wilford Manor” is due to be released in March 2010. Check out our website at www.neuroglyphgames.com for D&D 4e News, Reviews, Blogs, and Upcoming Releases!

APPENDIX: ENCOUNTER MAP AND AREA DESCRIPTIONS



~AREA DESCRIPTIONS~

Area 1 — Entry Hall:

Muddy tracks mar the once lavish carpets that run along this hallway. The wooden floors beyond the carpets show scuffs and dirt from years of neglect. An archway opens from the hall to the west. The eastern way is barred by a triple-locked doorway.

Area 2 — The Great Hall:

This was the Great Hall of the Manor, once used to entertain guests. Now it looks like a dormitory, with crude cots and straw mattresses lining the walls. Satchels and backpacks hang from the ends of some of the cots. Dying embers smolder and pop in a fireplace to the south.

Area 3 — The Solar:

Archways lead to the west and the south away from the makeshift dormitory. Through to the south, there is the remains of a solar, but is now been made into a bedroom. The bedrolls are nicer here, perhaps belonging to the hulking cultist that you had just defeated.

Area 4 — The Parlor:

An archway leads to the west, past a spiral staircase and into what was once a parlor for the lord of the manor. But it now appears to have become a makeshift prison. Rough pallets of straw line the room, and manacles on chains have been stapled to the once richly polished hardwood walls.

Two of the pallets appear to be in better condition than the others, and lack manacle—perhaps these were for the guards to watch prisoners kept here.

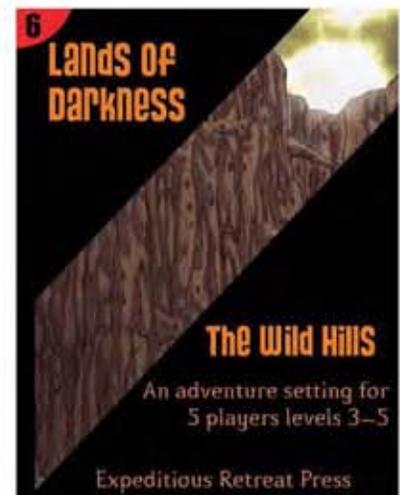
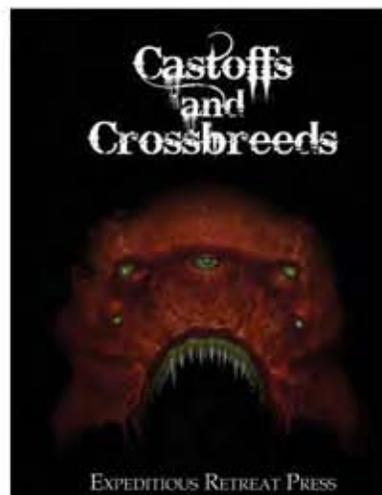
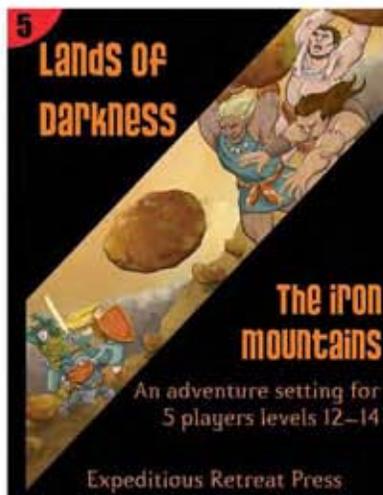
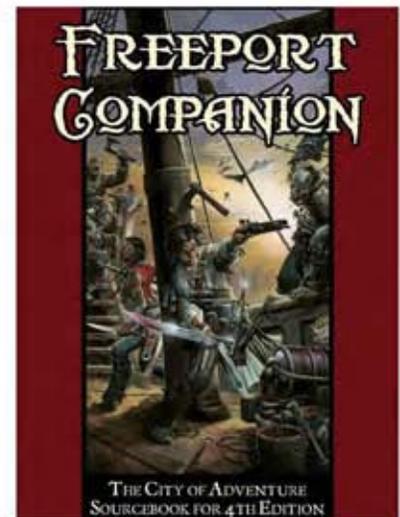
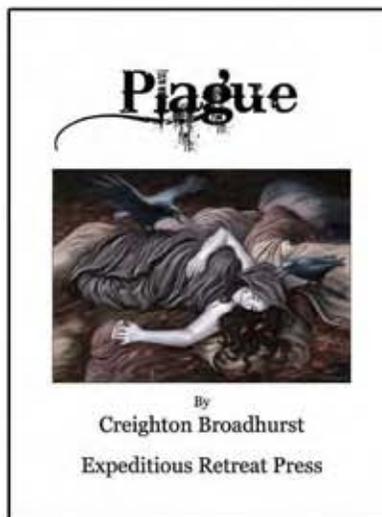
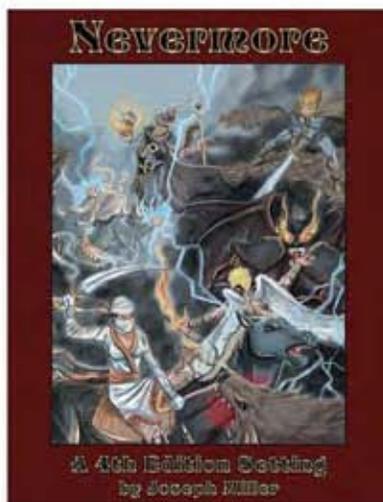
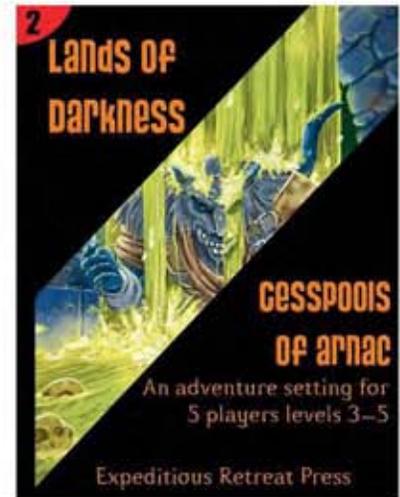
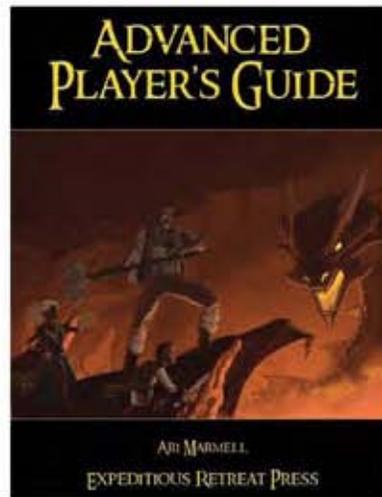
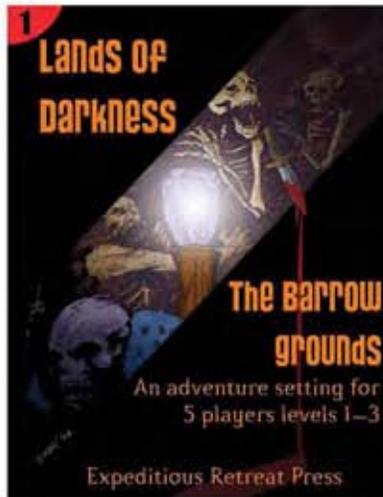
Discarded clothing is piled in a box, clearly belonging to a number of different people. There is currently neither prisoners nor guards in this room.



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Martin Hanford is a freelance illustrator and is currently available for commissions. You can reach him at martinhanford@talktalk.net

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