

REALMS OF ROTHAEEN

A fantasy setting for role playing games

WES OTIS



DUNGEON WORLD COMPATIBLE

Thank you to Hamish Cameron and Dana Cameron for all their hard work and help making the book better; to all the Kickstarter backers who made it possible to create, to the artists Jack Lawrence, Shugmonkey, and Jess Bourdrie for all their wonderful art, and to Michelle Otis for her insight, support, and patience. Finally, I would like to thank my mom, Brenda Otis, who bought me the D&D red box all those years ago and put me on the path of RPGs and filling my life with joy, I love and miss you.

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ISBN: 978-1-7333759-2-4

Realms of Rothaen v1.1

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REALMS OF ROTHAEN

WES OTIS

with Hamish Cameron

For use with *Dungeon World*



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REALMS OF ROTHAEEN

Welcome to Rothaen, a dark pulp fantasy world of adventure, excitement, drama, and endless stories just waiting to be created by you and your friends. Your group could be Noden warriors trying to rid the land of flesh-eating blood orcs, hunters of the Kosar pirates who keep attacking Carthic merchants, or members of the corrupt Athix Empire royal court looking to save or destroy this once great empire. The world is vast and filled with challenges that only your characters can confront and overcome.

When you run *Realms of Rothaen* it becomes your world. You will mold it with your own style, and your players will shape it as they play. The goal of this book is to give you a jumping off point for adventures, whether you use everything or just cull it for a few ideas.

Realms of Rothaen is designed to be used with the *Dungeon World* system by Adam Koebel and Sage LaTorra, so you will need a copy of *Dungeon World* and the playbooks to run the game. Having a copy of *Perilous Wilds* by Jason Lutes is highly recommended as well.

RUNNING ROTHAEEN

Rothaen is a huge world, so much so that it might overwhelm GMs. If this is the case for you, just remember to start small and have fun. Below are some basic guidelines to running the setting.

Your group's stories are center stage.

There are no right or wrong stories in Rothaen. Think of this, or any Rothaen book for that matter, as the bones of a colossus ice titan: your stories rest on their mighty bones like muscle, tissue, blood, and awesomeness.

Maps are printed on paper, not carved in stone.

You'll find wonderful maps for Rothaen. Many show vast areas with cities, natural features, and unnatural locales all waiting to be explored, but remember, not everything is detailed. If you zoom into what seems like an empty region, you can find all kinds of adventure there. Fill it however you like. Ruins may be marked, but they are waiting for your group to explore and map them. Even if there is a map for the area in which you want to run, feel free to change it around. Maps are made by mortal hands—they can have mistakes and become outdated quickly. In short, fill in the spaces as your group sees fit.

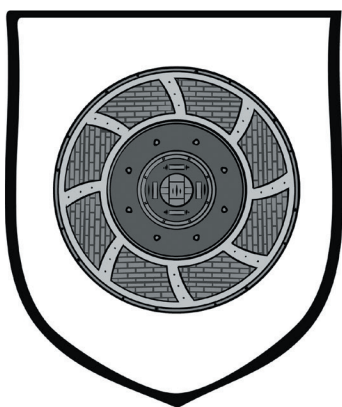
Wheels within wheels.

Remember that everything in Rothaen is interconnected in some way. The merchants at the bazaars in Asi sell elk meat imported from Noden. Luxin-vale, Scaldival, and Carthic are allies sworn to protect one another if war erupts. It's important to think about the connections your story has. Use them to weave a more tightly layered story. If your group is plumbing the depths of an old castle, think about who was in the castle before it fell. Are their ancestors still with us? Does a cult call it home now? If so, are there any politically powerful people in that cult? Every connection can lead to more adventures and deeper stories.

YOUR FIRST GAME

After you are familiar with the setting, get together with your group and discuss the game. Together, decide on a starting area where you would like to begin your story; each area has its own flavor. During this first session, everyone should make characters. Jot down notes as they create their characters, listening to their discussion, adding in your thoughts, and getting a rough idea of what your first game will be. Start small, maybe clear out a goblin hole in the nearby forest, but put some leads in for future games. Make sure to take your players' ideas and work them into your game. Exploit their Bonds and Trials to create a dynamic story in which they are invested. Not every game needs to be about saving the world.





LIFE IN ROTHAEN

LIFE IN ROTHAEEN

Rothaen's political and social structures had been the same for hundreds of years—but nothing could last forever. The population declined sharply during the long and drawn out Athix Civil War. This conflict led to the creation of the pirate nations, an increase in slavery, and several new nations which had gained independence from Athix on the continent of Jorginver. Now the human population is nearly 253 million, the elf population is 88 million, and the halflings are the third largest at 68 million. The rest of the civilized races combined account for about 93 million. The most elusive group is the dwarves: their numbers are not known at all, neither those in the mountains nor those in the ice lands.

The people of Rothaen are diverse and their cultures are varied. Some states are xenophobic and see outsiders as barbarians or have long-held hatreds toward one group or another. There are cultures that hold certain genders in higher status. There is even a land of eternal night, where the undead are citizens of the realm with all the rights of the living.

SOCIAL POSITION

Even with all the different cultures and traditions around Rothaen, there are common threads that tie people together. Wealth is always a factor when determining social position, but sometimes one's cultural background has an influence as well. Where slavery is legal, slaves always hold the lowest status in society and are nothing more than property. Religious groups with sway and coin can run roughshod over governments. In Rothaen, those who have the most wealth and influence shape policies and laws.

FARMERS AND MANUAL LABORERS

Above slaves are the largest portions of the population: farmers and manual laborers. They spend long hours working in the fields, contributing to building projects, or participating in non-skilled labor. Farmers work just outside the city walls or near villages, while laborers can be found anywhere work needs to get done. They are aware of the dangers that lurk in the caves and woods, but they seldom encounter these threats on their own land.

Depending on the government, laborers may serve a lord or be free people who own or rent the land they work. Literacy among farmers and laborers is high in many areas, with children going to some form of school for at least part of the day. Rothaen has the printing press, making printed books and newspapers available in large cities and towns. Farmers often make a run into town twice a month to get a newspaper or the latest penny dreadful.

CRAFTSPEOPLE AND MERCHANTS

The next group on the economic ladder is comprised of the skilled craftspeople and merchants. Craftspeople live in populated locations where their skills are needed and can be paid for. Villages near logging camps might have one blacksmith, while large cities will have several. Woodworkers, tanners, shipbuilders, stonecutters, and many more ply their trades through guildhalls or union houses. These organizations helped create a middle class in which craftspeople and merchants now reside. This, in turn, has drawn more people to the cities for apprenticeship opportunities.

Merchants have had a rough go of it since the end of the Athix Civil War. Pirate-infested waters make international trade perilous. There is no major navy strong enough to stop these treasure-hungry buccaneers, so it seems like ship raids and kidnappings are here to stay. Merchants have resorted to paying mercenaries to help guard cargo. It is a dangerous, but lucrative, trade.

Merchants, more than any other group, can rise to great heights—there are even city-states where merchants rule and control great amounts of wealth. Nobles often come into conflict with the unions and merchants that they perceive as a threat to their power. But, in places with more democratic leanings, people can change their position more easily than ever before.

NOBILITY, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, POLITICIANS, AND CRIME LORDS

At the top of the heap are the nobility, religious leaders, politicians, and crime lords. These groups, for the most part, control the governments, collect taxes, and lead their people. Nobility own land and titles and rule through birth-right. This has led to some underqualified people in powerful positions. With the wholesale murder of many nobles during the Athix Civil War, nobles had no choice but to finally allow marriage outside of the royal families; however, their spouses must be in very high standing in the court, or at least very rich.

Of course, there are exceptions to the rules. In Asi, arranged marriages are the norm for all people and a noble almost always marries a noble from one of the desert nations. Scaldival, on the other hand, is a polyamorous society where monogamy is rare and marriages can have multiple people living together. To the Scaldivals, Asi seem strange and backwards, while to the Asi, Scaldivals are decadent sinners.

*“Politicians! Is there any slimier thing upon this world?
I think not.”*

*—King Risuis of Carthic, just before signing the High
Seal Manifesto, which dissolved the monarchy*

Politicians are elected by the people in certain nations. In Carthic, for example, every post in government is elected; however, to be a Carthic citizen one must serve in the army. Having the right to vote is not given to everyone in any given democratic country: gender, ethnicity, social rank, or race can dictate if you are allowed to cast a ballot.

Religious leaders also have a great deal of sway in the halls of power. Churches and temples of good deities provide many services throughout a nation. Divine magic keeps disease at bay and helps to heal the injured. Education, many times, falls to the clergy of a religion as well as advocating for the poor. The guild known as the Morticians deals with the dead in many of the major cities, but always with clergy involvement. Religious leadership can be corrupt, but those who aren't may provide balance against the crime bosses and other negative forces at play in a government. Churches employ many clergy as well, giving those who might not do well in other sectors a place to go.

In any case, politicians need funds, therefore, many of them come from powerful merchant families or trade companies they have built themselves. As with anyone in power, corruption is always a concern. Many work for the common good, but many also get caught up in scandals.

The final group in the highest rung of the socio-economic ladder are the crime lords, which include pirate leaders and mob bosses. Mob families have wormed their way into the halls of power through money, blackmail, and murder. There are ten major gangs that control the larger cities on the continents of Jorginver and Euliom, and there are reports that they are trying to spread to the continent of Iros.

The pirates are the second piece of the crime puzzle. Most hail from the Victoire Republic, Kosar, and Helliëan, all of which belonged to Athix Empire, but during the civil war these islands declared their independence and quickly seized the bulk of the empire's navy which was stationed in their harbors.

The Kosar pirates decided that ship boarding, blackmail, kidnapping, and smuggling were not only profitable but also easy to do. Now powerful captains control sections of Kosar. Helliëan has pirate coves and rumors of state-sponsored privateers. This connection is denied, and the island has said any pirate caught will be hanged. The Victoire Republic has had a long pirate tradition, even before the Athix Civil War. They themselves had a privateer charter from Athix. Though there is more honor among their ranks than Kosar, they are still thieves and killers.

SOCIAL POSITIONS AND YOUR CHARACTER

When making your character, ask yourself what part of society do you come from and how does it affect your worldview. Will you fight for greater wealth for farmers, collect taxes for the king of Luxinvale, or help your merchant parents get their cargo across the pirate sea unharmed? Maybe you are a pirate's kid trying to clean up your family name. Your background does not need to be long, just a few interesting sentences about where you came from is all a GM needs to involve it in the story.

ECONOMICS

Trade has been happening between the nations of Rothaen for centuries. Because of this, international standards of currency are followed to make transactions easier. Governments and merchants buying large amounts of goods use gold bars that must have at least 1000 grams of gold per unit. Bars are stamped with a government seal to note their point of origin. Gold coins, each equal to fifty silver coins, are used by the rich for expensive items or land purchases, seldom being seen in the market unless used as a symbol of success and power.

Rothaen is on the silver standard. Wages are paid in silver coin, and when the *Dungeon World* core book says an item is X amount of coins, it will be silver coins. Ancient treasure is always a mix. Finding gold coins means paying a steep tax if you are found trying to enter a city with them. Exchanging them at the moneylender can also be hard, as they too will try to take a portion of your earnings. Spending gold at high-end shops can be the best way to convert it—just remember to get the right change.

Money can be the source of many adventures for a party: counterfeit gold, merchants looking to steal trade secrets, or smuggling treasure to avoid taxes can all lead to quests, for good or bad.

TIME

Tracking time should only be done when it is important to the story. Rothaen has two suns: Anu and Sol. Anu is a large yellow sun, much like Earth's Sun. Rothaen takes 408 days to make one circuit around Anu.

Sol is a small blue star that appears every 5 years for 30 days during the start of winter and brings great upheaval with it. During this time, Anu seems further away and the days grow much shorter. Storms are stronger, tides are greater, and magic is more unpredictable. Sometimes Rothaen will even suffer from huge earthquakes. Sol hangs in the sky even when night comes, bathing the entire planet in pale blue light. How it can do this is unknown, but sages theorize that Sol is a curse on the world from an angry deity. The star turns people's sense of time upside down by transforming nights into ghostly days, making sleeping difficult. Sol affects people's emotions: magnifying fear, distrust, and anger.

There are four seasons—spring, summer, fall, winter—although in some areas it feels like they only have one or two. Rothaen has twelve months; each is 34 days long with the new year starting on the first day of spring. The seasons last roughly three months apiece.

Due to its former power and size, the Athix Empire's calendar is used most often in Jorginver, Euliom, Chiatex, and surrounding islands like Rusal. In areas where they use local calendars, merchants will still use the Athix calendar to track shipment times. Its months are as follows: Auth, Ge, Hiris (spring); Timdis, Diisph, Frem (summer); Filbrin, Homil, Santer (fall); and Rul, Aithsis, Yisth (winter). The first day of Auth is traditionally the first day of spring. There are seven days in a week: Moonday, Anukday, Solday, Trysday, Warday, Kithday, and Thievesday. Each day is 24-hours long.

The Divine Empire of Northern Iros has its own calendar divided into the four 102-day seasons with no months. They are Goddess' Gift (spring), Wind's Gale (summer), Harvest Sun (fall), and Rising Moon (winter). When the weather of one season spills over to another, it is seen as a bad omen from the gods—the world is out of balance. The days are counted within the seasons, so Goddess' Gift starts with day 1 and then ends on day 102, then Wind's Gale starts over with day 1, and so on. People will say they were born the 80th day of Goddess' Gift Year 3587, for example.

Tutacami and Cixt have two seasons: rainy and slightly less rainy. They keep track of 24 17-day weeks. Each week is tied to an emotion set down by the ancestors of the Tutacami people. Unlike the rest of the world, their new year starts in the week of Joy, which lands in the middle of fall everywhere else. The weeks are Joy, Happiness, Concern, Worry, Anger, Despair, Envy, Relief, Confidence, Resolve, Anxiety, Fear, Rage, Clarity, Humility, Pride, Sadness, Disgust, Trust, Kindness, Shame, Hurt, Pity, and Love. For birthdays here, a person would say the week they were born and year, so Humility 6081. They do not track the day.

TRAVEL

Towering mountains reaching for sapphire skies, dark foreboding forests, glass-patched deserts, and fey-infested glens make Rothaen a massive world of varied terrain to explore. The most common modes of travel are horses, boats, and one's own two feet. The journey to one's destination is its own adventure and can be rife with challenges.

When travel time is important to the story, remember these basic guidelines: distance traveled by land per day riding a horse is 50 kilometers, travelling by horse and cart is 25 kilometers, and walking is 15 kilometers. This assumes that you are traveling on a well-maintained road and the weather is mild. Many roads will have inns with small communities around them where you can rest your horses and hear local news. Closer to larger cities and towns, guards will patrol the roads making travel relatively safe.

Sea travel is common, but far from safe. Since the rise of the pirate nations, there are few passenger ships on the high seas. Merchants will take on passengers if room allows, especially if they can provide defense during a journey. Adventurers and mercenaries can earn a great amount of coin helping goods arrive safely to port.

Pirates are just one challenge that arises with sea travel. Sea monsters, aquatic humanoids, and water deities can all bring a ship to a watery grave. Some fishers whisper of a dreadful evil that lives far down in the inky depths, its disciples infecting coastal villages, spreading its influence onto the land. Due to this, fishers avoid certain waters, even if the promise of a bountiful catch is great.

The weather, which is the biggest threat to any vessel, takes down ships all the time. In the frozen north, ships can be crushed if caught in an ice floe, while in the south, hurricanes batter coastlines and ships alike. None of these stops people from traveling, though. Land and sea are full of things that will kill a person—that's no reason not to get out and live life.

Beyond the mundane traveling options, there are many exotic ways to get around throughout Rothaen. On the Jorginver continent, enchanted horse tack is used by nobles and the wealthy to travel quickly. Horseshoes of Speed enable horses to travel at triple their normal pace, while Saddles of Ever-rested Steeds keep the animals refreshed, even after a long day of running. Despite this, in the north people still use horses, minus any magic enhancements, as their main way of traveling.

Carthic, the Athix Empire's biggest rival, has put all their research into airship technology. Using hot air and magic engines, these vessels can cover about 80 kilometers per hour. They travel to cities in Noden, Asi and, when not warring with them, Athix. More destinations are in the works for countries further out, such as Findi.

The biggest problem with airships is that they are huge, easy targets. Altitude is their best defense, and each has a spell caster and cannons that can rebuff the attacks of dragons and other flying nightmares. Spell casters are not a cheap defense, though, and there are fiscally conservative factions in the Carthic government that want to scrap the program, even as there are talks of expanding it to other nations. And how long will it be until the pirates figure out a way to board airships?

On Iros, the gnomes of Chiatex are working on the first rail system. At this point, the steam engine is still giving them issues. They have partnered with human spell casters to see if they can make an engine powered by steam and magic work. They have already started laying tracks through the desert valley from the city of Caspis for testing. Southern Iros may be the first continent with a rail system, or with a huge cavernous hole where the testing went horribly wrong.

Exotic mounts are used in several places throughout Rothaen. Noden has clans that use bears and elk, while Crysom has terrifying massive insects they ride. Elephants are used in the desert and jungle regions of Euliom, and goblins ride dire wolves in Dragonthorn Forest. The people who live in the jungles of Southern Iros ride giant panthers. Many years ago, the Athix Empire had a system of griffons that would take off every few minutes carrying rich lords and adventurers alike to neighboring cities; this system broke down when a dragon figured out the flight paths and started eating travelers.

Most unusual of all, there is the hivemind deity of time and space known as the Curre. The Curre is a collection of thousands of sentient crimson archways, three meters high by two meters wide, with ancient cuneiform script carved into them. Each of these is connected to the hivemind, and they are found all over Rothaen. The archways can move without warning, but most stay in an area for years. To use the gates to travel, it is best to consult a priest of the Cult of Curre: they will know what sacrifices will activate a gate and where that gate goes.

MAGIC & TECHNOLOGY

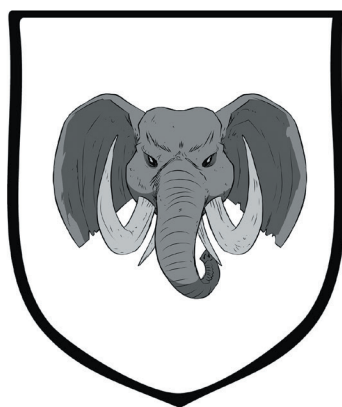
Magic, both divine and arcane, has long been the lifeblood of Rothaen and thus has stunted the advancement of technology—but that is changing. Inventors have started experimenting with steam and clockwork mechanisms and wizards have begun to combine these new technologies with magic as a power source. This has led to innovations in all aspects of life on Rothaen.

Huge machines need crews of people to create magic power sources. Air balloons or steam-powered siege towers take a lot of power to work, so it takes time to create their engines. Large-scale, non-magical steam or clockwork engines are still not as reliable as magic-powered engines. Airships can't fly without magic-powered turbines, though smaller hot air balloons are being tested out. Steam engines alone are too heavy to lift off, for now. Mundane recording devices have not been perfected, so magical methods are still dominant. Magic communication stones are very popular, but are also very expensive and their range is limited. The printing press has made newspapers and books more readily available; this has led to an increase in literacy for people from all walks of life.

Because there are many mechanical devices big and small, it is left up to the GM whether a device can be operated by a player character. Flying an airship takes a well-trained crew, so unless the fiction supports it, PCs will not be able to create or fly them, especially on their own. Whenever a player uses a device and is under pressure, such as from enemies or nature, they must perform the *Use Contraption* move on page 69, even if they have used that item before. When using an item that deals damage, players use their class damage die.

THE NON-HUMAN NATIONS

The fey, dwarves, elves, and many other humanoids such as goblins have their own maps of Rothaen with their own national borders, something many human nations ignore. Some of these lands stretch between Rothaen and other magical realms. People can pass between these realities if they know where the portals are. Non-human nations rarely interact with human kingdoms, and many times they are hidden from mortal sight. They are known to go to war with those encroaching on their lands, using magic and surprise as weapons.



ROTHAEN
PLAYER
RACES

ROTHAEN PLAYER RACES

Here you will find all the playable races, including their cultures and influences. In some cases, such as for the Greystik dwarves or the Asue'Tai elves, the same game mechanics presented in the *Dungeon World* core book are used. Many of the races are cloistered and tribal in their interactions with others; adventurers are often those that tend to go against the social norms of their people. Large human cities are Rothaen's melting pots. Outside of these areas, people tend to segregate themselves. Even in large cities, districts are often separated by race. Conflict due to xenophobia and bigotry is common.

There are always exceptions. A human village in the middle of a forest controlled by Pwati elves could get along just fine if they have a symbiotic relationship with each other. But misgivings and fear can always bubble up and cause harm, even between party members.

Notes:

- ◆ Stats given in each section below are for NPCs of that race.
- ◆ Class playbooks give you damage for your character.
- ◆ Standard class playbooks are free on the *Dungeon World* website under "Play Kits". <http://www.dungeon-world.com/downloads/>

DWARVES

“Myrith reached into the volcano forge; its lava churned and blazed within. He pulled out white-hot liquid metal from Rothaen’s core. He poured the liquid onto the ground and then waved his hand over it. The metal took the form of two dwarves, a man and a woman. Myrith named them Rokbard and Isula. By giving them names, he gave them life. He told them the secret of metals, stone, craftsmanship, and family. ‘The earth is yours, all of it. Dig deep and live well.’ These words are carved into the soul of every dwarf.”

—Mastersmith Greynail’s Gospel 3:48

There are two different dwarven cultures, Greystik and Cuik, but the former is by far the more dominant, with its people living in the mountains all over Rothaen. So numerous are the Greystik dwarves that most of the time they are simply referred to as “dwarves”. Seeing a Cuik dwarf outside the frozen land of Jötunn is very rare. The Greystik tend to look down on their icy cousins. Some even go as far as saying they are not truly dwarves, but instead some cruel joke of an evil human wizard.

CUIK DWARVES

Tribal, Hunters, Survivors



NPC STATS

Battle axe (1d8+1 damage, *close*)

8 HP 1 Armor

Special Qualities: Giant slayers (+1 vs giants)

Look

Cuik dwarves are slightly larger than Greystik dwarves, standing at 1.4 meters. They have eyes that range in color from sapphire to dark blue, sometimes even black. They tend to wear their hair long, and all genders grow beards. Hair color is either brown, red, or blond. Their skin is pale white to light blue.

SOCIETY

The frozen tundra of Jötunn shaped the Cuik dwarves over five millennia. It is hard to pin down the exact population of the Cuik, who are split into ten nomadic tribes that migrate across the land fighting ice giants and hunting feral beasts. Everyone must pull their weight or be left behind. A dwarf is considered an adult when they take part in their first hunt, usually around age fourteen. Dying on a hunt is a very real danger and happens often, but it is also seen as a good death—cowardice is met with a spear to the throat. Because of the harsh environment and dangerous prey, life expectancy for a Cuik dwarf is only forty-five to fifty years, much shorter than for Greystik dwarves. Perhaps because of their possibly short lives, the family structure is loose: they do not marry and children are raised by the tribe, seldom knowing who their father is.

At the start of the spring and fall seasons, the tribes meet and have a week-long festival to celebrate life and to bid farewell to those who did not survive. On the last night of the festival, under the full moons, each dwarf throws their lot in with the chief they wish to travel with for the next six months. Children too young to hunt stay with their mothers. If a tribe has fewer than five hundred people, that chief is stripped of their title and a new chief is picked. The disgraced leader often takes their life after being removed from command.

It is during these festivals that trade with the outside world occurs. Merchants from Athix, Luxinvale, Scaldival, and Ulenvin arrive with weapons, food, and textiles to trade for furs and exotic meats. Potions are also exchanged, as the Cuik have learned to create magical elixirs that boost strength and speed. They trade these for healing potions because they do not always have a healer nearby during the hunt. They only trade for items they need; they are not interested in being weighed down by possessions.

CULTURE

The culture of the dwarven tribes of Jötunn is influenced by living a nomadic existence in harsh, icy highlands. To outsiders, they may appear to be a wild, dangerous, and primitive people, but that is because few are allowed to live with them and see the depth and richness of their society. They have keen minds that appreciate the raw power of the world around them.

Always on the move, their stone and metal crafting are merely functional. Instead, Cuik craftspeople focus their skills on things that are easier to create on the go, such as carving beautiful scenes into ivory tusks, often depicting images from the hunt. Their writing, which resembles pictographic and cuneiform styles, was developed from this art form.

There is no word for fashion in the Cuik language, but they are skilled in leather working and create intricate designs in their clothing. Furs are worn not only for warmth, but also to show off their best kill: polar bear capes and cowls are prized most of all. Everyone has unkempt long hair and beards, and they do not dress to a set gender, which is confusing to some outsiders.

They are gifted singers, with a rich oral tradition of song and storytelling. They sing of their history and of their goddess Uiki. Uiki lives in the mortal realm and watches over the hunt, while her evil brother Tyst rules in the afterlife. When a Cuik dwarf dies, they travel to Tyst's realm. Once there, they must claw their way back to Uiki and be reborn. A dwarf may die, but if they are strong willed, their spirits will live again.

At the center of their culture is the hunt, which is a sacred rite. It is a time to commune with Uiki and to prove one's worth. The ability to provide for oneself and the tribe is paramount to a Cuik's self-image. Tales of one's deeds are how they attract partners and secure their place in their community—it is not a coincidence that the chiefs tend to be the best trackers and hunters. There are several traditions tied to the hunt including the *Blessing of the Blades*, the *Dance of the Hunter*, and the *Thanking of the Prey*. The more dangerous the prey, the more respect one gets for killing it. Roc, dire polar bears, snow dragons, and wooly bison are all considered major catches that prove a hunting party's superiority. The most important type of hunt, however, is when a tribe takes down an ice giant. This is done with sharp weapons, ropes, and pure rage. There is a burning hatred for giants among the tribes. After killing a giant, they let it rot and use the corpse to bait animals. This event only happens once a year, usually near one of the festivals where they plan to trade their goods.

OUTLOOK

The life of the average Cuik dwarf is brutal, but this does not seem to faze them and they do not complain about hardships. Sometimes a dwarf might migrate south for an easier way of life, but the majority prefer the frozen stretches of Jötunn. Though their demeanor can come across as surly and grim, they love life. They are not interested in owning things or settling down: that is a boring concept to them. They trade for items they need for survival, and they hunt to feel alive. As a people, they are good-natured and, if a person is not seen as a threat, they will treat them with cautious respect. But respect and trust are two different things, and earning their trust is never easy.

CUIK DWARF CHARACTERS

Leaving the homeland is never an easy decision for Cuik dwarves. Those that do leave have a wanderlust to explore the outside world. Culture shock is the first thing they must overcome. In a big city, their different ways will seem rude. They can also be gullible, making them easy marks.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ **Race modifier:** The 8 (-1) ability score must always be taken in wisdom.
- ◆ **Barbarian:** You are an Outsider. At the beginning of each session, the GM will ask you something about your homeland, why you left, or what you left behind. If you answer them, mark XP.
- ◆ **Druid:** You are the cold winter! In addition to any other attunements you pick, the frozen north is always considered your land.
- ◆ **Fighter:** When fighting an opponent that is large or huge, add +1 to your attack.
- ◆ **Ranger:** You have a gift for tracking and providing food for your friends. Take +1 to the *Hunt and Track* move.

Note: Cuik dwarves have no formal church and, as such, no clerics.

GREYSTIK DWARVES

Craftsmen, Miners, Stubborn, Greedy

“The earth belongs to the dwarves, every stone of it, and it’s our right to mine it and no one else’s.”

—King Stonehammer XLV



NPC STATS

Battle axe (1d8+1 damage, *close*)

8 HP 2 Armor

Special Qualities: Never lost underground

Look

It is said that Greystik dwarves are as broad as they are tall. This is an exaggeration, of course, but they are stout and strong, standing up to 1.2 meters. Their skin tone can range from pale to dark brown, but their eyes are always hazel or blue. Their hair can be blond, red, black, or brown.

SOCIETY

Family, clan, land, and honor are the four pillars of Greystik society. Families live together in dwellings called *huskruts*. These massive stone buildings can accommodate up to fifty dwarves. Children rarely move out of their family homes. If they go exploring for years, their family never considers them truly gone. A dwarf can return home and pick up as if they never left. For the Greystik, there is no distinction between immediate and extended family—there is the head of the household and everyone else. The leader of the family is the highest regarded craftsperson, which is not always the oldest. This can lead to tension in a group.

Greystik dwarves marry for life, usually right out of trade school, and often within the same clan. Clans can be as large as twenty families, depending on the area. Marrying into a different clan does not preclude one from practicing their family's trade; dwarves take family traditions seriously. Divorce is rare and often due to one party dishonoring themselves within the relationship. Extramarital affairs, spouse or child abuse, and misuse of money are all grounds for divorce and, many times, banishment from a family.

Education is very important. Dwarf clans run schools where the basics of reading, writing, and math are taught along with the clan's trade skill. This schooling starts around eight and lasts until the pupil can pass the clan's exit exam. After that, they are considered a journeyman who must decide if they will join the family trade or take a job elsewhere. The pressure to join the trade is intense, but there are other options, such as becoming a miner, a merchant, a repair worker, or doing any other task that needs to be done in dwarven society. Rarely, some will even learn another clan's trade and, if they find they have a gift for it, they will marry into the new clan. The bottom line is if you work, you are considered to be doing your part.

Clans are made up of several families working in the same discipline. Jewelers, stonecutters, brewers, blacksmiths, and the like all come together to work on their family's chosen craft. The craft and clan is a big part of a dwarf's identity, and thus changing trades or not taking up a family's trade is never an easy

decision. Their devotion to their family's discipline is a testament to their character and a dwarf's craft is part of their religion. Clans have ancestral names and maker's marks that they hold sacred, and thus creating a forgery of a clan's maker's mark is a serious crime.

Honor is paramount in dwarven society, and without it, one is nothing. Dwarves must not break their word, so they rarely enter oaths or make promises. Lying to another dwarf is considered one of the worst things another dwarf can do. Competition between clans of the same discipline is fierce and can explode into bloodshed. Clan wars happen, and some have lasted for centuries. When they finally end, dwarves never truly forgive and never forget. Regardless, they are expected to defend their clan, family, and nation against outside threats.

Myrith told his newly created people that the earth was theirs, and that is how the Greystik see all minerals, rocks, and soil. When a dwarf speaks of land, they are talking about the actual mineral deposits, not acreage. They do not care about the Black Mud Swamp in Orlamain, but if someone discovered a vein of gold in the morass the dwarves would claim the area and try to mine the site with little regard for any people already living there. This attitude has led to major problems with other nations. Greystik dwarves control around 50% of all mining operations around the world. The mines they do not own are hotly contested. For the Greystik, human mining operations represent a threat to the very foundation of dwarven society.

CULTURE

Craftwork is the art of Greystik culture. Everything created has a function as well as an artistic design. The outside world may marvel at a dwarven-made hammer, not knowing that it wasn't created by a master. Their best work is never sold to non-dwarves and is beyond compare. Stonework, such as statues, are incorporated into buildings with few freestanding pieces seen. Marble and jade are found as inlays for weapons. Marble busts are crafted to honor a family's ancestors.

Music tends to consist of drums and horns accompanied by choirs shouting prayers. The closest thing to bards the dwarves have are priests yelling on pitch. Harps are regarded as elf garbage. They do appreciate human bards, though, and will often invite performers to big events such as weddings or festivals. Human bards gained access to the dwarven world in ages past, and they are often used as ambassadors by kingdoms looking to make deals.

Clothing is generally practical: lots of browns, dark blues, and grey cottons or wools, with black-dyed leathers. In contrast, beards and jewelry are very

colorful and represent one's family, clan, and nation. A dwarf's clan might all have long hair and no beards with facial tattoos, while in another the women might have long beards and shaved heads with the men having brightly colored mohawks and short beards. Some clans find beards to be sacred and something only men should grow. At the same time, there are those who feel women have the best beards and men should be the ones shaving.

Beyond their traditional clan and family beard or hair attire, individuals will tweak their look to stand out. They will braid their beards and hair with ribbons in complex patterns, showing off their artistic flair. There are no hard and fast rules, and no dwarf is required dress in the style of their clan unless they are part of a religious order.

OUTLOOK

Greystik dwarves do not seem to care much for anything above ground, including the people that live there. In general, they are content to be left alone in their mountains to mine and craft. To the outside world, they seem greedy, stubborn, and unwilling to share Rothaen's resources. But, even with all their bluster about mining rights and dwarven might, they always side with the greater good in times of peril. It would be easy enough for them to cut off the rest of the world from metal ore, but they have not. They look at life as a chance to do great work and master their craft.

GREYSTIK DWARF CHARACTERS

Some Greystik see adventuring dwarves as potential ambassadors, but others think of them as quitters, especially to the older guard who scream of tradition. Adventurers tend to be the younger children of large clans, with no hope of advancement in the clan's craft and who don't want to do another job inside the city. When facing a lifetime of being a journeyman's assistant or toiling in the mines, some choose to go adventuring to see the world, make some coin, and become self-reliant. Others will leave home for sixty years and then, one day, return to take up the family business as if they never left.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ Greystik dwarves can be any dwarf-available class in the *Dungeon World* system: **Barbarian, Cleric, Fighter**
- ◆ **Barbarian:** You are an Outsider. At the beginning of each session, the GM will ask you something about your homeland, why you left, or what you left behind. If you answer them, mark XP.

ELVES

Elves are a mysterious and magical people who live incredibly long lives, some living to be over three thousand years old. Any elf met on the street is over two hundred, as younglings are kept hidden away until they reach adulthood. Arcane talent is something with which most elves are born. Those not able to cast spells are called *ikwins* by their people, the elven word for broken. Ikwins often leave their tribes to adventure as fighters.

There is now only one elf-ruled nation on Rothaen, Daceana, but before the rise of humans elves dominated many regions. In Iros, they ruled as factions that constantly warred. On Jorginver, there was the elven Asue'Tai Empire, whose arrogance led them to ruin. And in Euliom, the Pwati elves ruled the wild lands, hunting humanoids for sport.

Though there is now only one elf nation, there are elven free cities throughout Rothaen. These pay a tribute to the local human governments for protection and freedom. There are also tribes of Pwati who have built vast tree cities and protect certain forest areas. The Kylom elves of Iros have built beautiful towns in the mountains; they are the only elves to adopt much of human culture.

Elves strive to foster a belief that they are benevolent and wise, but this is far from the truth. Asue'Tai elven society skews towards evil and cruelty. Several Pwati tribes are eco-terrorists who kill without thought or mercy when enraged. The Drucolen live in sprawling underground areas known as blight warrens, which ooze evil.

THE CALL

All elves are members of the same race, despite differences in culture, location, and appearance. The Asue'Tai may claim to be “pure elves,” but this simply racism. Half-elves, those offspring of human and elf unions, however, are not thought of as actual elves, largely because they never hear The Call.

The Call is a genetic trait that causes an evil insanity in older elves, usually occurring after the age of one thousand. A lucky elf may make it past one thousand without being afflicted by The Call, but it is inevitable and will eventually overcome them at some point. It twists their thoughts, their dreams,

and finally drives them mad. It also affects them physically, transforming them into what are called Drucolen elves. There is no magical treatment for this transformation. Each elven culture deals with The Call differently, but none speak openly about the affliction with outsiders.

The Call causes elves to do great acts of evil, and those who were evil before The Call often transform at an earlier age than others. This has led some to believe an evil entity is behind the affliction. What god would do such a thing? What creature could reach into the dreams of aging elves and drive them mad?

No one knows...

Note: The bard class is prohibited to all elven player characters.

ASUE'TAI ELVES

Magical, Arrogant, Cunning



NPC STATS

Staff (1d6 damage, close)

6 HP 1 Armor

Look

Standing up to 2 meters tall, Asue'Tai elves are graceful with fine features and pale skin. They are vain and regard themselves as the most beautiful people of Rothaen. Their hair is silver, red, blond, or brown, while their eyes are green, light blue, reddish hazel, or jade in color. They have a very ethereal appearance.

SOCIETY

Asue'Tai elves ruled a vast empire for tens of thousands of years, during which they experimented on any they regarded as “lesser beings”—such as humans. Not only did they create orcs and other hideous monsters by mutating humans with magic, they also enslaved many people. Their arrogance and cruelty towards their slaves was a major contributor to their downfall and, ironically, their own enslavement under the Athix Empire.

Asue'Tai society has a rigid caste system founded on family lineages, many of which claim to trace back to their creation by the gods Yuthie and Asue. They say that Asue gave birth to one hundred Asue'Tai elves who were placed in Rothaen's forests. These elves married and created the noble families. The first Asue'Tai were great warriors and wizards with demigod-like powers. The elven chronicles tell stories of their great deeds in the early days of Rothaen.

Yuthie decided more Asue'Tai elves were needed, over which the original one hundred could rule and guide. He created 10,000 more elves from the bark of the life tree, Iggdrysil, but unlike the first group, these Asue'Tai were not perfect and had no special powers. As time went on, the original elf descendants would marry those created by Yuthie in order to expand noble families. Those elves who can trace their lineage back to a true Asue child are called an *asuema* or “child of perfection”. The *asuema* are always at the top of Asue'Tai society.

Those who cannot prove their descendance from the original one hundred have less standing in society. These elves make up the largest population of Asue'Tai and, though they are not considered “true” Asue'Tai, they do run large portions of the government, vote in elections for low-ranking positions, and can gain power through commerce. One way they make themselves feel better about not being on the top is to look down on other “lesser” races.

Half-elves produced by human and Asue'Tai unions are often are raised by their human parents and have little to no social capital with the Asue'Tai elves. When they do encounter the Asue'Tai, they are scorned and ridiculed. Daceana's laws discriminate against half-elves: they cannot vote, are not allowed to marry, and are not allowed to live in some cities.

The Asue'Tai try to cover up their racism with public relation ploys and elf-washing of history. What they want the world to believe is that they are a wise and noble race. Non-Asue'Tai elves are not allowed in some areas due to religious traditions or customs. They lean on the fact that they were slaves to humans for years, while flat-out denying that they themselves had human slaves for centuries as well or that they committed just as many atrocities as the Athix Empire. There are even reports Daceana has been taking secret shipments of slaves from the pirate nations, though this has not been confirmed.

Although Greystik dwarves feel that they have a right to all the minerals of earth, they do not see all other races as lesser beings. Most Asue'Tai elves, on the other hand, feel that they were ordained to rule the world. This is the same viewpoint the Athelean humans held when they ruled the Athix Empire and enslaved Asue'Tai for over a thousand years.

CULTURE

Asue'Tai elven opera has been described as the best way to cause the slow and painful death of outsiders. Banned in many countries, these seven-hour-long productions have been known to drive non-elves screaming into the streets. A critic once said, *"An Asue'Tai elf on a stage is more terrifying than a dragon on your doorstep."*

One area of art that the Asue'Tai excel at is the creation of armor and weapons. Elven chain is prized by any lucky enough to find some in their size, and their elven bows can get top coin. Asue'Tai weapons are graceful in their design and are always done with intricate inlays.

OUTLOOK

The average Asue'Tai elf is mainly concerned with living a self-centered life of ease. They don't hate humans per se, but they view them as only slightly more intelligent orcs. However, there are Asue'Tai hate groups that target humans and other humanoids. The higher up the purity ladder of this elven society one goes, the more superior acting and insufferable they can be.

THE CALL

Asue'Tai elves allow their people to heed The Call and descend to the blight warrens underground as newly corrupted Drucolen elves. Their society is skewed towards evil, which results in a higher amount of their people falling as early victims to The Call. The Drucolen elves do not cause harm to the Asue'Tai way of life, and therefore they generally do not care about the damage the Drucolen do to other races. Why kill the enemy of your enemy?

ASUE'TAI ELF CHARACTERS

Asue'Tai adventurers do not agree with the xenophobic views that they were raised on, which puts them at odds with their countrymen. Though they may still come off as arrogant and selfish, they do enjoy the company of other races and try their best not to look down on them. There is always some tension between humans and Asue'Tai elves which can be hard to overcome, but once they do they are loyal friends.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ Asue'Tai elves can be any elf-available class in the *Dungeon World* system, with the except of bards: **fighters**, **rangers**, **wizards**, and **necromancers**.

DRUCOLEN ELVES

Sinister, Unhinged, Power Hungry, Cunning, Patient



NPC STATS

Dark energy wand (1d8+2 damage)

6 HP 1 Armor

Special Qualities: -1 to the **Hack and Slash** and **Volley** moves while in direct sunlight.

Look

There are two types of Drucolen elves: those created by The Call and those born into the society from corrupted parents. Both have skin that is a marble white, black or white hair, and green eyes. Transformed Drucolen elves can develop a bent spine, warts, scars, hair loss, and facial tics as time passes. Height is based on their pre-afflicted bodies. Naturally born Drucolen do not have these ailments, but after they hear The Call they can develop them.

SOCIETY

Though all elves will eventually become Drucolen elves after hearing The Call, the blight warrens are almost exclusively populated by Drucolen elves of Asue'Tai origin. The other elven cultures of Rothaen do not allow their people to transform: once an individual shows signs of The Call they are “relieved of their burden” by family members or friends. Conversely, the Asue'Tai have laws that forbid the killing of those who hear The Call. The Asue'Tai do not label their brethren that are overcome by The Call “Drucolen elves” because they see it as a mental illness, one that might someday have a cure. However, this view is not born out of compassion, but is instead caused by pride and racism. Even if insane, power hungry, and cannibalistic, a Drucolen elf who was once a Asue'Tai elf is still considered a superior being who deserves to live out their days—as long as it is not in Asue'Tai cities.

Drucolen elves live underground in huge urban slums called blight warrens, where they and the voices in their heads hatch insidious plots. They are chaotic by nature, striking out at each other over trivial matters. This infighting prevents them from being able to unify their acts of evil against the surface dwellers. Instead, the strongest among them rule, and they force their will onto those below them. Those who are born Drucolen have none of the other changes or inherent evil that takes place with The Call. If they survive to adulthood, they usually try to escape.

CULTURE

Music created by Drucolen elves tends to be strange and alien to the ears, causing headaches and emotional outbursts. Art tends to consist of disjointed paintings and bizarre sculptures of grotesque beings. There are no festivals or celebrations, though groups will come together on the surface when the stars are right. A blood sacrifice is sometimes offered to an evil entity for a favor. Outsiders are not allowed inside the blight warrens. If caught, trespassers are killed. Slaves are bought from pirates and used as servants, sacrifices, or food.

OUTLOOK

Paranoia is strong in the community due to all the backstabbing. Even if two Drucolen are friends, they never trust each other. Each elf has their own twisted schemes and is willing to do whatever is required to achieve them. This is a good thing: since they are constantly fighting each other, any mad plans they do hatch rarely come to fruition.

THE CALL

The changes that The Call creates in those born Drucolen affects each differently with no two being the same. Although not inherently evil when younger, after The Call they are burdened with an urge to kill and punish those on the surface. This urge gets worse with time and, like those who changed into Drucolen elves, they will view everyone as an enemy while seething with hate and plotting the end of the world.

Young Drucolen elves who survive to adulthood know two things: one, they need to escape, and two, they can never let themselves give in to The Call. Suicide claims nearly all of the naturally born once they reach the age of 900.

DRUCOLEN ELF CHARACTERS

Once any elf has heard The Call they become NPCs, which means that the only Drucolen elf player characters are escaped Drucolen who were born in the blight warrens. These nationless souls roam the surface looking for a place to fit in. Drucolen elf PCs are always distrusted by all they meet. The reputation of their people follows them wherever they go. They tend to disguise themselves to help blend in, using makeup, cowls, and body wraps.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ **Fighter:** You coat your blade with the deadliest toxins. +1d4 damage when using your primary blade.
- ◆ **Thief:** Your stealth freed you from the blight warrens. You get *Escape Route* for free at 3rd level.
- ◆ **Necromancer:** +1 to the *Control Enslaved Undead* move.
- ◆ **Wizard:** You can use *frost ray* as a cantrip.

KYLOM ELVES

Integrated, Honorable, Loyal



NPC STATS

Sword (1d8+1 damage, *close*)

8 HP 1 Armor

Look

Kylom elves are the shortest of elf kind, reaching no more than 1.5 meters. Their skin is olive to dark brown, while their hair is black, white, or brown. Their eyes are light green, black, or blue. They share the same fine features as the Asue'Tai.

SOCIETY

The Kylom elves live in Northern Iros, but their history is murky. Historians of Oleis point to the art and poems of “Brother Fey,” who helped tame the land and gave his fidelity to the Hidden Empress. That tradition exists to this day: many Kylom elves who are trained as wizards or soldiers will give their loyalty to a master who has taken up the call in the ongoing war to become the most powerful warlord in Northern Iros. In Acum, they fight to defend the borders of the Doomlands and are known to even worship human gods along with the monks. Finally, in Yulima, they are rugged fighters trying to keep their adopted city-states safe from dragons and the Molati Horde.

Kylom elves who are not inclined to soldier usually live in human cities and have integrated into those societies, participating in common activities and occupations, while also maintaining traditions unique to their people. There are Pwati elves living in Northern Iros, but they view the Kylom with contempt.

CULTURE

Though they follow local human customs, there are unique traditions only the Kylom elves observe. There is an ancient temple in the Dragon Dog Peaks to which the elves make a pilgrimage every year for the Festival of Ol-Shen, the god of inner peace. This festival can only be attended by Kylom elves.

At this anniversary, the celebrants let go of their inhibitions and have a weeklong orgy of sex, drugs, wine, and fighting matches. It is believed that it cleanses the soul to allow the sin that is in one's heart out at the festival. On the final day, they pray in the temple for guidance and forgiveness, after which they head back home.

The favorite art form of the Kylom is stylized puppet theater—the less that is said about this, the better. One critic said, after seeing a performance, *“I have never wanted to gouge my eyes out more than when watching the Kylom production of ‘Three Wives and One Drunk Dragon.’ It aged me.”*

Fashion is an art form for which the Kylom elves are famous. Their silk garments are beautifully designed and a must-have for any noble or rich merchant. They cost a fortune and can take months to create.

OUTLOOK

The Kylom see the past elven empires as a mistake, even their own. They point to what happened to the Asue'Tai as an example of elven hubris and want no part in it. They still celebrate being elves, but they also celebrate their connections with the other races.

THE CALL

Kylom elves believe in control over all aspects of their minds and bodies. They meditate to calm their emotions and, like Pwati elven tribes, they end their lives before reaching one thousand years old. The thought of slowly going mad or worshipping alien gods in a blight warren is so disturbing to them that they would rather die. It is common for a younger member of their family, or for the community if they have no family, to assist with the ceremony in which they take their own lives.

KYLOM ELF CHARACTERS

Kylom elves who decide to roam as free adventurers are called Wanderers if they were once soldiers or Vagabonds if they were not. Not having an oath to a master is considered dishonorable to some inside Kylom society, but younger elves claim that it's more honorable to be a free adventurer than to swear an oath to an evil warlord. There are many types of Kylom adventurers, and with their ability to adapt and become part of a team, it is no surprise. They are sought out by other explorers for their abilities in magic and fighting.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ Kylom elves can be **druids**, **fighters**, **rangers**, and **wizards**.

PWATI ELVES

Tribal, Hunters, Tenacious, Protective, Passionate



NPC STATS

Hunter's bow (1d8 damage, *ranged*)

8 HP 1 Armor

Look

Pwati elves have light brown to dark brown skin with red, blond, brown, or black hair. They have brown, silver-blue, or blue eyes and grow to be around 1.6 meters in height.

SOCIETY

Pwati elves are self-appointed protectors of the forests. They live in tribes all over Rothaen and build tree villages high above the forest floor where they can keep watch. When territories overlap, the elves will combine into a larger group. Tribal populations run from 1,000 to 15,000, depending on the size of the forest. Though complete control over whole wooded areas is the goal, it seldom happens.

The ruling class is voted on by the people, with prominent families frequently ruling for centuries. There are two branches of government: the Council of Thirteen and the War Tribunal. The Council of Thirteen makes laws and runs the court system. There are forty judges working under a council. In Pwati society, judges adjudicate and enforce the law. Judgement is passed after a brief investigation, though serious crimes may take longer. Magic is often used in murder cases to commune with the dead. Verdicts can be contested; if this happens, the case goes before the council. However, the council often refuses to hear the case, and the judge's verdict is upheld. Pwati are a very emotional people, and crimes of passion are the largest misdeeds perpetrated.

The War Tribunal deals strictly with military operations. It is technically under the Council of Thirteen, but often acts independently. Its goal is to stop humans and other humanoids from logging or otherwise damaging the wilderness. The severity of the aggression depends on how isolated they are from others. War Tribunals in smaller forests are forced to negotiate with local governments and, in turn, tend to work better with others. Those with larger territories, or those who decide not to negotiate with other communities, have been described as eco-terrorists, often by those looking to make a living off the land Pwati elves protect. Who is in the right will be debated until Anu grows cold and falls out of the sky.

CULTURE

Pwati love long-form dramas about past heroes and their love lives. Like many other elven art forms, it is not often appreciated by others. Most of these stories may seem inaccurate or pure fiction, but the Pwati claim they are the real history of their people. Those non-elves who want to negotiate peace often must sit through the reading of stories. This can last for days, and it is considered rude not to listen to the entire story. It is a great way to wear down a diplomat before negotiations.

Painting, music, and interpretive dance are also part of their culture. Their art explores the forest they live in, their wars with other humanoids, and the fey spirits. Festivals are held with archery competitions, and swordplay exercises are very exciting to watch as well. Winning such an event is a grand achievement. In places where human villages are nearby and relations are good, humans may enter. Those good enough to win are hailed as honorary Pwati.

OUTLOOK

Pwati elves see themselves as the protectors of nature. They want to avoid human towns and cities for the most part. To them, the closer to nature they can get, the closer to their gods they are. Urbanization is a straight path to evil, and deforestation is the first step on that path. No matter how integrated these elves might be into a different society, they will always champion nature.

THE CALL

Pwati elves tend to have relatively short lives due to their aggressive protection of their forests. Those who do make it to old age are never allowed to submit to The Call. Before one reaches an age where they can become vulnerable, the elf is killed by their family. Sometimes The Call is used as an excuse for getting an unwanted relative out of the way. If a family member escapes before they can be “dealt with”, they are hunted down.

PWATI ELF CHARACTERS

It is uncommon for a Pwati elf to leave their forest and go adventuring. Many times, though, they feel they can help their cause and protect their forests by getting involved with humankind. Unlike Cuik dwarves who have a hard time adjusting to new societies, Pwati elves adapt quickly to adventuring life and human cultures, though they are never really comfortable in a city. Sleeping on top of the inn is a normal thing for an adventuring Pwati.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ **Druid:** You look after the woods and the fey who call it home. In return, the spirits look after you. +1 to your armor while in a forest, even if you are not attuned to it.
- ◆ **Ranger:** This land is yours. The trees, the lakes, the wildlife are all part of your gods and you will protect them. You can take +1 to **Volley**.
- ◆ **Fighter:** You love the call of battle and the smell of blood. Ripping through enemies with your sword is a religious experience. You gain the **Roar of Battle** move.
 - ◆ **Roar of Battle:** At the beginning of battle, your first action can be to produce an unnerving sound that strikes fear into your opponents. This ability can only be used once an encounter. On a 10+, you and your allies receive +2 to your next attack. On a 7-9, you, and only you, get +1 to your next attack. On a 6-, your roar fails and you must pick one of the following: enemies fight harder, +1 to enemy attacks for the rest of the encounter, alert a nearby sinister enemy who joins the fight against you.
- ◆ **Wizard:** You can use the energy of the sun and the moons to heal. You can cast **Cure Light Wounds** as a first level spell.

ESLIA

Magical, Intelligent, Controlled



NPC STATS

Staff (1d6 damage)

6 HP 1 Armor

Look

Slender and tall, Eslia stand 2.1 meters. Their eyes are light colors such as blue, silver, and gold, while their hair is copper, white, or brown. They get their nickname *sandwalkers* from their large padded feet, which make walking on sand easy. Their skin is light to dark brown, and their ears have tiny ridges. They live up to four hundred years old, which leads some sages to theorize that they are related to elves, which is highly offensive to the Eslia.

SOCIETY

Created by Weix, the goddess of magic, knowledge and magic are the bedrock of Eslia life. They study how mana effects the world around them, and they develop new spells to make life better for all. They tend to be anti-technology. Why have technology when you can get a better effect with magic?

The Eslia worship many gods, with their creator Weix at the center. They are strict vegetarians who use magic to create their food. Those not able to keep up with magical studies perform the manual labor in the cities with the aid of wands and scrolls.

A small portion of the population can develop psionic abilities over time, an anomaly they refuse to talk about. This is considered a birth defect, and those who have such power are seen as threats. They often must leave Ritona to avoid being forced into magical therapy. Many of the adventuring Eslia are those who have psionic ability and had to flee, or those even rumored to have it.

They do not trade often with the outside world and have closed their borders with magic several times over the centuries. Ritona is a nation of intelligent introverts who just want to read books and cast spells. When faced with an issue that deals with outsiders, they can have trouble working with others.

CULTURE

The Eslia love to paint and sculpt. They have choirs that perform religious music. Writing fiction is also a common passion. They enjoy short stories about far-off lands they know little about. Adventurers who come back with foreign books can make a lot of coin. Their favorite stories come from Asi, another desert nation. Magical theaters are run throughout Ritona. Theaters show thirty-minute shows that depict ancient myths or love stories, using magic to enhance scenery.

For fashion, Eslia wear light-colored clothing that breathes well in the desert heat. Most shave their heads or keep their hair very short. Jewelry is usually magical. They do not like flashy or loud clothing.

OUTLOOK

Coming from a culture based on strict tradition and adherence to the law, Eslia can be black-and-white thinkers when confronted with a problem. This can lead to issues when dealing with outsiders. Even so, they see the world as a chance to learn. They feel war is a waste of time and hide from others to avoid it. When threatened, though, a nation made of powerful wizards is a horrifying enemy. There is a reason they have never been conquered by an outside force.

ESLIA CHARACTERS

Eslia rarely leave Ritona. Those that do have either been bitten by the adventuring bug and want to get out of the libraries, or they have psionic abilities that make them outcasts. In foreign lands, they are met with curiosity and sometimes fear.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ **Fighter:** Your quick thinking gives you an upper hand in battle, take +1 to *Hack and Slash*.
- ◆ **Cleric:** Your devotion to your god shines through, +2 HP to all healing spells cast.
- ◆ **Wizard:** Magic is part of your culture, you can prepare one extra level one spell.

GNOMES

Inquisitive, Open-Minded, Forgetful

“Gears, grease, and steam make the world a better place.”

—Rose Grumble, gnome inventor



NPC STATS

Short sword (1d6 damage)

6 HP 1 Armor

Look

Gnomes stand up to 1 meter tall, have brown or green eyes, dark brown skin, and dark curly hair. Gnomes can live to be two hundred and fifty years old. They are very bright, if a bit absent-minded, many times mumbling to themselves about one project or another. This can make them look a bit off if one is not normally around gnomes.

SOCIETY

The cousins of dwarves, gnomes once lived primarily in Chiatex but can now be found all over Rothaen. Their warrens are dug into hills where several generations of families will live and work. They do not have clans like the dwarves, but family is important and trades are passed from generation to generation. They are a matriarchal society in which the oldest woman is the head of the family. Marriages are arranged between families at birth. These are legal contracts and, if broken, can lead to feuds that last decades.

Gnomes enjoy human company and will follow a kingdom's laws, but those laws stop at the warren's entrance. Crime in these multi-family homes is not usually an issue, though pushing matches between feuding family members do occur. Murder or abuse among the gnomish people is almost unheard of. For the most part, they are good-natured and like to enjoy life. When a crime does happen, gnomes keep things in-house; they feel human justice is barbaric.

CULTURE

Gnome art centers around drum circles, steam player-pianos, and clay sculptures. Jewelry making has also become an art form. Gnomes like to see human theater, with a few becoming producers. Acting is a different matter; they feel the roles written by humans are demeaning towards non-humans.

Gnomes are at the forefront of invention. They tinker with cogs, steam, and magic, trying to create the next breakthrough gadget. Selling these items has come with mixed results. Explosions can happen due to misuse or bad craftsmanship. No one has died... yet. Gnomes also create gadgets that are not magic-powered. One big project is the steam engine, which so far has had limited success.

When gnomes do decide to live in a human city, they often find themselves drawn towards journalism because big city newspapers are always looking for new reporters. This has put them at odds with halflings, as gnomes tend to report on all the horrible things done by halfling mob families.

OUTLOOK

The world is full of joy and wonder if one is just willing to look. Gnomes see the world as a place of unending opportunity. They are not naïve in their optimism, though. They understand there are great evils in Rothaen and that one must be vigilant. Gnomes love life and people in general, making them great friends.

GNOME CHARACTERS

There are many reasons why a gnome will set out on an adventure. Some need to bankroll a project, a few are escaping contracted marriages, and others have wanderlust. Whatever the reason, gnomes make great additions to parties and are always ready to back up their friends.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ **Fighter:** You are quick and hard to strike, take +1 to your AC.
- ◆ **Thief:** When you roll a 10+ on *Hack and Slash*, you strike a vulnerable area and add +1 to damage.
- ◆ **Wizard:** Your magic is powerful, gain +1 to the *Cast a Spell* move.

HALFLINGS

Cunning, Quick, Sneaky, Families, Halflings First, Survivors



NPC STATS

Dagger (1d6+1 damage, close)

6 HP, 1 Armor

Look

Halflings can grow to be as tall as 1 meter. Their skin ranges from olive to light brown, with hair that is brown to black and eyes that are hazel, blue, or brown.

SOCIETY

Most Rothaen halflings are dangerous and evil. The shires are hubs for large criminal organizations run by powerful mob bosses. The idyllic halfling farmer is just a front for those mobs: it is the worst-kept secret in the world. They traffic in people, push magical drugs, and have illegal gambling houses in every major city. Mobs have a role in every vice you can imagine and some you should not. No one crosses a halfling, because they are most likely connected to a gang somewhere and they always seek revenge.

Any halflings not actively part of a mob have a hard time not being under the thumb of one. The gangs took control of halfling society two hundred years ago, when the last halfling king died from a crossbow bolt between the eyes moments after his coronation. Leading up to the event, the mobs had consolidated their power and placed operatives in key high-ranking positions within the halfling government. Before the royal family knew what was happening, they were dead and the mobs had taken control.

The ten major mob families and their territories:

- ◆ Highfoot: Athix Empire, Ulenvin, Carthic, Kosar
- ◆ Loce: Athix Empire, Scaldival, Luxinvale
- ◆ Mastle: Scaldival, Athix Empire, Rusal
- ◆ Ogbin: Kalla'De, Asi, Ba'les
- ◆ Rhord: Luxinvale, Kalla'De, Victoire Republic
- ◆ Pillernar: Carthic, Helliean, Asi
- ◆ Kurte: Kosar, Ulenvin
- ◆ Ethrew: Wisgo, Asi, Taseki Empire
- ◆ Dullion: Chiatex, Ba'les, Taseki Empire
- ◆ Ayst: Rusal, Kivca

Now, even good, honorable halflings find themselves paying up the ladder. This has led to a resistance of sorts. Those halflings that are tired of being associated with mobsters or being taken advantage of by them do their best to fight back. This path is extremely dangerous, but some halflings feel that they have little recourse but to rebel. They look for human allies and report on mob business, or they sabotage ships that carry illegal cargo—anything to disrupt the mob's daily operations.

For those in the criminal families, things are very cutthroat, with members looking to outdo each other. It is not uncommon to find dead halflings floating face down under the docks. With the amount of money and power wielded by the families, it is not a surprise that there is infighting.

CULTURE

Halflings love the arts and will pay well for singers and actors to perform. They will also use such people to help with their shadow mobs. Painting is a hobby many halflings take part in, as well as folk singing. They keep these pastimes to themselves.

OUTLOOK

Working and paying taxes—that's for suckers. The world is meant to be robbed blind. The weak always have a little more money to lose and the rich always think they are protected. Halflings are interested in gold and the power it brings. Their physical size has led to many people underestimating them... a deadly mistake.

HALFLING CHARACTERS

Those who decide to adventure usually do so for the following reasons: they are on the run and need to find a way to support themselves without help from their families, they are never going to move up within the organization, or they are good folk who do not want to live a life of crime. For the last one, they will use their abilities for what they see as the greater good, even if they have chosen to be a thief.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ Halflings can be any halfling-available class in the *Dungeon World* system: **Druid, Fighter, and Thief**

HUMANS

Driven, Diverse, Single-Minded



NPC STATS

Sword (1d6 damage)

3 HP 1 Armor

Humans are very diverse when it comes to appearance and culture. They are also the most populous and control most of the nations of Rothaen. Humans have a lot of drive, be it for good or evil, and it is this drive that leads to conflicts. Because they do control much of the world, they drag everyone else into the fray. Greed, bigotry, and arrogance are just a few cultural traits that can be detrimental to humans and all those around them. At the same time, compassion, adaptability, and boundless imagination make humanity great.

Below is a brief description of the different major human groups. Although there are many human ethnicities, it is important to note that there is no dominant human culture and no dominant race on Rothaen. There is a balance and, in the end, people cross cultural lines all the time in the name of love.

That said, there can be bigotry between cultures. Athelean humans are by far the worst offenders, claiming that they are the “purest” of their race. Large cities, where international trade is common, are often the most progressive places when it comes to humans.

Unless ethnic tensions are important to the fiction, they can be easily ignored if your group is uncomfortable with them. Humans are humans after all, no matter where they come from.

ATHELEAN

The majority of the Athix Empire are the curly black-haired, olive to light brown-skinned, hazel or brown-eyed humans known as Atheleans. They tend to be slim and stand no taller than 1.8 meters. Because the Athix Empire once ruled so many lands, Atheleans are widespread throughout Rothaen. They think of themselves as above all other peoples, much like the arrogant Asue'Tai elves. Their racial purity claim, however, is crumbling along with their empire.

CARSAICS

The Carsaics make up much of the Carthic and Noden humans. They have light brown to pale skin and black, red, blond, or brown hair, which can be curly or straight. They average 1.7 meters in height. The range of the Carsaics' looks can be attributed to the central location of the mass of their people and the influx of other foreign humans into their lands over thousands of years.

ETI

The Eti humans started the first major human civilization with the founding of Asi. They also make up the people of the Murwata Island. They have light to dark brown skin, curly hair, and brown eyes. They average 2 meters tall. The Eti are known for their architecture, especially their massive building projects.

JURINS

The Jurins (Hurins) are the pale-skinned humans of Northern Jorginver and the Gevich Islands. They stand as tall as 2 meters high, have blond, red, or light brown hair, and blue, brown, or green eyes. After the Athix Civil War and the founding of Luxinvale and Scaldival, the Jurins have begun to spread to other parts of Rothaen. They are often called barbarians by Atheleans, but they are actually more progressive in their societies than most other humans.

MOLATI

The Molati humans make up the Molati Horde, a nomadic group that rides the steppes of Iros. They average no taller than 1.6 meters. Most have slim, muscular builds. They have black hair, brown eyes, and light to dark brown skin. They spend most of their lives outside in the saddle of a horse, which they love. Freedom is at the core of their culture.

TUTICI-MI

Tutici-mi live in the southern jungles of Iros. These humans have made many advances in math, magic, and astronomy. They average 2 meters tall. They have black hair and light brown to red skin. Many consider them a very beautiful people, perhaps because they don't show signs of aging as much as other humans do. Because of the jungle, they rarely wear metal armor, preferring light breathable cotton.

WUL-SUI

The Wul-Sui make up the largest portion of humans in Acum, Oleis, and Yulima, but there is a question as to where the Wul-Sui are really from. They have fine straight black hair, pale to light brown skin, and green or brown eyes. They average 1.5 to 2 meters tall.

HUMAN CHARACTERS

There are many reasons for humans to strike out on the path of adventure. To prove themselves. To find riches and fame. To fight evil or hold back the monsters at their village's door. Maybe their family trade is not something they want to do for the rest of their life or they don't like their family at all. Humans are so common that sometimes the only way to get ahead is to leave the city behind and explore the great unknown.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ Humans can be any class in the *Dungeon World* core book.

RINCRIN

Strong, Towering, Second-Class Citizen, Driven, Thick Skin



NPC STATS

Horn (1d10+1 damage, *close*)

10 HP 2 Armor

*Special move: **Charge** (2d8+2 damage):* With a roar, the Rincrin hurtle themselves at their foe, ramming into them with an unstoppable force.

LOOKS

Rincrin are large, rhino-like humanoids standing at over 2.4 meters tall and weighing up to 6300 kg. They have thick, light grey to dark black skin, black eyes, and a horn on the end of their snout. It can be difficult to tell what gender a Rincrin is, if any, as they do not dress or outwardly express any gender.

SOCIETY

The first Rincrin were the magical creations of the Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri, ruler of ancient Asi. These 5000 immortal constructs were tasked with protecting the Pharaoh and his lands. One thousand years later, when Amed-Ri disappeared and the old kingdom fell, they were released from service by Sultan Asut of the new Asi government. Not knowing how to dispel them, he cast them out into the desert.

The Rincrin wandered for centuries looking for a new life but found only scorn for their part in Amed-Ri's court. Finally, they met a jinni named Haurz'Aldee, who offered to grant them their wish of mortality and the ability to have children if they worshiped her as their goddess.

They took the deal. Tired of wandering the desert endlessly, they just wanted peace. With their new-found mortality, they started families and tried to integrate into human society, but their past still followed them. As the original Rincrin died, they learned Haurz'Aldee had the power to grant their wish to be mortal, but she had no place for their dead to go. Their souls were trapped on Rothaen.

Now, the spirits of the Rincrin's dead kinsmen stay in their family's house, "living" side-by-side with their descendants. This has made assimilation into human society even more problematic. Fighting their past of being created by an undead tyrant and being surrounded by their dead relatives in spirit form has not helped the transition. In turn, Rincrin try their best to prove their worth to the very people who fear them. They become guards, day laborers, and army infantry, working harder and longer than any other person.

Family is very important to them, especially because they are stuck with one another even after death. They spend all their time clustered inside tight-knit families. Human cities can be cramped for Rincrin, so they live in their own areas or just outside a city. There are some tribes that still live as nomads.

CULTURE

The Rincrin's work ethic does not leave much time for the arts, but they are great storytellers. Having spectral family members passing down tales of their long history gives them a lot to draw from. They tend to enjoy human theaters, though many venues do not allow their kind in to see the shows. They wear colorful clothing made of cotton.

OUTLOOK

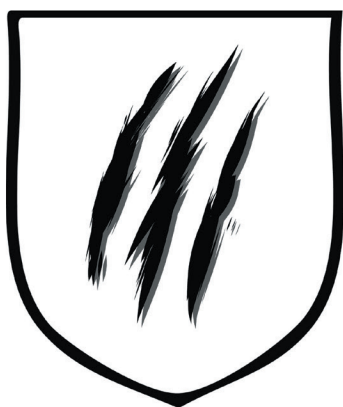
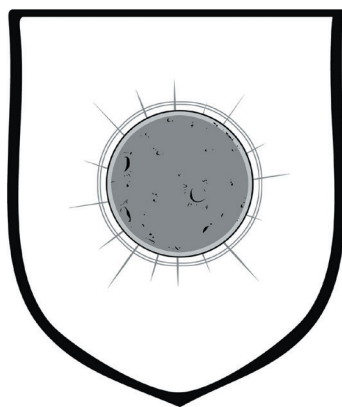
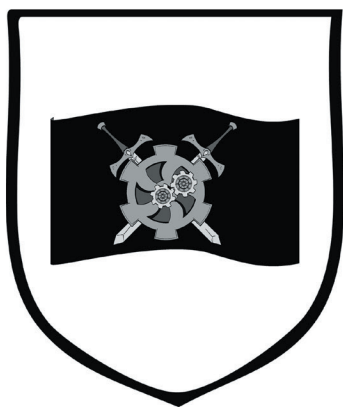
The Rincrin have been focusing on breaking their deal with Haurz'Aldee and allowing their dead to finally rest. They worship her, yes, but they have also started to worship human gods as well. They are an optimistic people, but at the same time they carry a deep sadness. The memories and stories of their ancestors haunt them.

RINCRIN CHARACTERS

Adventuring Rincrin are usually looking for a way to escape the pact they made with Haurz'Aldee. They also could be trying to make a name for themselves while dispelling the stereotypes of their people.

Available classes and other modifiers

- ◆ **Fighter:** As a starting move, you get *Charge*.
 - ◆ **Charge:** With a roar, you hurtle yourself at your foe, ramming into them with an unstoppable force, roll +DEX.
 - 10+: You ram into your target causing 1d10+2 damage. If they are human size or smaller, you also knock them prone.
 - 7-9: You hit a glancing blow doing 1d8 damage and your enemy can make an attack against you.
 - 6-: Your GM gets to pick one of the following:
 - You stumble and fall prone, taking 1d6 damage.
 - You hit a friend by accident, causing 1d6 damage.
 - You miss, allowing your target the opportunity to make an attack.
- ◆ **Cleric:** As a starting move, you get *Holy Bellow*.
 - ◆ **Holy Bellow:** When you roar during battle, your companions get a +2 to their next move. You can perform this move once per combat.



NEW BASIC MOVES & TRIALS

NEW BASIC MOVES

The *Drive*, *Malfunction*, and *Use Contraption* moves are new basic moves for the Rothaen setting. Any character can use them.

DRIVE

When you are driving a land vehicle and you must make a dangerous maneuver, roll +DEX. On a 10+, you easily perform your maneuver. On a 7-9, the GM will give you a choice between a hard bargain or a worse outcome.

MALFUNCTION

Contraptions will sometimes fail. Once per game per character using a contraption, the GM may invoke the *Malfunction* move. Roll +3, because luck is on your side. On a 10+, the contraption performs perfectly. On a 7-9, the item malfunctions and must be fixed during a camping move or while staying in a town. On a -6, the item is broken and must be replaced.

USE CONTRAPTION

When you are in a bad spot and you need a contraption to work, roll +INT. On a 10+, the item works just as it is supposed to and you will not have to roll again for a full day. On a 7-9, the item works once, but you must pick one of the following:

- It will not work again until it is fixed.
- It leaves you open to attack.
- It causes 1d6 damage to you.

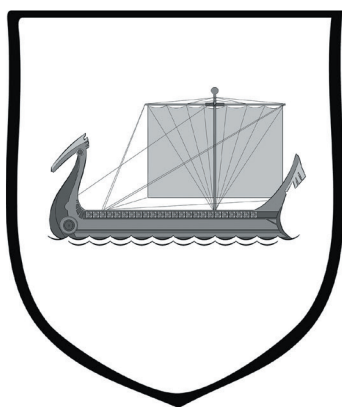
TRIALS

In the *Dungeon World* setting, characters have Bonds which link them to other PCs in meaningful ways. Trials are similar, but they link characters to NPCs within the fiction. Each player should pick one to three of the following Trials for their characters. These are story springboards that the GM and players can use to further flesh out a character.

Like Bonds, a Trial can be resolved at the end of a session. A Trial is resolved when it is no longer a true statement. When a Trial is resolved, you can mark an XP and, if you like, pick or create a new one.

You should let your GM know what your Trial is, but you do not need to tell the group: your Trial may end up affecting them.

- ◆ You owe money to _____ and they gave you 48-hours to pay.
- ◆ _____ is your _____ and you feel they cannot protect themselves, so you must.
- ◆ _____ is stealing from your church, but you need proof before you can make your move.
- ◆ _____ slept with your partner. You cannot control your jealousy and must get revenge.
- ◆ You slept with _____, and now they are blackmailing you.
- ◆ Your partner needs _____ to survive. You must get it before it's too late.
- ◆ An Ogre named _____ raided your parents' village and took them hostage. You must find them.
- ◆ The Cult of _____ has seduced your son. He must be saved.
- ◆ _____ is drinking too much. You must protect their children.
- ◆ _____ told you a secret you shouldn't keep. What is it, and will you tell?
- ◆ _____ kidnapped your spouse. They are no warrior and you must save them.
- ◆ Your child _____ has run off with _____, and you know they are really a dragon.
- ◆ _____ has asked for your help in dealing with threats from the local mob family. Why is this person being threatened?
- ◆ _____'s business needs a boost and they want you to invest. What kind of business is it?
- ◆ _____ murdered a townspeople, but they are also your closest friend. How will you handle it?



COMPENDIUM
CLASSES &
PLAYBOOKS

COMPENDIUM CLASSES & PLAYBOOKS

All standard *Dungeon World* classes and playbooks are available when a party starts their campaign.

Rothaen introduces several new playbooks and compendium classes. Compendium classes exist as part of your original class but add new moves that highlight a new adventure path within the core class; you can still use the moves of your base class, unless otherwise noted. The compendium classes can be unlocked by achieving their prerequisites.

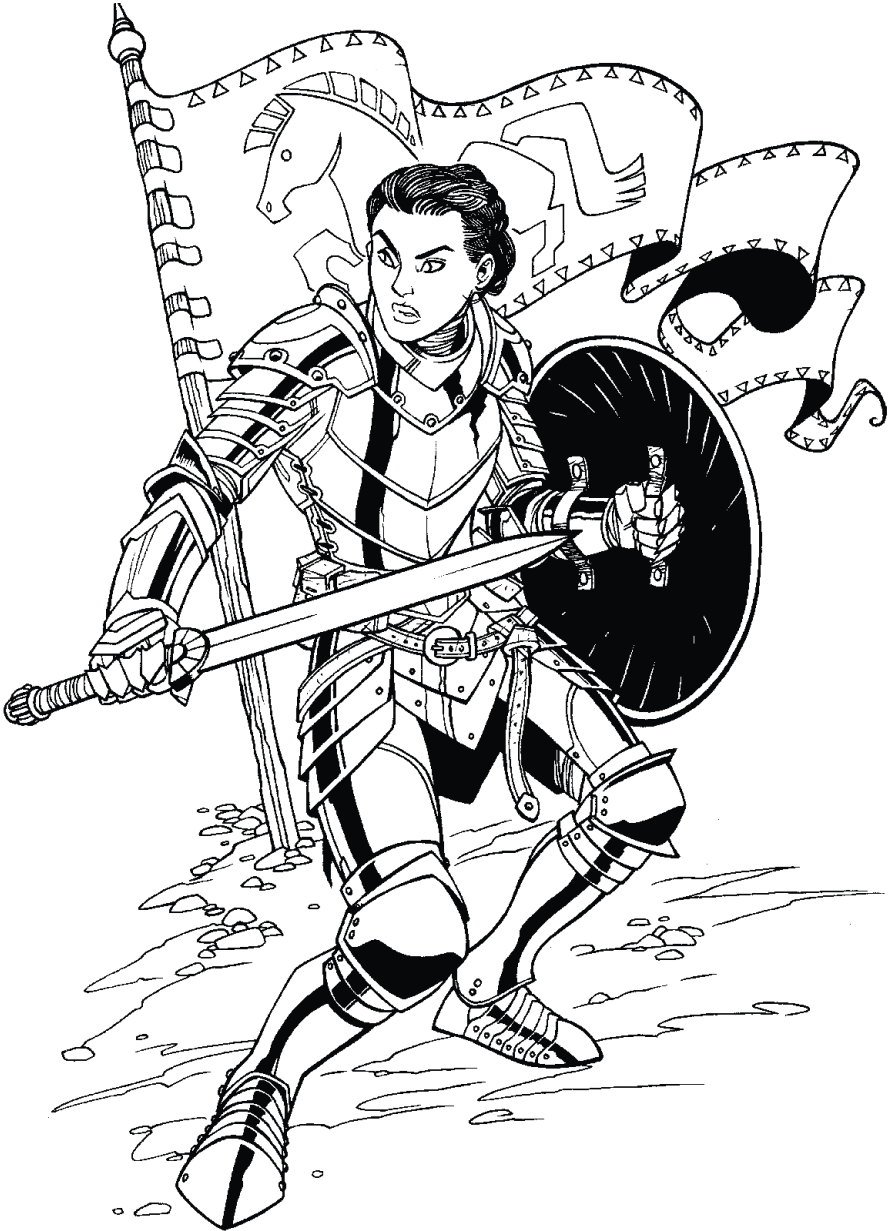
COMPENDIUM CLASSES

- ◆ Carthic Cavalier
- ◆ Trained Taseki Chantor
- ◆ Choir Mage
- ◆ Made Halfling
- ◆ Elsia Mastermind
- ◆ Noden Warrior
- ◆ Swashbuckler

NEW PLAYBOOKS

- ◆ Inventor
- ◆ Necromancer

COMPENDIUM CLASSES



CARTHIC CAVALIER

You ride into battle for the Carthic Republic, for the honor of those who have gone before and for those too weak to defend themselves. In the south, the Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri plots his invasion. Across the Pirate Sea is the Athix Empire, a wounded lion that could still strike a devastating blow. And to the west, the snake-people of Orlamain kidnap and experiment on Carthic citizens. Carthic is surrounded by enemies—it is your job to keep your land free. You are its protector.

Prerequisites

When you have trained with a Carthic horse master, have defeated an enemy of the Republic, and have sworn allegiance to the Carthic Parliament, you may become a Carthic Cavalier and take advantage of the moves below as well as the moves normally given to your base class. You *must be a fighter or paladin* to become a Carthic Cavalier.

MOVES

Military Connections

You know fellow soldiers, people like you who have served Carthic, and you can rely on them for solid information. Roll +CHA. On a 10+, the GM will give you 3 leads on a subject of your choice. On a 7-9, the GM will give you 1 lead on a subject of your choice.

Mounted Terror

When on a mount and equipped with a lance or sword, you are a nightmare to behold. Roll +DEX. On a 10+, roll 3 damage dice of your class instead of 1 and knock your target prone. On a 7-9, roll 2 damage dice of your class, but your enemy can counter attack. On a 6-, you must choose one of the following:

- Fall off your mount, taking 1d6 damage.
- Take damage from an enemy's counterattack but stay on your mount.
- Your mount is struck and takes damage; your mount attempts to flee with you on its back.

TRAINED TASEKI CHANTOR

You received training from the finest Chantor academics in the Taseki Empire. You sing alone. Your fear of Discord springs from a deep knowledge of its dangers; nevertheless, you know the power you command, and you expect respect for it.

Prerequisites

To receive Chantor training you *must be a spellcaster born into the aristocracy of the Taseki Empire or be a spellcaster sponsored to study at an imperial university* by a Chantor. It is recommended that the Chantor's player read the full Taseki Empire section (page 353).

MOVES

Compose the Lasting

When you draw on your knowledge of the Harmony to imbue written words with magical power for someone else to use, write or inscribe your words on a permanent object, permanently lower your HP by one, and roll +INT. On a 10+, the composition is truly permanent. On a 7-9, the user must **Defy Danger** with CON to use the imbued power, where the danger is the violent loss of the imbuelement or the attraction of Discord.

Recite the Truth

When you lay claim to the truth in the form of a rhythmic poem, roll +CHA. On a 7+, your claim becomes true, at least in part and at least for now. On a 10+, choose 2; on a 7-9, choose 1.

- Your claim becomes truer.
- Your claim becomes more widely true.
- Your claim stays true for longer.
- Your claim doesn't attract Discord.

Speak the Power

When you speak with the metrical rhythms of the Harmony to sway an audience, roll +CHA. On a 7+, your audience agrees with your position or will go along with it for now. On a 10+, anyone watching is impressed or dismayed by the popular reception of your speech, take +1 forward against them.

CHOIR MAGE

You have joined with a band of like-minded mages to further your craft beyond the control of the Chantors. You sing together, suppressing your fear of Discord with the knowledge that purity of heart or vision will protect you.

Prerequisites

To become a choir mage you *must be a Trained Taseki Chantor*, find a Choir, pass their entry requirements, and be inducted into their community by whatever rituals they deem necessary. Individual Choirs may have additional requirements based on birth, profession, or status. It is recommended that the Choir Mage's player read the full Taseki Empire section (page 353).

MOVES

Embody the Harmony

When you open your body to the Harmony, letting it flow through you, guiding your actions and exalting your voice, describe what that looks like. You may substitute CHA for DEX in any roll in which your joyous singing and dancing do not hamper.

Feel the Rhythm

When another practitioner unites their voice to a Harmony you weave, take your bond towards them as the bonus forward instead of the +1 as usual from helping. If you have no bond towards them, write a new bond with them.

Join the Harmony

When you join your voice in the Harmony, roll to *Aid or Interfere* as usual. On a 7+, choose a tag to add to the spell. On a 10+, count all dice rolled for the spell's effect as having their maximum value.

Example spell tags:

+forceful, +messy, +precise, +silent, +loud, +artistic, +mesmerizing,
+memorable, +fire, +water, +earth, +air, +spirit, +silver, +Discordant

MADE HALFLING

You are part of something bigger, part of one of the ten mob families of Rothaen. Kings, empresses, tzars—they've got nothing on you. You and your family take what you want. You have the judges in your pocket and a host of vices for sale that your customers can't do without. You don't play the game: your family created the game for the suckers of the world.

Prerequisites

To have it made in a mob family, you *must be a halfling*. You must do a job for a mob boss and take the blood oath of the family.

MOVES

Fence

You can move hot merchandise and get paid quickly. Roll +CHA. On 10+, you can get 40% of the goods' full value. On a 7-9, you can get 20%. On a 6-, you must pick one of the following:

- » You get taken. You only get 5% for the goods and your reputation takes a hit.
- » You get ratted out. Someone wants to put the heat on you, but who and why?
- » You robbed the wrong person. Your mark was connected, and now you are in hot water. Who did you steal from, and why is that a bad thing for you?

Wise Guy

You have the right to steal in the cities your mob family controls. You cannot be harmed by a member of any mob family, including your own, without the express consent of a family head. You may also request a sit down with your capo or crew boss to work out any grievances with another family member.

ESLIA MASTERMIND

You have true power in your thoughts that you can unleash on your enemies. Though your people look at you with fear and judgment, you know the truth: magic is not the only power in Rothaen.

Prerequisites

To become a mastermind, *you must be an Eslia and you may not be a spellcaster of any type*. You must have survived the dangers of the Temple of Thought (see The Mastermind's Journey page 294), opened the inner seal, and learned about the powers of the mind from Anum-Kas.

MOVES

Mental Communication

You can have back-and-forth mental communication with those willing to open their minds to you. While maintaining this link, you are at a -1 to all INT rolls. Taking damage results in breaking the link.

Telekinesis

You can move objects with your mind. The weight you can move is equal to your current level x 10. The distance from your location that you can move an item is your current level x 1.5 meters. The object cannot move fast enough to do damage unless it is dropped on a target. Damage for a dropped item is 2 points per 10 weight. You can move multiple items if their total weight does not exceed your maximum lift capability. Any time you move 30 weight or more with your mind, you must sleep before using ***Telekinesis*** again. While moving an object, you may not take any other action. Taking damage results in dropping the item.

Thought Blast

With a ray of mental energy, you cause physical pain that ignores armor. Roll +INT. On a 10+, do class base damage +1d4. On a 7-9, do your class base damage. On a 6-, the GM can pick one consequence from below.

- ◆ *Dazed & confused*: You cannot use any mental powers until you sleep.
- ◆ *Migraine headache*: Roll base damage and subtract the result from your current HP.
- ◆ *Altered state*: You start to hallucinate, -1 to all INT rolls until you sleep.

NODEN WARRIOR

To the outside world, you are nothing but a primitive barbarian. Your huts are mud and thatch, your metal is bronze, and your people worship the animal gods of old—but you know better. You are part of nature. You are a part of the world and you understand the importance of it. Your totems are sacred, your traditions great. You fight for your clan.

There are eight clans in Noden which form a loose government run by a council of warriors. There are three classes of people: druids, warriors, and workers. Druids are advisors and spiritual leaders. Warriors can become leaders, and even kings or queens, of their clans. Workers are merchants, farmers, and laborers. Anyone can move between these classes, and often do. Each clan worships its own animal god who has qualities that are prized by that clan.

The Y'slok is the only clan that worships a living being, the Kraken, which lives off the coast of Noden. There is always tension between the clans, but their common enemy, the blood orcs, keeps them united... for now. There have been several attempts to unite the clans under one ruler, but none has succeeded.

- ◆ **Alyba (Bear):** *Good, Warlike, Loyal*
 - ◇ Clan's Motto: Strength and Honor
- ◆ **Cawvin (Crow):** *Neutral, Spies, Proactive*
 - ◇ Clan's Motto: Intelligence and Cunning
- ◆ **Cro'lic (Elk):** *Good, Magical, Peacemakers*
 - ◇ Clan's Motto: Wisdom and Virtue
- ◆ **Eris (Wolf):** *Good, Loyal, Fair*
 - ◇ Clan's Motto: Bravery and Family
- ◆ **Fros'ih (Puma):** *Neutral, Warlike, Sly*
 - ◇ Clan's Motto: Stealth and Drive
- ◆ **Ilsot (Shark):** *Chaotic, Warlike, Power Hungry*
 - ◇ Clan's Motto: Force and Aggression
- ◆ **Rik'oi (Hawk):** *Neutral, Warlike, Calculating*
 - ◇ Clan's Motto: Precision and Power
- ◆ **Y'slok (Kraken):** *Strange, Supernatural, Ancient*
 - ◇ Clan's Motto: When the stars are right...

Prerequisites

To become a Noden warrior, you must honor the god of your clan with a personal sacrifice, complete a quest for your village's druid, and kill at least one blood orc.

MOVES

Clans People

Your clan is your family. People who are from your clan will give you shelter and a hot meal if you request it of them. Be warned, though, you must not take their generosity for granted. Noden warriors are expected to pull their own weight.

Primal Rage

Once per combat engagement, you can summon your inner animal rage that allows you to inflict grievous harm onto your enemies. Roll +STR. On a 10+, you deal an extra 1d10 points of damage as well as cause great fear in the enemies around you. On a 7-9, you deal an extra 1d8 points of damage but open yourself up to attack.

Spirit Healer

Once per day while in the wilderness, you may call on nature's spirits to heal your wounds. Roll +WIS. On 10+, heal yourself for 1d6. On a 7-9, heal yourself for 1d4.

SWASHBUCKLER

You've felt the freedom of the oceans, the chaos of the tides, and the blessing of the sea gods. The best parts of life are elegant sword play, mounds of gold, and a lover's embrace. Some call you a pirate, others a sea dog, but you know better—you *are* the freedom so many wish they had.

Prerequisites

If you *are* thief or a fighter, have taken a voyage across the ocean, and have completed a quest for a captain, you may become a Swashbuckler. You may take the moves below, as well as the moves normally given to your base class.

MOVES

Duelist

When fighting for your honor or the honor of a lover, gain +2 to damage.

Find Safe Passage

Mob families and pirates work many dock jobs in large cities in order to mark ships they mean to attack. Sometimes they will have crew posing as passengers already onboard prepared to cause chaos when their ship attacks. Roll +INT. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 1. Spend your holds as you walk the docks looking for passage to ask these questions:

- ◆ What mob family or pirate nation works this dock?
- ◆ Which ship is most likely to get attacked, and why?
- ◆ How many thugs or pirates can I spot going onboard the safest ship?
- ◆ Do I have any contacts here?

Graceful Swordsperson

You move with style and grace while engaged in swordplay and this makes you hard to hit. If you're wearing leather armor, you get a +1 to armor.

High Flyer

When there is a way for you to swing across a room or a deck of a ship, you can always find a rope, vine, or cable to do so. Roll +DEX. On a 10+, you fly across the room in style and can deal damage to two separate targets. On a 7-9, you swing across the room and deal damage to one target, but you open yourself up to attack. On 6-, the GM picks one of the following three things:

- Your rope, chandelier, or vine breaks and you fall hard. Take 1d4 damage.
- You land in the middle of enemies and are wide open to attack.
- You overshoot your destination and take yourself out of the fight for now! If in a room, you crash through a window. If on a ship, you find yourself hanging off the side. In the wilderness, you land in some far-off bushes.

PLAYBOOKS: INVENTOR

You work with the cutting edge of technology, combining metal gears, brass cogs, and steam to create new devices. You also dabble in the arcane arts, to give your creations true power. You keep your friends safe with your quick mind and your ingenious gadgets.

NAMES

Gnome: Athian, Cilicli, Fauls, Grellta, Hietion, Russ, Sieth, Truis, Whondi

Human: Erna, Francisco, Hedy, Ibn, Isabella, Rick, Mary, Nikola, Omar, Thomas

LOOK

Choose one for each.

- ◆ Bloodshot Eyes, Tired Eyes, Joyful Eyes
- ◆ Crazy Hair, Bald Head, Slicked-back Hair
- ◆ Lab Work Clothes, Dark Clothes, Messy Clothes
- ◆ Flabby Body, Slender Body, Hunched Body

STATS

Your maximum HP is 6+ your Constitution.

Your base damage is d8.

STARTING MOVES

Choose a race and receive the corresponding move.

Gnome

When you create a new contraption, it costs 1 less inventor's tool kit to finish it.

Human

You are cool under pressure. When performing the *Use Contraption* move, take a +1.

You start with these moves.

Build It!

You can craft an item from the contraptions list or you can create a new item with the right tools and components. For a new item, your GM will tell you if the item is possible to make, give the number of components and inventor's tool kit slots required to make it, its weight, and how many uses it has. If it is used for combat, it will do your base damage unless otherwise noted.

Roll +INT. On a 10+, you have created your contraption! On a 7-9, you create your contraption but it costs 1 additional inventor's tool kit or component slot, your choice. If you do not have enough to finish the contraption, it is not made but it does not cost you any slots. On a 6-, you cannot create the contraption properly, plus it consumes the components and inventor's tool kit slots required to make that item.

Locate Traps

Because of your knowledge of engineering, when you take time to survey an area you can find traps. Roll +INT. On a 10+, hold 3. On a 7-9, hold 1. Spend your holds as you explore the area to ask these questions:

- ◆ Are there traps here? If there are, what triggers them?
- ◆ What happens if the trap is activated?
- ◆ Is there anything else hidden here?

Power Core Spell

Level 1

EVOCATION

Inventors know just enough magic to help them create power cores for their devices. Magically created power cores last longer and require less maintenance than steam or clockwork powered engines. Some items require power cores to work at all. The spell becomes more powerful at 3rd, 5th, 7th, and 9th level, which results in a bonus to the amount of uses a contraption has. When you reach 3rd level your item gets a +2 to uses, at 5 a +4, at 7th a +6, and finally at 9th a +8.

To cast the ***Power Core Spell*** you must have a blank arcane rod, which costs 50 coins and can be found in any major city. Once you have one, roll +INT. On a 10+, you infuse the arcane rod with powerful magic energy, creating a stable magical power source with -1 to the number of inventor's tool kit slots required to make that item. On a 7-9, you create a magical power source but the item costs the normal amount to craft. On a 6-, your GM picks one of the following:

- *Magical explosion*: All nearby PCs take 1d6 damage.
- *Magical eummoning*: A monster of the GM's choice is summoned.

Tech Geek

You can be a bit long winded when it comes to Rothaen technology, but you know what you're talking about. When you are ***Spouting Lore*** or ***Discerning Realities*** about technology, take +1 to your roll.

Trap Removal

When you find a trap, you can attempt to remove it. Roll +INT. On a 10+, you disarm the trap. On a 7-9, the trap is disarmed, but you alert a nearby enemy to your location. On a 6-, you set the trap off accidentally.

INVENTOR CONTRAPTIONS

Below is a list of contraptions one can make using the ***Build It!*** class move. Characters must make the ***Use Contraption*** new basic move if they are in a stressful situation, like combat, to operate an item unless the contraption is a weapon. One does not need to be an inventor to use an item unless the GM determines otherwise. Beware: the GM may invoke the new basic move ***Malfunction***, usually when it is most inconvenient (see page 69).

Contraptions use the same tags as equipment. If the *magic-powered* tag is attached to an item, it must be created with a magic power source. See the ***Power Core Spell*** above. You can also create your own inventions as well, but not during combat.

INVENTOR'S TOOL KIT & COMPONENTS

To create a contraption, you must have the required components and an inventor's tool kit (or kits) with free slots equal to the item's tool kit requirement. Once an item is built and the tool kit's slots are used, you must get a new kit. An inventor's tool kit costs 10 coins and has 10 slots per kit, and it has 1 weight. Components are the building blocks of an item, as well as being a generic term for the cogs and metal bits that goes into said item. One component costs 1 coin and has no weight until it is turned into an item.

Cane Gun

5 components, 2 inventor's tool kit slots, 1 use

1d4+1 damage

The cane gun is a one-shot firearm used for defense in the city. May also be an umbrella.

Cog Slugger

10 components, 3 inventor's tool kit slots, 3 weight

1d8+level (max +5) damage, ignore armor, reload, far, ammo costs 1 coin

The cog slugger fires small metal cogs at high speed that rip through armor and flesh. Six shots per cartridge.

Clockwork Mouse

3 components, 2 inventor's tool kit slots, 1 use

This small spy can send one message before failing. This message can be heard through an earpiece and is transmitted as a simple phrase, such as "two guards" or "empty."

Camera Arcana

10 components, 5 inventor's tool kit slots, 1 magic core, 5 weight, 5 uses

This clockwork camera takes great pictures and is much smaller than its tintype brother. However, it costs a lot more to make and will stop functioning after 5 uses.

Lightning Gun

6 components, 2 inventor's tool kit slots, 3 weight, 5 uses

stun, close

This handheld device lets off an electric shock that imposes stun damage, leaving the victim open to an attack or subdual damage. For 1 extra component and inventor's tool pack slot, you can upgrade the device to do 1d8 lethal damage.

Steam Bike

500 components, 60 inventor's tool kit slots, 10 magic cores

Requires: *Bigger and Better* and *Workshop*

This bike is an all-terrain vehicle. On a dirt road it will travel 80 kilometers in a day. To operate it, one must make the **Drive** move on page 69.

Steam Pack

20 components, 5 inventor's tool kit slots, 2 magic cores, 5 weight, 10 uses

The steam pack is worn on the back like a backpack and allows the wearer to fly up to six meters into the air for fifteen minutes. There must be a cooldown period of at least ten minutes between uses.

Tintype Camera

35 components, 4 inventor's tool kit slots, 30 weight, 1 use per ten plates

This is a large wooden box that sits on top of a wooden tripod. It uses a large handheld flash to capture an image onto tin plates coated with a special gel. Each plate costs 5 coin.

X-ray Goggles

10 components, 3 inventor's tool kit slots, 1 magic core, 1 weight, 4 uses

X-ray goggles allow the wearer to see through up to one meter of stone for two minutes per use. They cannot see through magical barriers. The goggles consist of a small pack, containing the magic core, which is connected by a tube to the back of the leather hood on which the goggles are attached.

ALIGNMENT

Choose an alignment.

Good

Use technology for the betterment of all people.

Neutral

Create an original contraption.

Evil

Use technology to cause suffering.

GEAR

Your load is 11 +STR. You begin with dungeon rations (*5 uses, 1 weight*), leather armor (*1 armor, 1 weight*), 1 inventor's tool kit (*10 uses, 1 weight*), 3 arcane rods (*1 weight*), 5 components, and 15 coins.

Choose a set of melee weapons:

- Zapper gun (*hand, 1 weight*) and short sword (*hand, 1 weight*)
- Clockwork fist (*hands, 3 weight*) and dagger (*hand, 1 weight*)

Choose a ranged weapon:

- Hand crossbow (*near, 2 weight*) and a grip of bolts (*6 ammo, 0 weight*)
- 4 darts (*thrown, 0 weight*)

Choose one:

- Adventuring gear (*1 weight*)
- Healing potion (*0 weight*)

BONDS

Fill the name in of one of your fellow PCs in at least one.

_____ is afraid of technology, I will win them over.

_____ stole something from me, I know it!

_____ has been a person I can trust.

I think _____ is hiding something that's hurting them.

ADVANCED MOVES

When you gain a level from 2-5, choose from these moves.

Armor Upgrade 1

You upgrade your leather armor with cog inserts. Add +1 to your armor, but also +1 to its weight.

Clockwork Mind

You approach an invention like a puzzle waiting to be solved. Add +1 to your ***Build It!*** roll.

Fewer Tools Needed

You have learned how to create contraptions using fewer resources from your inventor tool kit. You use one less tool kit slot for all devices you make.

Find Work

Your name and accomplishments are growing. When you enter a large city, you can find tech work to make a few extra coins. Roll +CHA. On a 10+, you find a job working on a large-scale city project. Tell the GM what the project is and what you are doing on it. The project will take a week to finish. Get paid 200 coins. On a 7-9, you get hired on a smaller job. The pay is 25 coins and is only a few days' work.

Marksman

You are a great shot. When using a contraption that fires a projectile, take +1 to your ***Volley*** move.

Master Craftsperson

You are better at creating one contraption over all others. Take a +2 to the ***Build It!*** move when you create that contraption. You can take this move multiple times for each item, but the bonus cannot be stacked multiple times on any one item.

Nerves of Steel

When in a stressful situation you are calm and collected, take +1 to ***Use Contraptions***.

Quick Thinking

Your eye for detail gives you an advantage in combat situations, take +1 to ***Defy Danger*** rolls.

Scavenger

You can find components during your adventures. This move can only be used once in each location, a location being an area the size of 150 x 150 square meters. Roll +INT. On a 10+, you find 3 components in your current location. On a 7-9, you find 1 component in your location.

When you gain a level from 6-10, choose from these moves or from the level 2-5 moves.

Ace Flyer

You can fly airships! The ship you are flying must have a full crew to fly it. When you must make a dangerous maneuver, roll +INT. On a 10+, you easily perform your maneuver. On a 7-9, the GM will give you a choice between a hard bargain or a worse outcome.

Advanced Driver

Get a +2 to your ***Drive*** move when operating a land vehicle.

Armor Upgrade 2

Replaces: Armor Upgrade 1

You can upgrade your leather armor with cog inserts. Add +2 to your armor, but also +1 to its weight.

Better Bolts

Requires: Master Craftsperson, Workshop

You can make your own ammo. Any time you are in your workshop, you can use your machining skills to improve your bolts, giving them piercing +2.

Bigger and Better

Requires: Workshop

You can build large contraptions that have the “**Bigger and Better**” requirement. These must be made in a workshop.

Clockwork Saboteur

You understand how clockwork creatures are put together and how to disable them. Roll +INT. On a 10+, you can quickly disable a clockwork enemy. On a 7-9, you deal damage to the clockwork target, but it gets the drop on you and can make an attack.

Recycler

Requires: Scavenger

You can disassemble a contraption for its parts. When you do this, you salvage half the components it took to originally make that contraption.

Workshop

Requires: Master Craftsperson

If you are in a workshop, take a -2 to components and a -2 to inventor's tool kit slots needed. The number of components and tool kit slots needed for an item can never be reduced below 1.

PLAYBOOKS: NECROMANCER

You know they are watching you, the others in the group, afraid of what you might do. You cough at the edge of the firelight. Its warmth holds no comfort. They need you though, and they know it. Why else would they risk traveling with a corpse speaker? You know the dark lore they will need deep within the bowels of the earth. Your price is low—you merely want fresh corpses for your experiments. It doesn't matter whose. Dead is dead.

NAMES

Asue'Tai Elf: Aburdu, Arian, Jattaulle, Kaso, Lisette, Rinnst, Tillis, Yugoth

Drucolen Elf: Aubf, Dregch, Froth, Kiullif, Srana, Uil

Human: Ammun, Ash, Corrin, Creag, Drac, Eiddwen, Elizabeth, Poe

Eslia: Auwel, Barwert, Clemi, Evi, Gisela, Hella, Teije

LOOK

Choose one for each.

- ◆ Dead Eyes, Crazy Eyes, Menacing Eyes
- ◆ Tattooed Head, Stringy Hair, Wild Hair
- ◆ Elegant Robes, Black Rags, Muted Robes
- ◆ Gaunt Body, Sore-covered Body, Waxy Body

STATS

Your maximum HP is 4+ your Constitution.

Your base damage is d4.

STARTING MOVES

Choose a race and receive the attached move.

Asue'Tai Elf

Your magical nature has been corrupted. You can cast **Cause Fear** as a cantrip.

Drucolen Elf

In the fight for a bigger army of the darkness, you are a master of control! Take +1 when rolling **Control Enslaved Undead**.

Eslia

Your skill and magical nature gives you insight into the mechanics of spellcraft. Take +1 to the **Cast A Spell** move.

Human

Choose one wizard spell not in the **Book of the Dead**. You can cast it.

You start with these moves.

Book of the Dead Spellbook

The **Book of the Dead** is one of the oldest writings known to Rothaen. It has a horrific past and is outlawed in most civilized places. It is seen as a threat to the very fabric of life. This tome has been copied and recopied in dozens of languages—and always in blood. Any copy discovered by the agents of good is destroyed and its owner executed. The book also allows necromancers access to several cleric and wizard spells that deal with the dead and dark spirits. The physical weight of the **Book of the Dead** is only 1 weight, but the spiritual weight is much heavier.

Understanding the blasphemous text is not easy; the pages are covered in scrawling text inked from a blood drenched quill. When you first get the book, you may pick any cantrip from the wizard spell list as well as three first-level spells from the necromancer spell list. As you master the forbidden lore, also known as gaining a level, you may choose one new spell from the necromancer spell list of your current level or lower that you now understand. Though you have access to all necromancer spells in the book, once you learn a spell, you can't replace it with a different spell you have not learned yet.

Prepare Spells

You nervously review the arcane dark knowledge put forth in the **Book of the Dead**, jabbering like an mad person for an hour precisely. After which you:

- ◆ Lose past spells memorized.
- ◆ Choose new spells from the **Book of the Dead** whose total levels don't exceed your own level +1.
- ◆ Ready your cantrips, which do not count against your limit.

Cast A Spell

When you tap into the negative energies of the universe, you can form them into spells to be unleashed on the world. Roll +INT. On a 10+, the spell is successfully cast and it remains in your memory for later use. On a 7-9, the

spell is cast, but you must choose one of the following tragedies to befall you:

- The spell is wiped from your mind and must be prepared again.
- Reality bends and you feel an overwhelming sense of joy and love for the living, take a -1 ongoing to cast spells until the next time you **Prepare Spells**.
- You draw unwanted attention. The GM will tell you how.

Remember that maintaining spells with ongoing effects can sometimes result in a penalty to your roll to cast another spell.

Control Enslaved Undead

You can control enslaved undead through force of will and magical power, such as zombies or skeletons you did not create. Roll +INT. On a 10+, the undead target will do your bidding, including fight for you. You do not need to concentrate to maintain your hold over it. On a 7-9, the undead will follow basic commands, but it will not fight for you and you must concentrate. While you are controlling the undead, all of your rolls are at -1. If you lose your hold over the undead, it will turn on you and attack. This move will not work on powerful undead like vampires or liches.

Spell Shield

You can convert a prepared spell into a magical shield which will deflect an incoming attack. Subtract the level of the spell used from the damage dealt to you. That spell is forgotten until it can be prepared again.

ALIGNMENT

Choose an alignment.

Neutral

Through the academic study of the dead, you learn about what lies in the next world.

Evil

Use the undead to spread pain and corruption.

GEAR

You can carry 7 +STR. You begin with the **Book of the Dead** (1 weight), leather armor (1 armor, 1 weight), and dungeon rations (5 uses, 1 weight).

Choose your weapon:

- Curved snake dagger (*hand, 1 weight*)
- Skull staff (*close, two-handed, 1 weight*)

Choose one:

- » Anti-toxin (3 uses, 0 weight)
- » Healing potion (0 weight)

BONDS

Fill the name in of one of your fellow PCs in at least one.

_____ knows where the corpses are hidden; they've got my back.

I think _____ has it out for me... I'm not paranoid!

_____ is dangerous. I must see if we can work together.

_____ angers me; I do not trust them.

ADVANCED MOVES

When you gain a level from 2-5, choose from these moves.

Death Missile

Your **Magic Missile** spell is powered by energy from the afterlife. When you hit a target, add a bonus 1d4 damage to the spell. The amount rolled on this extra die is the number of the years the victim ages. You must let the GM know which die ages victims before you roll; you may not change it afterwards to age people faster.

Death's Anatomy

You are well versed in the humanoid anatomy and can use it to cause extra damage. +1d4 to your weapon damage.

Death's Friend

When you die, you meet your friend Death at the Black Gates and they gift you a boon. +1 to your **Last Breath** roll.

Doctor Dead

You can use your knowledge of humanoid physiology to apply first aid to an injured person. Your administrations heal for 1d4 hit points and stabilize the injured. Only works for mundane damage.

Empty Pages

Your copy of the ***Book of the Dead*** has several blank pages in the back. You may copy a new spell from any other characters' spell list onto those pages.

Forbidden Lore

When you ***Spout Lore*** about the undead, death gods, or outer-planer beings, take +1.

Still a Wizard

You trained just like all other wizards, you just picked to specialize in death. Pick one 2-5 level advanced move from the wizard character sheet.

Zombie Hirelings

You can raise and animate a zombie who can act just like a living hireling, but dead and a lot cheaper. They will not be allowed into cities for the most part; trying to bring one into a city may end with a pitchfork mob chasing you down the street. You may only have one zombie hireling at a time, and they are created like all hirelings as laid out in the *Dungeon World* core book.

Note: a zombie was once a person, so spice up a party's quest with relatives who don't much like their kin used as undead slaves.

When you gain a level from 6-10, pick any advanced move.

Advanced Death Missile

Requires and replaces: Death Missile

Your ***Magic Missile*** spell is powered by energy from the afterlife. When you hit a target, add a bonus 2d4 damage to the spell. The amount rolled on the bonus dice is the number of the years the victim ages. You must let the GM know which die ages victims before you roll; you may not change it afterwards to age people faster.

Control Greater Undead

You can control one powerful undead such as a vampire or ghoul. Note that liches cannot be controlled. The risk to attempt this is great. You can only control a greater undead once with this move. Targets will not harm themselves, but will fight as commanded. Roll +INT.

On a 10+, you gain control over the undead. You must concentrate to maintain control. It will act as you demand until you drop your concentration. Once you release the creature, it will run away. On a 7-9, pick one task for the creature to carry out. It won't forget you, or that you compelled it to perform a task. If you are nearby when the task is done, it will attack you. If not, it will hunt you down.

Still an Arch-Wizard

Requires: Still A Wizard

Your training parallels that of your more mainstream counterparts. Pick one 6-10 level advanced move from the wizard character sheet. If it has a 2-5 level advanced move requirement or one that it replaces, you must already have chosen that move prior.

The Lich Path

Requires: Death's Anatomy

You have begun taking the path to lichdom and your transformation has started to take hold. +2 to your HP and armor; take -2 to your charisma.

The Thin Black Line

Requires: Death's Friend

You can go below 0 hit points to -4. When you reach -5, you must take the **Last Breath** move.

Undead Sage

Requires and replaces: Forbidden Lore

When you **Spout Lore** about the undead, death gods, or outer-planer beings, take +2.

Zombie Hireling Master

Requires: Zombie Hirelings

You can animate up to 5 zombies who can act just like living hirelings, but dead and super cheap. Cities will not want you and your zombie entourage in their streets. Guards are likely to attack you on sight. You must create these undead workers like all hirelings as laid out in the *Dungeon World* core book.

NECROMANCER SPELLS

1ST LEVEL

Animate Dead Animal

Level 1

NECROMANCY

You bring a small creature, such as a mouse or cat, back from the dead. You can see and hear through this creature, allowing you to spy on your enemies. The creature cannot fly and has 1 HP.

Cause Fear

Level 1

NECROMANCY

You radiate doom! This spell acts the same as the *Dungeon World* cleric spell **Cause Fear**, which can be found on page 97 of the core book or on the cleric's playbook sheet. Instead of an object, you are the center of fear.

Cause Light Wounds

Level 1

NECROMANCY

Your touch causes intense pain, creating an open wound on your target doing 1d4 damage. Damage does not ignore armor.

Find Corpse

Level 1

NECROMANCY

Casting this spell will lead you to the nearest dead body. You might need to bring a shovel.

Magic Missile

Level 1

EVOCATION

This is the same spell as the wizard's version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 151 or on the wizard's playbook spell sheet.

Soul Plague

Level 1

NECROMANCY

A green orb of malice and hate surrounds the target, forcing them to cry out in pain and inflicting 1d8 damage.

Speak with Dead

Level 1

NECROMANCY

This is the same spell as the cleric version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 97 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.

3RD LEVEL**Animate Dead** Level 3 *NECROMANCY*

This is the same spell as the cleric version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 98 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.

Cause Moderate Wounds Level 3 *NECROMANCY*

Your touch causes a fist-sized wound to break open, causing 2d6 damage. Damage does not ignore armor.

Darkness Level 3 *NECROMANCY*

This is the same spell as the cleric version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 98 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.

Ghost Armor Level 3 *NECROMANCY*

You are surrounded by a field of swirling ghosts that give +2 to your armor for as long as you can concentrate. You take -1 to all spell casting attempts while using **Ghost Armor**.

Hold Undead Level 3 *NECROMANCY*

Pick an undead target and hold them in place for as long as you can concentrate. You take -1 to all spell casting attempts while using **Hold Undead**.

Sleep Level 3 *ENCHANTMENT*

This is the same spell as the wizard's version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 152 or on the wizard's playbook spell sheet.

5TH LEVEL***Cause Critical Wounds***

Level 5

NECROMANCY

Your touch makes deep slashes on your target, causing 3d6 damage. Damage does not ignore armor.

Death Mask

Level 5

NECROMANCY

You change your appearance to look like the recently dead. After the target is slain, simply touch their face and you become them. You get their voice, look, and even memories from the past year. While this effect is ongoing, you cast spells at a -1.

Summon Undead

Level 5

NECROMANCY

An undead monster appears and helps you in any way it can. You control it like your character, with access only to basic moves. It has a +1 to all stats, 1 HP, and uses your damage dice. The undead monster also gets your choice of 1d6 of the following traits:

- It has a +2 in one stat instead +1.
- It can ***Cause Fear*** like the cleric's first-level spell (see page 97 of the *Dungeon World* core book).
- It has a blood-sucking grapple that does 1d8 damage.
- It is powerful. It gets a +2 to its HP to each time you take this option.
- It has a link to you. You can see and speak through it.

Based on the traits you choose, the GM will tell you what type of undead monster you summon. It will remain with you until it is slain or you dismiss it. While this spell is ongoing, all other spell casting is at -1.

Trap Soul

Level 5

NECROMANCY

This is the same spell as the cleric version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 99 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.

7TH LEVEL**Cloudkill**

Level 7

SUMMONING

This is the same spell as the wizard's version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 154 or on the wizard's playbook spell sheet.

Ghoul

Level 7

NECROMANCY

You call forth the universe's negative energy and transform a humanoid target into a ghoul that fights for you. It will follow you until you dismiss it or it is killed. If you dismiss it, it will run off and join others of its type. You may not create another ghoul while you have one under your control. Ask the GM for the ghoul stats, which are located on page 258 of the *Dungeon World* core book.

Mark of Death

Level 7

NECROMANCY

This is the same spell as the cleric version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 100 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.

Reaper

Level 7

NECROMANCY

When you lose all your hit points, as a dying move you can cast this spell and the Reaper will take a different soul. You pick a target and they die instantly. You gain any hit points they had when struck down by the Reaper up to your max. The Reaper disappears once the target has been chosen. You must be dying to cast this spell.

Sever

Level 7

NECROMANCY

This is the same spell as the cleric version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 100 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.

Shadow Attack

Level 7

NECROMANCY

Casting this spell allows you to reach through a target's shadow and attack them, including casting another spell. You can choose a number of targets up to your level to attack simultaneously, but for each target over the first, you receive a -1 to your attack, max -3. Damage does not ignore armor.

9TH LEVEL***Antipathy***

Level 9

ENCHANTMENT

This is the same spell as the wizard version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 155 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.

Consume Unlife

Level 9

NECROMANCY

This is the same spell as the cleric version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 101 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.

Note: *You can consume the unlife of an undead you have created or summoned.*

Cripple

Level 9

NECROMANCY

You break every bone in a target's body with merely a gesture, leaving them writhing on the floor until they are killed. When crippled, they have no defense or means of escape.

Mass Animate Undead

Level 9

NECROMANCY

You can raise up to 20 zombies or skeletons at a time that will follow your every command until they are struck down again or dismissed. If they are struck down, they can be reanimated later. You can cast this spell up to 5 times and control up to 100 undead. While this spell is ongoing, all other spells are cast at a -1 per times it is cast, up to -3. You must be in an area where there are enough skeletons and corpses to mass animate, otherwise only corpses nearby will animate.

Plague

Level 9

NECROMANCY

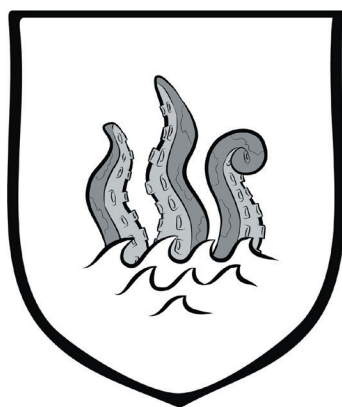
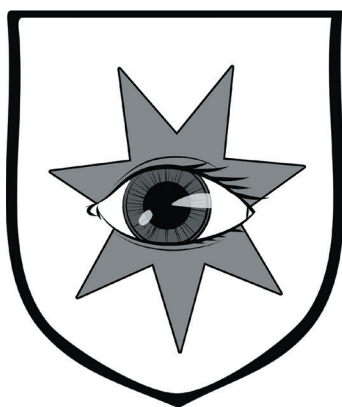
This is the same spell as the cleric version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 101 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.

Soul Gem

Level 9

NECROMANCY

This is the same spell as the wizard version in the *Dungeon World* core book on page 155 or on the cleric's playbook spell sheet.



NATIONS & LANDS

NATIONS & LANDS

This chapter is an in-depth resource for GMs, designed to give details, color, and depth to the nations and wild areas that make up Rothaen. You can, of course, change them however you like to make them fit your campaign.

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ACRADON ISLANDS

ABITH

ABADOS

ICE SEA

VAL'S CURSE

IROS

EMERALD
OCEAN

ACUM

OLEIS

YULIMA

MOLATI
HORDE

CHIATEX

RITONA

TUTACAMI

CIXT

MAXADEMIS

KOSAR

HELLIEAN
ISLANDS

KECK
OCEAN

N



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KILOMETERS

GINVER

GEVICH ISLANDS

RUSAL

SEA
LOW
SHAL

KIVCA

JÖTUNN

IVALE

THE WILDS

DI SCALDVAL

ACEANA

ATHIX
EMPIRE

ULENVIN

DANNOUS
OCEAN

ATHALOS
VICTOIRE
REPUBLIC

KEYS

PIRATE'S SEA

EULIOM

ORLAMAIN

NODEN

BLOOD
ORC
TERRITORY

CARTHIC

KAHADAL

ASI

BA'LES

ALA-DEEM
SEA

WISGO

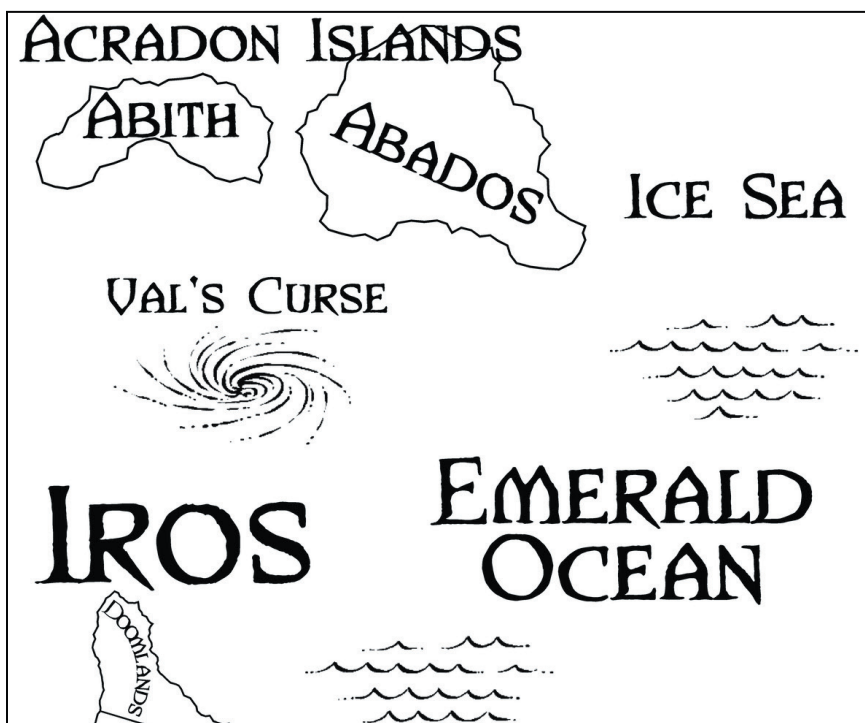
MALO
CRYSON

TASEKI
EMPIRE

MURWATA
ISLAND

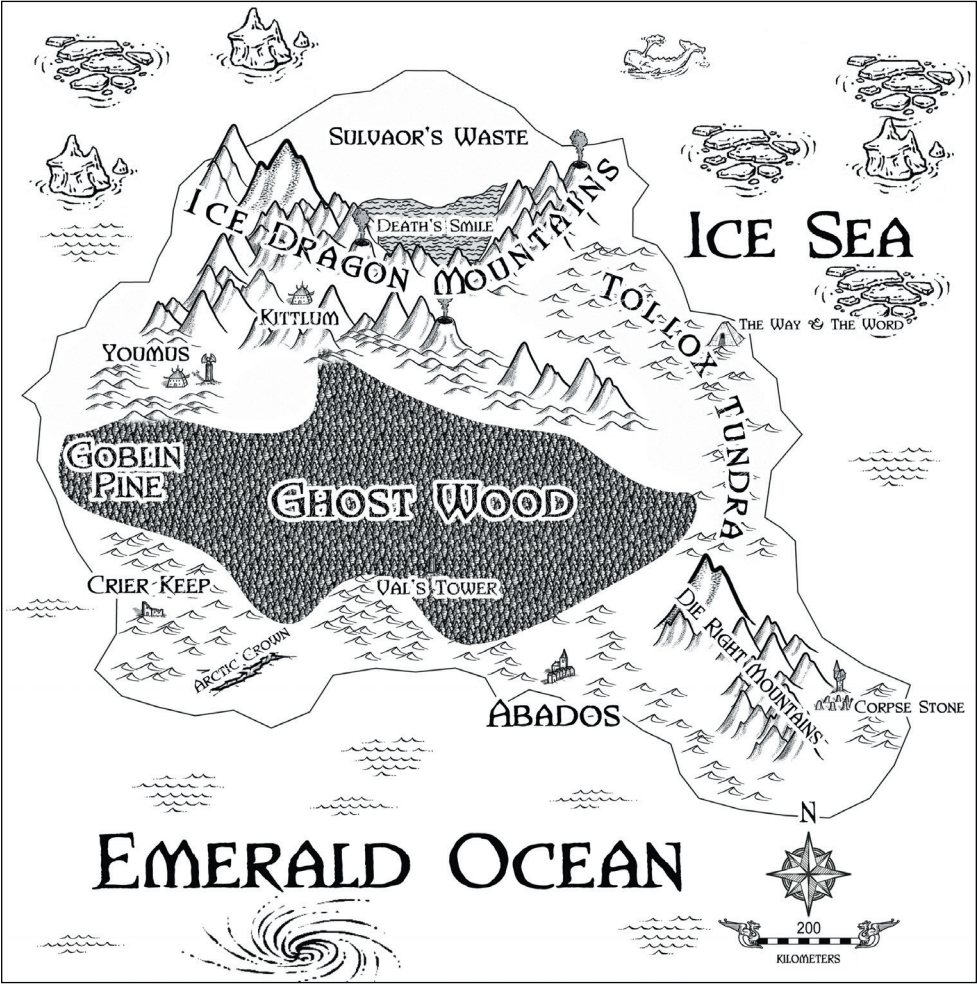
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ACRADON ISLANDS

Abados, Abith



ABADOS

Undead Oligarchy, Slave Camp

Abados is the easternmost island of the Acradon Islands. In the north are the Ice Dragon Mountains where massive caves honeycomb the rock, creating homes for arctic beasts like ancient ice dragons. On the southern shore, just below the Ghost Wood, is Abados City, a fetid decaying haven for the undead; this city-state is the only settlement on the island. To the east of Abados City are the Krackcowl Mountains, the location of the Mines of the Damned. Here Abados uses slaves to unearth gold and other precious metals.



The temperature on the island is always below freezing, with strong arctic storms striking often. Daylight only lasts 6 hours, making it perfect for the undead residence.

ABADOS CITY

Dangerous, Undead, Lawful

Abados City is the religious center for the Cult of Mortus (see page 414) and a sanctuary for vile, gore-consuming evil. Many of the living populace arrive as slaves, brought by gold-hungry pirates. The price for such cargo is high due to the threat of Val's Curse, the huge maelstrom kilometers from the coast that swallows ships whole.

The buildings are drab, frozen structures mostly devoid of warmth. There is no art, fashion, or bright colors beyond that in the Undead Council's own chambers. Slaves wear the tattered clothing of their past lives with battered furs to keep from freezing to death. The sailors who do business here have a pub at the docks called The Rust Haul where you can find some bad music and worse beer. It is clear from the bleak decor of this city that the undead who rule it have little care for mortal beauty or comfort.

General Val Yustep founded Abados over seven hundred years ago after leaving her ancestral home in Asi. Her past is shrouded in mystery, though it is known that at one time she served under Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri. Rumor has it that she may have had a hand in his banishment as well.

She is a tall, beautiful woman with long thick curly hair and a disarming smile, which she uses to make her meals feel at ease. General Yustep spends many hours studying magic, history, war, and human culture, sealed away in her tower on the edge of the Ghost Wood. Her servants include both undead and living subjects who tend to her every need. Below the tower is a network of tunnels where humans are let loose so she can hunt. She also allows other creatures to lair there: it's good for security and adds an extra level of fun to her dinners—first one to find the mortal gets the heart.

Val Yustep is measured in her governance. She only acts in council matters when asked for her opinion, otherwise she leaves it to them. The city runs incredibly well all on its own, thus allowing Val to study, hunt, and plot. What she is plotting, no one knows.

THE COUNCIL

- ◆ Count Bron: *Lich, Right Hand to General Yustep, Cunning, Ruthless*
- ◆ Russell Grimstaff: *Human, Dean of Abados University of the Necromantic Arts, Powerful*
- ◆ Aseem: *Vampire, Elite Sword Fighter, Head of the Scythe Guard*
- ◆ Ji-Xin: *Ghost, Leader of the Cult of Mortus, Ancient, Unstable, Murderous*
- ◆ Sir Rothhand: *Death Knight, Military Advisor, Ambitious*
- ◆ Catilies: *Human Pirate, Dock Master, Greedy, Calculating*
- ◆ Frillik: *Vampire, Val's "Son", Master of Spies, Cunning*

THE SCYTHE GUARD

The city is patrolled by the Scythe Guard, undead officers sown together from several body parts and brought to life with necrotomic energy. Laws in Abados favor the undead and the rich, so the Scythe Guard only punish low-class living mortals. They hunt down runaway slaves, patrol the streets for illegal feeding, and keep the peace on the docks. There are no courts in Abados: justice is dealt on the spot by the Scythe Guard.

Scythe Guard

Group, Teamwork, Undead

Sword (1d6+x, close, messy)

5 HP 1 Armor

x = the total number of Scythe Guards present, up to +4

Special Qualities: Attacks in groups of three or four; Fights to the death; Limb scavenger

Put together with heavy thread, rusted staples, and leather straps, members of the Scythe Guard look similar to golems made of flesh. Their body parts are usually from several different corpses, regardless of species or gender. They are hideous to see, and they will cause people with weak constitutions to flee when encountered. They only speak a few words, such as basic commands or judgments. They roam the streets and alleyways of Abados City looking for those who have broken the Undead Council's laws. If you are living and not one of the elite, you best have the right papers or the Scythe Guard might decide you'd be better off in the slave pits.

When a guard is slain, they fall into pieces that will reattach and rise again in two hours unless burned. If a part, say a hand or leg, is damaged beyond use, a guard can take what they needs from another victim. After reforming, the guard will search for its attacker until either them or the guard is destroyed.

Play to find out...

- ◆ How slaves are escaping.
- ◆ Why the council is worried about Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri.
- ◆ Who is a spy for the Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri.

GM Moves

- ◆ Check the citizens' papers.
- ◆ Seize slaves for a necromancer's experiment.
- ◆ Execute slaves to raise undead troops.

ABADOS UNIVERSITY OF THE NECROMANTIC ARTS

Dangerous, Magical, Organized

Abados University of the Necromantic Arts, or AUNA, is the finest school at which to study dark arcane magic. It is also one of the safest places to be alive in Abados, well, as long as you are a good student. The head of the school, Russell Grimstaff the Fourth, is in his late eighties, blind, and almost devoid of all humanity. It is said that soon he will make the leap from human to lich. Under him is a group of teachers who run the school. Students who catch the negative attention of Grimstaff don't last long, and no one who fails their courses leaves alive. The school itself is in the center of town, a black onyx structure that rises up and slashes at the heavens.

There is a crisis at the school that, for now, is only known by the staff: death magic is becoming weak and can fail at random times. In some extreme cases, spells are having a completely different effect than intended. Grimstaff and his colleagues are trying to discern the issue, but so far have found nothing. With Grimstaff getting close to crossing over to lichdom, he is worried about the magic fluctuation interfering with his plans. For now, they have been able to hide what is going on, but if the effects spread past the school, it could mean the end of Abados.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What is changing magic at the school.
- ◆ The secret plans of Grimstaff for the city.
- ◆ What happened to the last professor of poisons and potions.

GM Moves

- ◆ Accept new students.
- ◆ Enslave failing students.
- ◆ Make magic fail for one night.

GHOST WOOD

Dangerous, Haunted, Tropical

The Ghost Wood is a large pine forest north of Abados City. The groan of spirits, often mistaken for wind, fills the wood. When a person dies on the island, their soul can be drawn and trapped here. With the large number of slaves who die in Abados, the wood is crowded with ghosts. The energy given off by these poor souls is used by the necromancy school and General Val in their magical experiments. Once a soul's energy is completely drained, the essence of that person is gone forever. If you happen to die on the island, you should make the ***Spirit Drain*** move before making the ***Last Breath*** move.

Spirit Drain

When you reach 0 HP while on Abados, before making the ***Last Breath*** move you must see if your soul is automatically sucked into the Ghost Wood. Roll +nothing—yup, you get no bonus because the wood's pull is that strong. On a 7+, you resist the pull of the Ghost Wood and precede to Death's gate, where you will make the ***Last Breath*** move. On a 6-, your soul is trapped in the Ghost Wood, forever churning in the winds of the forest.

Those exploring the Ghost Wood are surprised by how warm the forest floor is. It is almost tropical, and although the trees are dusted in snow, it seldom touches the ground. If flying over it, one would see steam rising through the snow-capped treetops. Sunrays pierce the snow-covered canopy above just enough to allow vegetation to grow. Scattered throughout the wood are hot springs that hint at a warm network of water that crisscrosses just under the ground. Rain in the forest is from melted snow after it hits the warm boundary created by the hot springs. There are rumors of a cave that connects to Val's tower through her hunting catacombs.

Due to the unique nature of the wood, the creatures found here tend to be more tropical than arctic in nature, and the wood is filled with creatures constantly hunting one another. This is one of the few forests in Rothaen that is devoid of a Pwati elf presence.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If the ghost population is fading away.
- ◆ Besides magic, what else is feeding off the ghost energy.
- ◆ Which dragon makes its home on the forest floor.

GM Moves

- ◆ Show a lost city, still inhabited by a strange culture.
- ◆ Allow the party to find the entrance to Val's catacombs.
- ◆ Reveal a way for a ghost of the forest to be free, but at a great cost.

ICE DRAGON MOUNTAINS

Perilous, Frozen

The Ice Dragon Mountains might as well be on another planet because few can survive the trek here. This tall mountain range is one of the coldest places on Rothaen and is extremely hostile to most living things. The only creatures to be found above ground are ice giants and the grand elk they hunt. Other humanoids must have magical protection to survive on the slopes for longer than a day. It is easy to get lost due to snowstorms or die by falling down a hidden crevasse.

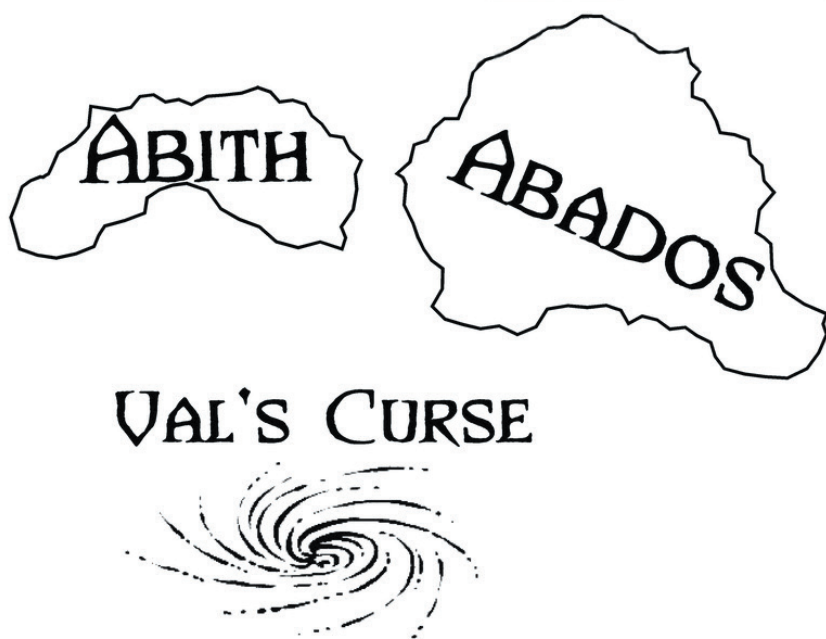
Under the mountains are huge caves that honeycomb throughout the entire range. The temperature is always well below freezing, and the howling wind can drive a person insane. Several ice dragons have lairs here. The caves are large enough for these beasts to come and go as they please. Ice dragons are vain, greedy creatures and, as such, hoard gold brought back from their travels—if your party is brave enough or insane enough, they could strike it rich.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What strange magic pools can be found in the dragon's lair.
- ◆ What is in the sealed vault below the mountains.
- ◆ What makes it snow all the time inside one of the caves.

GM Moves

- ◆ Reveal a path to a Drucolen blight warren deep below the mountains.
- ◆ Reveal an ancient portal to a god's realm.
- ◆ Let the ice melt and free an ancient wizard or undead.



ABITH

Tribal

Abith, the mountainous sister island of Abados, is shrouded in mystery. The gigantic maelstrom known as Val's Curse, just kilometers off the coast, keeps ships from making landfall. The only way onto the island is over the narrow channel from Abados. The waters here flow quickly and there is a huge hungry creature that lives just under the surface.



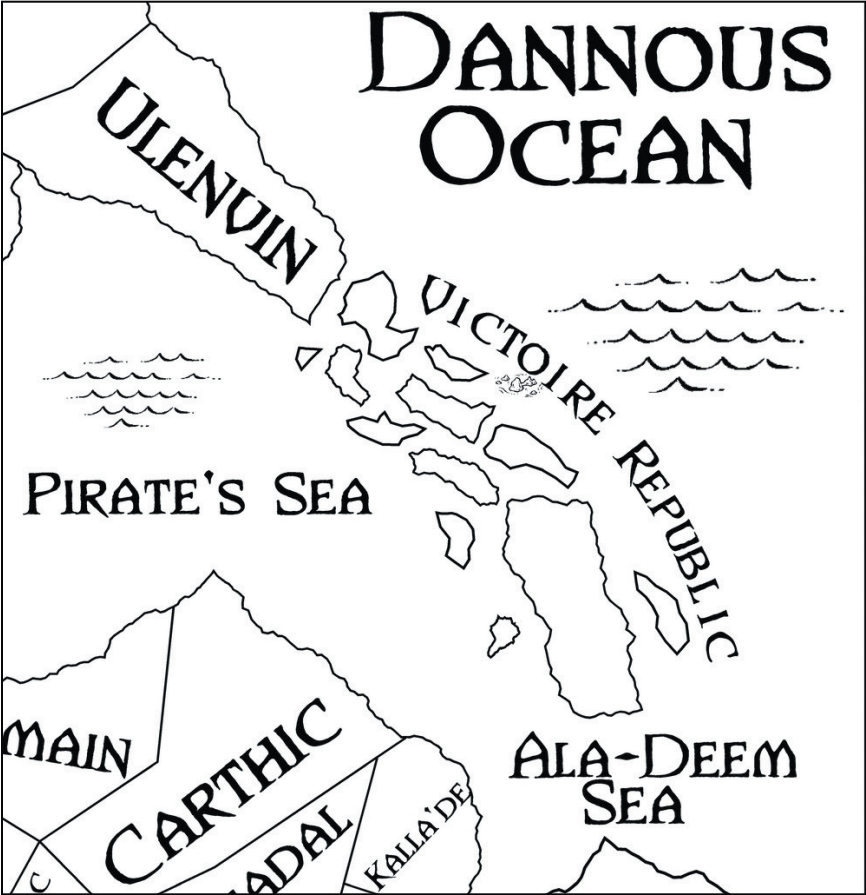
Those who make it back from Abith tell of wild human tribes riding dire sabretooth snow lions. It is a wild land, and its secrets are waiting to be uncovered.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who the king of the ice dragons is.
- ◆ Where the lost Cuik dwarf tribe lives.
- ◆ If you can conquer the frozen tundra and build a utopia.

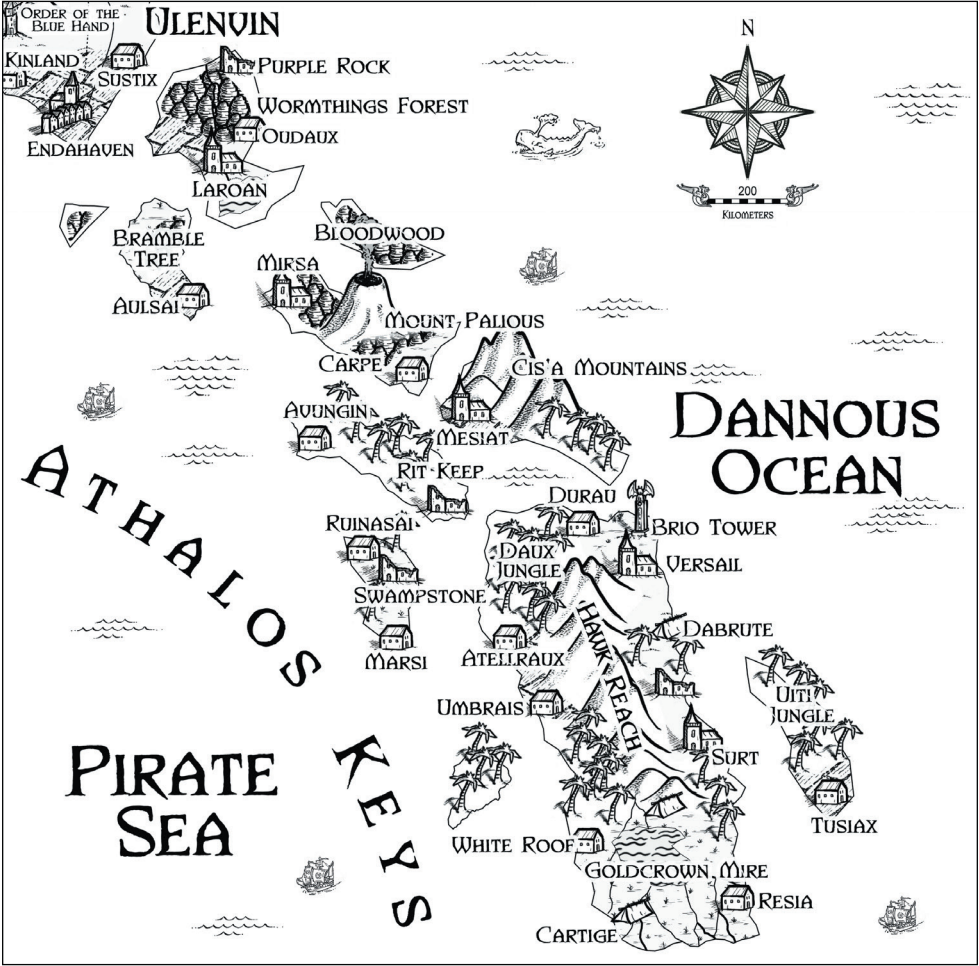
GM Moves

- ◆ Create an ice storm that causes the players' ship to run aground.
- ◆ Reveal a long-lost temple in the mountains.
- ◆ Introduce a friendly human tribe who needs the group's help.



ATHALOS KEYS

Victoire Republic



VICTOIRE REPUBLIC

Democratic Republic

Even before the Athix Empire Civil War, the rebellious Victoire Republic was sending pirate ships out to board merchant ships and raid small villages along the Ulenvin and Carthic coast. The Athix navy did their best to stop this, but when the war erupted on the mainland, Victoire Republic split off from Athix quickly, much the same way Kosar and Helliëan did. The republic is a chain of islands called



the Athalos Keys, south of Ulenvin and north of Wisgo. The islands form a boundary between the Dannous Ocean and the Pirate Sea. The keys have several islands and stretch around 4000 kilometers north to south, making it easy for pirates to set up secret hideouts and avoid capture. The Carthic navy has tried without success to stop pirate activity from Victoire, however, the area is just too big for them to patrol.

The Victoire Republic government is a lightly regulated council whose members represent the cities and towns of the keys. They meet to talk about issues, such as the Carthic navy, that affect the entire island chain. For the most part, though, each island governs itself and its local waters. If a threat from sea is too large, an island can call for help and the surrounding islands must respond. If they do not, those islands' leaders will be dealt with harshly. Not having a strong central government makes it harder for Carthic or Athix to deal a decisive blow to the pirates.

Besides piracy, the local economy thrives on fishing in the warm waters and farming rare spices that can be traded. The Athalos Keys trade strictly with merchant guilds and mob families to get their goods to market, avoiding the Carthic government all together. The islands are warm and breezy most of the year, with heavy rains in the spring and fall. Growing season is year-round. This means easy trade all the time, especially with pass-through pirate waters, making merchants of the islands rich beyond compare.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The thrill of swinging from the rigging of a pirate ship.
- ◆ The danger in taking on a Carthic war vessel.
- ◆ The secrets of the Keys.

GM Moves

- ◆ Hit them with hurricane winds and kilometer-high waves!
- ◆ Reveal a map to sunken treasure.
- ◆ Besiege a pirate hideout.

VERSAIL

Versail was the seat of power for the Athalos Keys when they were vassals to Athix. After independence was declared, the city became the home of the council that meets every three months to talk about current events and threats to the republic. As such, its influence, power, and wealth has grown. The cost of this power is that they are targeted by nations who want them out of the pirate business.

The city is run by Chancellor Jacqueline Moshont, who was a pirate captain herself until three years ago when she was elected to her current position. Moshont is anti-regulation and pirate-friendly. She works closely with leaders from Kosar and Helliëan to maintain control over local waters ways for pirates. The chancellor doesn't see pirates as criminals, which is why she views Carthic's aggression towards them as an attack on the republic's sovereignty. To Moshont, the pirates are military units who are controlling the waters and making sure old super powers, such as the Athix Empire, never have dominion over the waves again. Now, to an outsider, this view twists certain facts to justify piracy, but to the people of the Victoire Republic it is truth; a small government with a strong navy is what they want.

The city is a paradise, with warm weather and perfect sunsets. There are no homeless here. Even though Versail is not heavy on regulation, they do use funds to help the citizens with a basic income if they cannot work on a ship. Versail uses the taxes collected from foreign merchants, as well as their cut from the pirate ships, to provide assistants to those who are unable to work, like the elderly, new mothers, and children. However, if you are fit and can work, you are expected to get a job. The biggest health issue on the island is alcoholism,

which is regarded as a weakness of character. People who are addicted to drink or other substances are usually put on ships and sent elsewhere. Those with more traditional illnesses are tended to by nurses and clerics from the local temple.

There is not a single local religion. Because of the influx of people from around the world, all major religions, save for those from Iros, are represented here. This has led to one strong belief among the cities' peoples: religion is a personal thing that should be left at the temple and kept within one's home. Displaying religious symbols, unless you are a cleric or priest, is considered very rude.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The real reason there are no homeless people in Versail.
- ◆ The plot of the temples to gain more control over the islands.
- ◆ What the pirates smuggle in to gain favor with the chancellor.

GM Moves

- ◆ Flood the streets.
- ◆ Commit a horrible act against the weak.
- ◆ Show a new side of the city.

WORMTHINGS FOREST

On the island closest to Ulenvin is a wooded area called Wormthings Forest. It is a descriptive name for what lurks here, if not a bit uninspired. The forest dominates the northern portion of the island, but even with its size and lure of resources, few humans dare explore it. The eponymous wormthings are called grubblings and they are the stuff of nightmares. A grubbling is about 5 centimeters long, has a glossy black coat, and can move quickly on hundreds of tiny legs. Grubbling mouths allow them to bore into the skin of their victims and burrow up to the brain, where they kill the victim and take over the corpse, acting as a puppet master. They themselves have large brains and are cunning hunters, hiding in trees and waiting for prey to drop onto. There are other monsters that live here, but the forest is defined by grubblings.

Grubblings are not natural creatures. They were created by an ancient fey queen named Uis who wanted people to stay out of her forest. She created grubblings to be efficient hunters and to scare off humans—it worked. Logging camps

were abandoned as workers were killed and rumors of the “wormthings” spread to the other islands and the mainland. The problem was, though, that the grublings enjoyed fey flesh as much as human, and they started hunting the queen’s subjects after the humans left. Many fey were too small for the grublings to take over, so they just devoured them whole.

The forest is full of hosts, now controlled by grublings and slowly rotting away. These poor victims include dryads and tree nymphs. These puppets will attack to make it easier for other grublings to infect their victim. They recognize their own, even in a host, and will help each other subdue new targets. It is easy to tell if a being has been infected because they speak differently, often slurring words, and have a shambling walk, not to mention that if it’s been a while since they turned they will look very decayed.

Grublings

Bite (1d6+1 piercing, *close, messy*)

Tiny, Intelligent

3 HP 0 Armor

Habitat: Wormthings Forest

Instinct: to hunt

- ◆ Surprise attack
- ◆ Kill and control

Grublings are only found in the Wormthings Forest, but if they ever spread beyond its boundaries it could mean the end of humanoid domination. When a grubling takes over a host they have access to all of the skills of the victim, including spell casting, as well as having the same hit points and armor. Grublings attach themselves with their first attack, followed by quickly burrowing under the skin. The victim has about five minutes to locate the creature and cut it out before it reaches the brain and kills them. PCs should use the **Cut Out a Grubling** move below if they are successfully attacked.

The corpse will decay at a slower rate than usual, meaning a host could last for up to a few years. Once a host is no longer viable, the grubling splits into two and starts hunting for another host. Outside their host, they are very weak, and if they cannot find a new one within one year they will die. A host does not need to be human, any creature with a large enough brain will do, even magical or fey creatures. The smallest creatures they can attach to are raccoon-sized. They have trouble making it through hard skin or armor.

Cut Out a Grubling

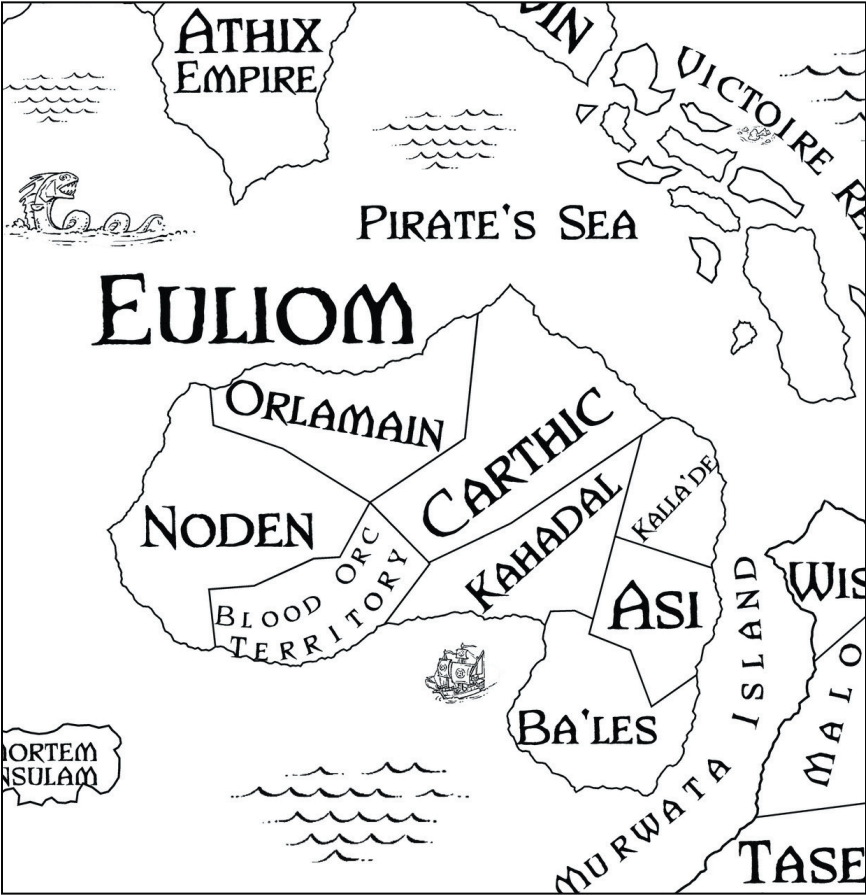
When a grubling successfully attacks, you must quickly cut it out. You or a friend must grab a knife and go to work. Roll +DEX. On a 10+, you can remove the grubling and take only one point of damage. On a 7-9, you remove the grubling—it is sloppy and painful, but you do it and take 6 points of damage. If this takes you to 0 points, immediately do the ***Last Breath*** move on page 72 of the *Dungeon World* book. On a 6-, you are dead and no ***Last Breath*** move can be made. You are now a puppet NPC; hand your character sheet to the GM and create a new one.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What happened to the fey queen's realm.
- ◆ If there any fey left in these woods.
- ◆ If the grublins can be stopped.

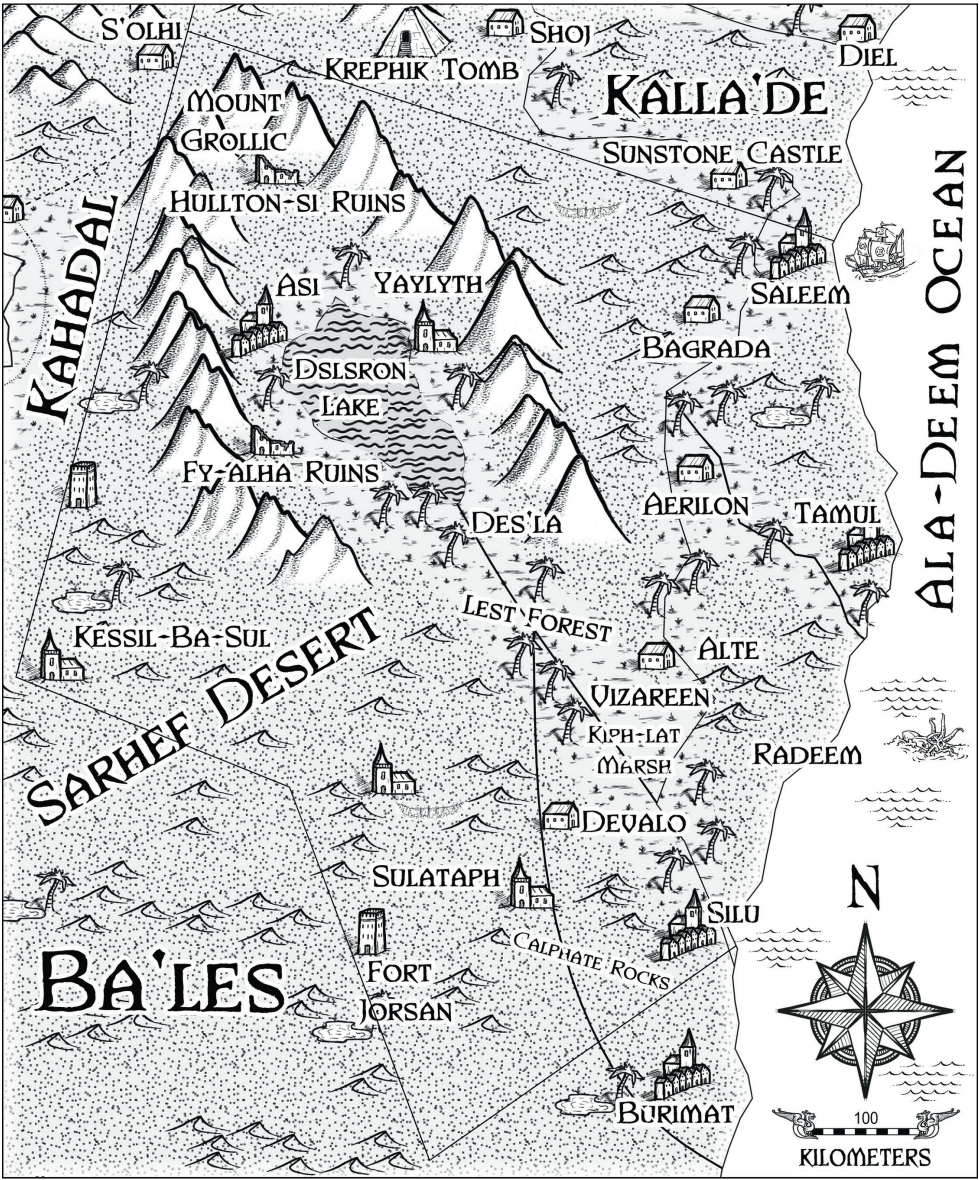
GM Moves

- ◆ Attack without mercy.
- ◆ Strip away defenses.
- ◆ Cause confusion.



EULIOM

*Asi, Ba'Les, Blood Orc Territory, Carthic,
Kahadal, Kalla'De, Noden, Orlamain*



ASI

Absolute Monarchy

Considered the first nation of humans, Asi stood witness to the rise and fall of many nations. Known for its ancient customs and very active gods, this land is both wondrous and terrifying. Once the pharaohs of old Asi ruled all the Sarhef Desert, now the new Asi is just a small portion of its past glory. Sultan Marhi Ra-di is in his late 80s and very concerned that his children are not up to the task of ruling after he is gone.



He has tried to reform the bureaucracy, but nothing moves quickly in Asi and his children have begun to raise questions about the sultan's fitness to lead, hoping to force him out.

The sultan must also worry about Kahadal's Amed-Ri, the Pharaoh Lich. Amed-Ri took the throne of Kahadal over a year ago and closed the borders. No one is allowed in or out. Surrounding nations fear that the lich could invade at any moment. Unfortunately, none of the desert nations are strong enough to strike first. Sultan Marhi Ra-di is doing his best to pull his country out of the past while preparing for a war with the undead. He is looking at Carthic's government as a roadmap for what he wants for his people, but time is short.

The royal court is made up of nobility picked by the sultan to govern areas of Asi. These are not titles passed down, but they are life-long appointments. The sultan is an absolute monarch, but these families hold great power themselves. Sultan Marhi's first task must be to give up some of his power and give the people the vote. He has declared that open elections will be held after the festival of the gods at the end of the year. This is something the people have never had before as they had always lived under a strict caste system.

Even with the sultan's new progressive laws, there is one group of people who live in Asi that are not seen as equals: the Rincrin. The Rincrin were magical constructs created by Pharaoh Amed-Ri, (see page 63) and, now that they have become mortal, they spend their time trying to get equal rights for their communities under the Asi government. Most people don't trust the Rincrin no matter what feats of courage or acts of goodness they perform, especially now that Amed-Ri is back. Some of the younger Rincrin have taken to the streets in protest of their lack of rights, shining a light on the nation's bigotry.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Which of the sultan's children is thinking of killing their father.
- ◆ Who is spying in the courts for Kahadal.
- ◆ About the plans of the sultan to pass his crown to the people, not to his children.

GM Moves

- ◆ Block the passage of reforms to the royal court.
- ◆ Hire a group to spy on Kahadal.
- ◆ Create political intrigue by shoving the characters into the middle of the sultan's battle with his heirs over power.

ASI CITY

Over-populated, Corrupt, Dangerous

Asi City is the current seat of government for the nation, as well as being its center of culture and wealth. Built on the shores of Dslsron Lake, the city has bustling docks that move goods swiftly in and out year-round. The snow pack from the surrounding mountains supplies the local rivers with fresh water and, though Asi is a desert nation, the valley the city sits in stays a perfect 23 °C to 27 °C most of the year. The surrounding fertile valley grows herbs and spices found nowhere else in the world. Local mines supply precious metals to the rest of Asi as well as Kalla'De. Foundries and blacksmithies work tirelessly to create master works, while stone workers build temples of massive carved sandstone to the gods, old and new. The sandstone blocks are brought upriver from quarries several kilometers away.

The opportunities for work and the gentle climate make Asi City the destination for many looking for a new life and, unfortunately, this has led to over-population. The city grew well past its original boulder walls years ago. The city boasts riches beyond imagine, but those riches lay in the hands of the few. If a person can get enough coin, they can live within the walls of the city proper. Poor, ramshackle districts outside the walls are pits of disease and crime for those desperately trying to break the old caste system. Cheap labor can be found here, and so the local government turns a blind eye to the problems these people have. Even the sultan, for all his progressive leanings, has not tackled solving the problem of poverty in the city.

Mayor Frisis-Disol has controlled the local government for the past ten years through his family connections and willingness to look the other way when the powerful need him to. Frisis-Disol has built a web of spies that let him monitor what is going on throughout the city, even beyond the main walls. He is usually one step ahead of his enemies. In his personal life, he is a sadist who loves to torture the defenseless. Frisis-Distol is a twisted human being who can justify his actions and feed his dark desires.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What final straw will lead to revolt.
- ◆ About the deal the Mayor has made with a local dragon.
- ◆ What illegal items the Mayor is selling to the mob families.

GM Moves

- ◆ Have police crackdown on carrying weapons or wearing armor.
- ◆ Start a fire to clear out the poor.
- ◆ Allow a local noble to torture and murder lower class citizens by blaming the deaths on the thieves' guild.

CALPHATE ROCKS

Dangerous, Hot

On the southwest boundary of Asi in the Sarhef Desert are the Calphate Rocks, massive jagged stones that reach 2 kilometers into the sky. Hot wind whips through the valleys, while frequent winds have carved the rocks slowly. This area was used thousands of years ago by nobles and pharaohs as a burial site to guard against tomb robbers long before Pharaoh's Rest (see page 142); the condition and remoteness make the rocks the perfect place to hide tombs of royalty. It never rains here and the heat can kill the unprotected. Of course, this doesn't stop those who know of the region's past from trying to find the lost tombs.

The tombs were built under the valley floor and were interconnected over time. Sealed, never to be opened, the entryways were hidden to keep out unwanted guests. If a person breaches a tomb, booby-traps, monster guardians, and its maze-like design help protect those who are buried here. Some claim there is a curse protecting the interred, but there are always those willing to risk their lives for coin, fame, and knowledge.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Where the assassins from Kahadal are.
- ◆ How to fight with the Rincrin for equal rights.
- ◆ Why the Oasis Wars rage across the deserts.

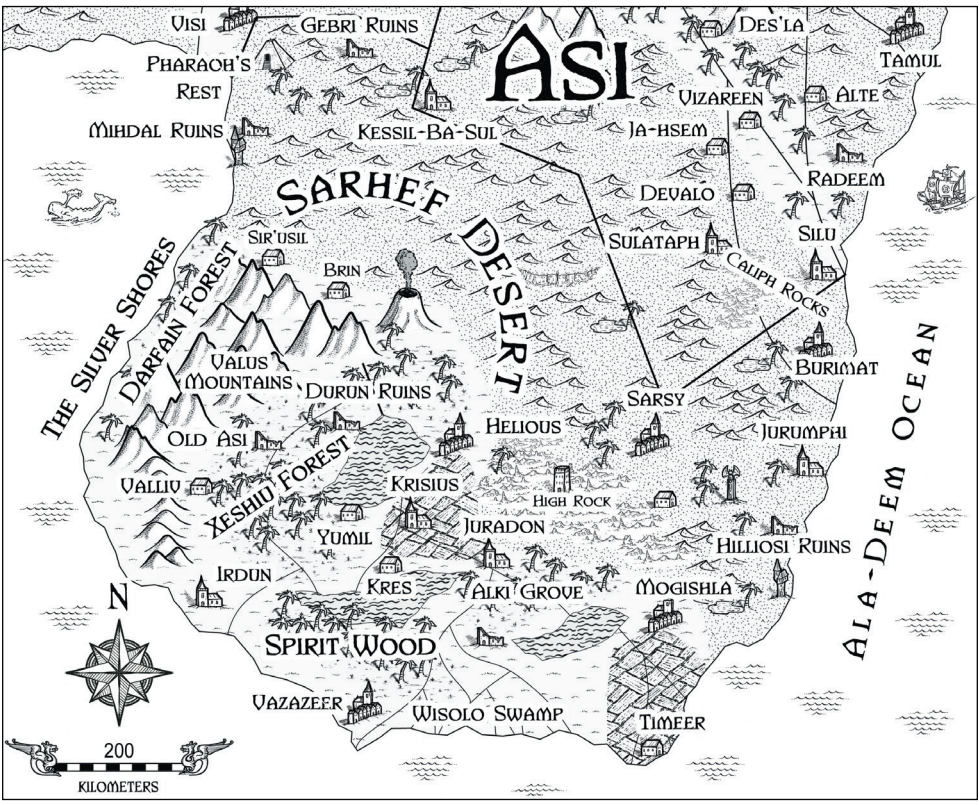
GM Moves

- ◆ Show a new path into the tomb complex.
- ◆ Hinder the party with an unexpected sand storm.
- ◆ Shake the earth, sending sharp rocks falling from above.

SARHEF DESERT

Windy, Dangerous, Dry

The Sarhef Desert is massive and is part of Kahadal, Kalla'De, Asi, and Ba'Les. The average temperature in the desert is 30 °C, but in the summer months it can reach 50 °C or higher. This heat drops rapidly at night and can hit below freezing during the winter months. In addition to the heat are the sand storms. Powerful winds move large amounts of sand around the desert. This sometimes reveals long lost cities or temples, which can disappear just as quickly.



BA'LES

Theocratic Matriarchy

“There is only one Goddess, and her name is Gi’hina. She created the world and all life on it. Evil is born from not respecting her gifts to us. Those who turn their backs on Gi’hina find nothing but emptiness. Her love is easy to attain: love each other and give yourself fully to being kind.”

—from the Holy scrolls of Gi’hina

Ba’Les is the first country to embrace the teachings of the prophet Hellan Fel and is the only monotheistic nation in Rothaen. Their beliefs are highly controversial, bringing calls for holy crusades from Carthic, Kalla’De, and Asi to reestablish the old gods, but Kahadal and Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri are a much bigger threat right now and so none of these governments will dare send troops to Ba’Les anytime soon.



Ba’Les is a matriarchy based on the teachings of the temples of Gi’hina. Though men can hold some lower governmental positions, women are the true leaders here. Gi’hina only accepts female priests, but men can serve in the temples as Speakers of the Goddess. Men can perform masses, but they do not take part in the high holy days of Gi’hina or the blessings of the family and home.

The government is also a theocracy. Food, shelter, work, and medical care are strictly controlled by a city’s temples. Merchants are heavily taxed to help pay for social programs. This in turn means most merchants do their best to hide profits from the tax collector. The nation is rich in resources, including rare spices, precious metals, and salt. National aquaculture creates a huge surplus of food, which the temples sell to neighboring countries.

There are a few things to note when a party is entering this nation or plans to start here as citizens. Outward worship of any god other than Gi'hina is prohibited and will lead to imprisonment or sometimes death. Women are leaders, and so it is expected that women adventurers speak for the group when interacting with anyone in Ba'Les. It took foreign diplomats a surprisingly long time to figure this out—they would send envoys who would return saying no one would see them—when they started sending women diplomats things changed.

Wearing weapons and armor within a city is legal for a woman, but never for men. Any abuse of women is punishable by death. Treasure found within the boundaries of Ba'Les is taxable by 50% of its worth. Magic items are considered property of the state and must be turned over. Not paying taxes or turning over items is punishable by imprisonment and maiming. The right amount of coin in the right palm can make these taxes go away.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The ways of the new goddess.
- ◆ The inner realms of Pharaoh's Rest.
- ◆ Who the non-believers are and whether you'll help them escape.

GM Moves

- ◆ Search for undeclared treasure.
- ◆ Demand obedience from male adventures.
- ◆ Send missionaries to other countries.

OLD ASI

Festering Evil, Demented Cults, Lost Treasures

Sages have long held that the desert nation of Euliom is the cradle of human civilization and that the nation of Asi was the first kingdom. Before humans banded together and began to create villages, the land was untamed by the older races. The Greystik kept to themselves in the mountains and, though there were a few Pwati elves, they were nothing like the Asue'Tai of Jorginver who created an empire.

The nation of Asi stood for thousands of years, ruled by pharaohs and worshipping the old gods. At that time, the capital city was in what is now Ba'Les and was simply called Asi. It was a huge, marvelous city of sandstone gilded in gold and silver. Brightly colored monuments were constructed to honor the gods and the pharaoh. The city sat in the Xeshiu Forest, near the Valus Mountains where mines produced massive amounts of ore which kept the city rich. But as time went on, pharaohs moved the capital to suit their personal needs and political aspiration. Once the mines dried up, Asi declined.

Now, the ruins of the city, referred to as Old Asi, await explorers to discover their secrets. The surrounding jungle has spread throughout the lime and sandstone blocks. Old crumbling buildings have become lairs, and the ancient catacombs beneath the city are teeming with a festering evil. There is even talk of a small cult of mad people living there who still worship the ancient gods and plot to bring back the old ways.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What evil lurks in the catacombs.
- ◆ What treasures remain in the decaying palaces.
- ◆ Why the ancient Asi people really left the grand city.

GM Moves:

- ◆ Beset the area with poisonous dangers.
- ◆ Reveal the secrets under the choking vines.
- ◆ Attack with the mad cult of Old Asi.

PHARAOH'S REST

Sacred, Dangerous, Full of Lore

Pharaoh's Rest is a collection of massive pyramids and several smaller burial sites near the border of modern day Kahadal. Thousands of years ago, the great pharaohs were brought here to make the journey to the afterlife. Even Amed-Ri, pharaoh lich of Kahadal, was supposed to be interred here... but he had other plans. He built the Eternal Pyramids far to the north, making his father the last ruler of Asi to be buried at Pharaoh's Rest.

This vast region of tombs is a testament to ancient Asi engineering. There are eight gigantic pyramids clustered within a few kilometers of each other, surrounded by dozens of smaller pyramids and countless underground tombs with catacombs connecting them all. Generations of pharaohs, their families, and their servants were buried here with their treasures. For years grave robbers tried to plunder those treasures, but found the magical traps, undying guardians, and local monsters too much to handle. Adventures, on the other hand, have had more success.

Several obstacles block the way of adventurers wishing to explore Pharaoh's Rest. First are the magical sandstorms meant to keep people away from the tombs. As a person draws near to Pharaoh's Rest, the winds pick up and create waves of sand, making navigation almost impossible. Groups often find themselves several kilometers away from the site before the storm subsides. To make it past these storms, each person in the group must make the following move:

Surviving a Pharaoh's Rest Sandstorm

When traveling through the sandstorms enroute to Pharaoh's Rest, roll +WIS. On a 10+, you find your way through the sandy gales and make it to the outer edge of Pharaoh's Rest. On a 7-9, you find your way to Pharaoh's Rest, but you lose one piece of gear of your choice. On a -6, the GM picks one of the following:

- The storm lets up and you find yourself far from your destination.
- You find Pharaoh's Rest but are set upon by a monster.
- You find Pharaoh's Rest but lose 5 HP and an item of the GM's choosing.

The next obstacle is the weather. The tombs were built in an area of unrelenting heat with no major body of water nearby. Ancient priests would create water for workers, but many still died during construction. All dice rolls while in the direct sunlight are at a -1 unless magical protection is used. Wearing metal armor is like wearing your own coffin and causes a -3 to all rolls. At night the temperature drops, making travel, though still dangerous, a viable option. Desert monsters, such as the giant desert scarabs, are another threat as fresh adventurer meat will surely peak their interest. These and other desert beasts will track and attack any who enter their area.

Once a party gets past these obstacles, they then must get inside one of the tombs. The GM can make a map beforehand, or let it take shape as the players explore. Inside the tombs are traps, monsters, and magical guardians protecting the treasure. Some tomb items are cursed within the treasure hordes. These items should be defined by the GM. Players can *Spout Lore* about an item to give it a background, but they should never know if it is cursed until after the effects clue them in. It's not easy to get rid of a cursed item: it requires that the item either be returned its original location or that a priest of a good god removes the curse. The latter always turns the item into a hunk of worthless metal.

Cursed Item Effect (player picks one)

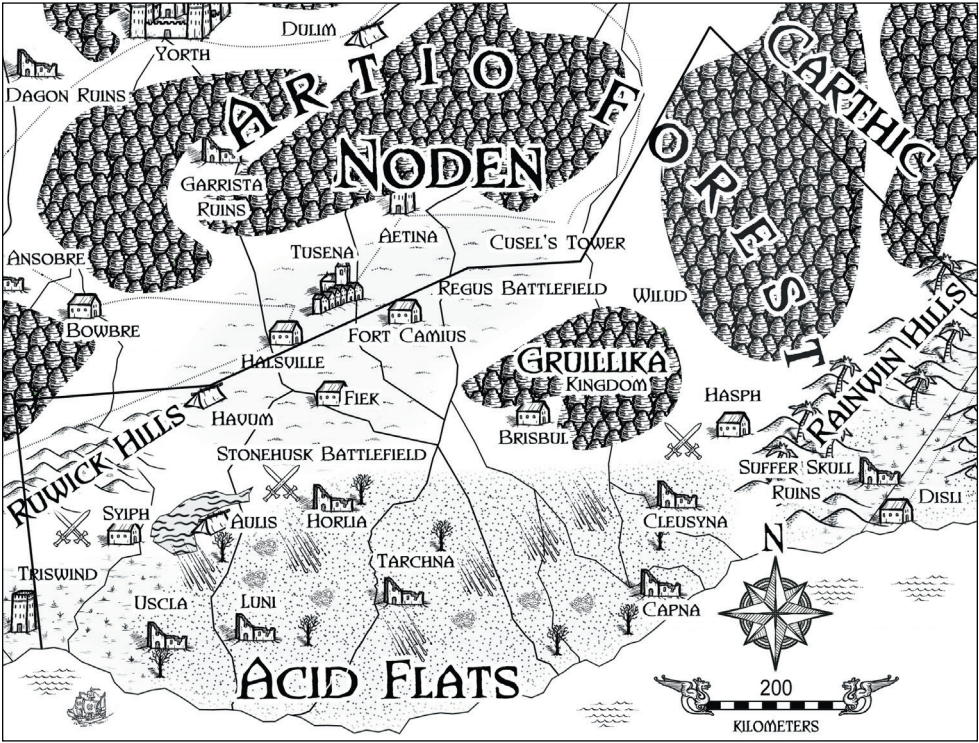
- The item makes the owner very sick, resulting -3 to CON modifier.
- The item makes the owner a klutz, resulting in a -3 to DEX modifier
- The item drives the owner mad, resulting in the inability to do any moves connected to INT or WIS.
- The item kills a random NPC that encounters the PC within in one day (time lapse is left up to the GM).
- GM's choice.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If you can survive the challenge at Pharaoh's Rest.
- ◆ What treasures were left behind.
- ◆ If the power of the old gods still holds sway here.

GM Moves:

- ◆ Use traps to force them into a corner.
- ◆ Allow the undead out of their chambers.
- ◆ Let the sand seep in and block their passage.



BLOOD ORC TERRITORY

Kratocracy (Might Makes Right)

“We remember our brothers and sisters of ivory and steel, fighting atop their gigantic mounts like titans. They fought to the last warrior, and in doing so, afforded the other clans the opportunity to mount a defense. They saved thousands of fellow Noden citizens with their sacrifice. We raise our hands to the skies in honor and remember that sacrifice of the Diasim, the Elephant Clan.”

—Druid Huo-rik of the Bear Clan

The Noden humans say that the blood orcs poured forth from the gates of Udik, a hell plane, and slaughtered all who crossed their path. They attacked the Diasim first, catching all the Noden off guard. The Diasim, also known as the Elephant Clan, mobilized as quickly as they could, but it was hopeless. The blood orc numbers were too great and the Elephant Clan fell. The rest of Noden was horrified. Of all the clans, the Diasim was the strongest; however, this strength is what saved the rest of the Noden clans. Every Diasim warrior is gone now, and their once beautiful lands have been transformed into the vile, sizzling Acid Flats. The blood orcs are far from done with conquest—they have turned their gaze on the rest of Noden and the Artio Forest.



For the past three years, the blood orcs have raided Carthic and Noden relentlessly. Neither nation knows where the horde came from. The blood orcs have a *might makes right* philosophy about life. This is not only regarding physical might, but intellectual might as well. Only cunning leaders can control the generals and their men. Loyalty is a fear-based emotion to the blood orcs. They are interested in the spoils of war and the freedom of chaos. Cruut the Unyielding would surprise most with his refined speaking style and musical ability, but he is also a cold-blooded killer playing a chess game to keep his people in line.

Outside humanoids are used as troops to invade human lands as well. Ogres, bugbears, and goblins all either work or are bullied into service. There are also rumors of cults using blood orcs in their schemes. The thought of a people brave, foolish, or insane enough to approach the blood orcs to make deals is truly frightening. Then there are the demons. Blood orcs have opened gates to Udik before and have made deals with these otherworldly creatures. A patrol of blood orcs with a demon among them is truly frightening.

Blood orc shamans use what is called Rage Magic. It is pure magical energy focused through the caster's anger. The spells are always destructive. The more hate and malice that can be conjured by the caster, the more damage the spell will do. The use of this type of magic is very dangerous and it can lead to a caster's soul burning out, leaving behind dead-eyed husks that indiscriminately attack anything in their path.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Which cult is working with the blood orcs.
- ◆ Where the demon gates are.
- ◆ Which general is close to overthrowing Cruut the Unyielding.

GM Moves

- ◆ Challenge Cruut the Unyielding's rule.
- ◆ Send small war parties to disrupt trade.
- ◆ Kidnap humans for fresh meat.



GRUILLIKA AND THE ARTIO FOREST

War Zone, Helpful Fey

There is a secret fey kingdom called Gruillika in the blood orc's area of the Artio Forest. The fey and their Pwati cousins are fighting a guerrilla war to save the forest from destruction. Concealed in huge tree trunks are the villages and towns of Gruillika. They are packed full of all types of pixies, fairies, sprites, and brownies. There are also larger fey such as nymphs, dryads, and other forest spirits who call Gruillika home. All the subjects are dedicated to repelling the orcs from the forest. They do this by causing as many problems for the orcs as they can, such as setting traps, attacking patrols, and sabotaging camps. King Dy has been working with the druids of the Noden by feeding them blood orc troop movement at great risk to his people. It is a dangerous gamble for everyone involved.

The kingdom has several portals to the fey realm hidden all over the forest. Gruillika troops use these portals to ambush blood orc patrols. These gates are being threatened by those on the other side after a patrol of blood orcs found one and went through. These orcs ended up killing several fey before being destroyed. If these gates are closed, it will make fighting the blood orcs very difficult.

Play to find out...

- ◆ How to help King Dy.
- ◆ Where to enter the fey realm.
- ◆ If the blood orcs can find another fey realm gate.

GM Moves

- ◆ Set traps to maim and kill.
- ◆ Play tricks on the blood orcs.
- ◆ Track non-fey movement.

THE SECRET CITY OF IVORY

Hidden

When the blood orcs invaded, they sacked every Elephant Clan city, burning them all to the ground, save for one, the capital city of Ivory. The Diasim fought to the last warrior but, when the invasion first began, they hid the entire city with the help of their goddess Eul. The city of Ivory holds the very old, who could no longer fight, and the young, who had yet taken part in the hunt of adulthood. They are all sleeping, waiting for Eul to wake them and restart the Elephant Clan. These people are not out of danger: the city is only invisible and moves within the borders of the blood orc territory. It could be stumbled upon by the orcs at any time. This is why the city is always moving, cloaked by the goddess's love for her remaining people.

If the secret city were to be found, one would need to get past the magic wards protecting the city. Once in, one would find themselves face to face with the Guardian, a huge elephant construct who will fight to the death to protect the city and its sleeping inhabitants. If the Guardian falls in battle, it will trumpet a death call, waking the people of Ivory and temporarily stunning the invaders, giving them a small window of time to escape.

The Guardian

Solitary, Huge, Construct

Trample (1d8+2 damage, *close, reach, forceful*)

18 HP 4 Armor

Gore (1d10+5 damage, *close, reach, forceful*)

Special Qualities: Death Trumpet, Regeneration, Thick Skin

Instinct: to protect

- ◆ Crush a person under foot
- ◆ Throw a person onto the ground

The Guardian towers above one-story buildings and its footsteps shake the ground when it walks. Its huge elephant head sits on a bipedal humanoid body, its hands are the size of hay carts, and its deep blue eyes are like small pools of magic water. Because of its divine creation, the Guardian will regenerate at the rate of 3 points a day unless burned to ashes. Once fully healed, it will hunt whomever attacked it until the target is dead or it is destroyed.

DIASIM RUINS

Haunted, Cursed

The blood orcs left no city, town, or village standing. They washed over each one like an unstoppable wave of chaotic death demons, murdering everyone. Now those settlement ruins are scattered across the land like open wounds that will never heal. These rotting graveyards were not pillaged for their wealth and still hold treasures—blood orcs have little use for coin. But take a moment and think about what that means: the Elephant Clan were good people, they lived good lives and defended nature. These sites are tragic reminders of the evil in Rothaen. Pillaging the remains of these towns is not an honorable act. Clerics, paladins, or any who follow the path of righteousness who choose to plunder a Diasim ruin may well feel the wrath of their gods.

There is one reason for a good group to go to a ruined city—to put its people to rest. Ghosts and other undead live in these places now. Their deaths were so brutal, such a shock, that many rose as ghouls, zombies, and specters. Like all Noden clans, the Diasim normally blessed their departed before burning them in a pyre and sending them to Eul. The ritual requires a druid of Noden to complete, but it does not matter what clan they are from. Again, taking any items from this place is a bad idea, and will surly lead to a curse until the item is returned.

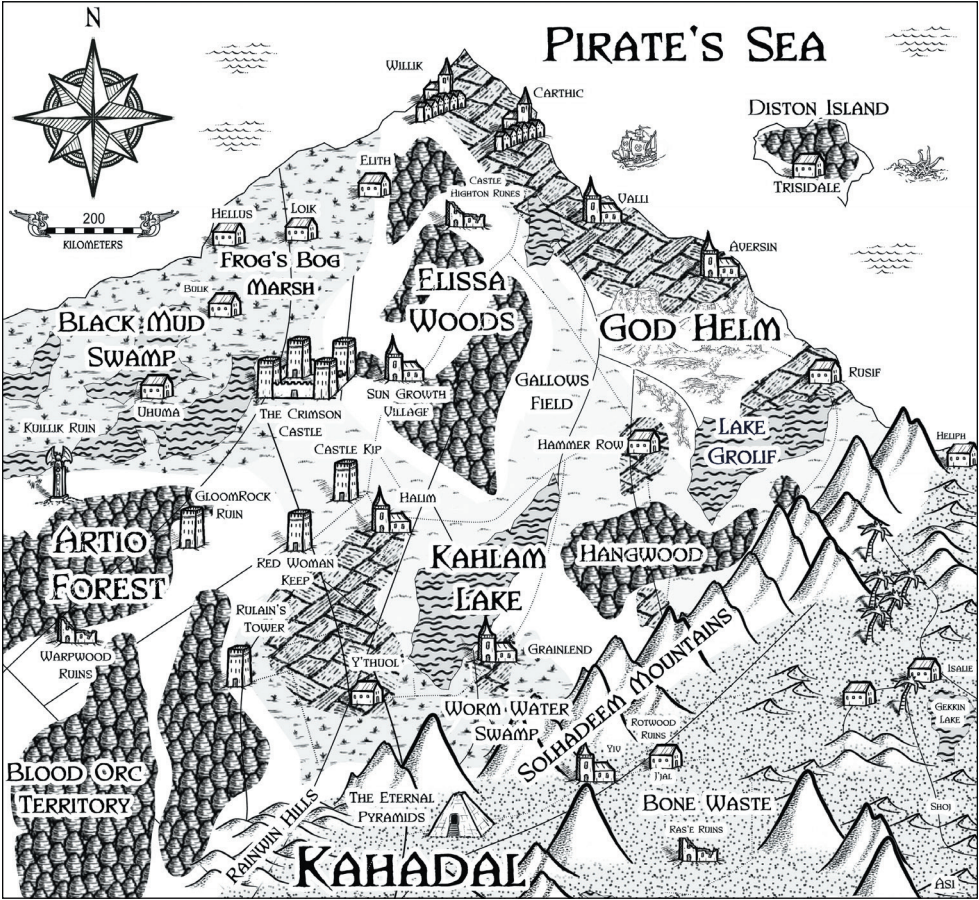
Besides the ruins of Diasim, there are older, deeper ruins of a very different civilization that can be found all over the blood orc territory, and indeed the rest of Noden. This civilization died long before the clans of Noden arrived, and many of these ruins are unexplored. Many believe these places were home to the first humans who left Asi.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If you can help the fey of Gruillika.
- ◆ If the Acid Flats can be healed.
- ◆ The secrets of Rage Magic.

GM Moves

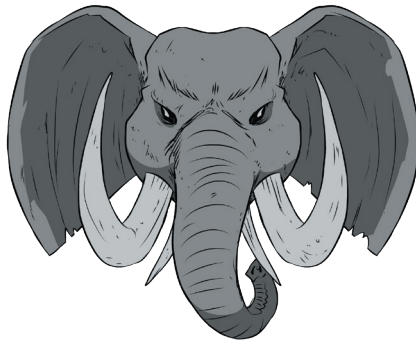
- ◆ Reveal the city of Ivory.
- ◆ Have the ghost reach out to be laid to rest.
- ◆ Define the first humans who lived here thousands of years ago.



CARTHIC

Military Democracy

Carthic is the most technologically complex, and claims to be the most progressive, nation in the world. It is a democracy, allowing all citizens to vote and run for a variety of positions. It is said that anyone can be born dirt poor and still one day become prime minister with hard work.



The reality, though, is that most high seats in Parliament are held by noble houses that have been part of Carthic since the beginning. Political parties fight for control of the Parliament and lobbyists bribe those that win the seats. Most of the time, seats rarely change people. Yes, a citizen in Carthic enjoys many freedoms and can rise to be great, but it's never an easy climb and most are corrupted by bureaucracy. At the end of the day, the government is under control of the rich, noble elite, and they would like to keep it that way.

Powerful merchant guilds, labor unions, and special interest groups try their best to influence laws to strengthen their positions. This abundant gold for influence in turn leads to more corruption. But, unlike the Athix Empire, Carthic citizens have more power and those caught in a scandal quickly find themselves on trial. In order to become citizen of Carthic, a person must be at least twenty-one years old and have already spent five years in the military, even those born in noble houses. This threat of violence from the populace helps keep to keep those in power from overtly abusing their positions. Those at the top must be careful not to anger the populace too much, or they may find their heads on pikes. Carthic politics can be tricky.

External threats created the requirement that citizenship be based upon obligatory military service; Carthic is surrounded by enemies looking to destroy the nation. The snake people of Orlamain to the northwest, the Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri to the south, the Athix Empire across the channel, and the blood orcs to the southwest are all chomping at the bit to overrun Carthic.

Small skirmishes happen all the time as these foes look for weaknesses along the borders. The threat of invasion has made immigration to Carthic a hot topic over the years. During the Athix Civil War, over five hundred thousand refugees fled to Carthic, swelling the population and stoking fears of foreigners. Carthic became a forced melting pot.

Those who go in to military service with the goal of adventuring can participate in special training and will come out of their service at 1st level in the class of their choosing. Those who go into service already with class levels are assigned to the Special Forces and given missions to fight deep in enemy territory. Although not the only nation that does this, Carthic is the most successful. They see adventurers as an asset. Bonds and trials are often made during the training years that follow PCs in their adventuring days.

The Cult of Asmodeus (see page 411) is very active in the capital city of Carthic. They recruit those who feel the government is not working in their best interest under the guise of giving them the power they so obviously deserve through political action. Some cult members won't even know the true motive of the group until they have been thoroughly brainwashed.

Magical technologies are on the rise, literally, with the use of huge airships. There are only a few of these ships in service because the cost to maintain them is quite high. They carry large amounts of cargo and extremely rich passengers. For a city to be on the flight path of an airship, they must have a tower dock. Right now they travel to Asi, Athix, Noden, and Kalla'De. There is talk of a dock tower being built in Luxinvale, but that is unlikely to happen for some time. One of the biggest expenses is the cost of arcane inventors and wizards who are needed to keep the airships in the sky and to fend off any huge flying predators, like dragons or rocs. Airships have been known to explode while under attack, killing everyone on board as well as sending flaming, magic-infused debris everywhere. For many merchants, the risk is worth the cost—it's easier to fly over mountains than ride through them. For passengers, being able to afford a ticket is a status symbol.

Pirates cause massive problems for Carthic, raiding villages, kidnapping people, and disrupting trade. This is yet another reason why more money is going into airship research, and it has also led to the construction of a new fleet of war ships. The hope is to wrestle control from the pirates and provide safe sea-lanes for merchants and passengers alike. This new project has met with sabotage as outside forces try to delay Carthic from obtaining new ships.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What the generals really think of this democracy.
- ◆ Who is in the pocket of the cults.
- ◆ Why there is talk of a revolt over forced military service.

GM Moves

- ◆ Raise an army to reinforce a border.
- ◆ Pass laws to entice more people to become citizens.
- ◆ Launch a new airship.

ELISSA WOODS

Old Growth, Dangerous, Haunted

Elissa was a famous war queen during the early days of Carthic. She fought to expand Cathic's lands to its present-day borders and founded Carthic City as the capital. In honor of her achievements, the Elissa Woods were dedicated to her. Regulations restrict where one can chop down trees and the forest is protected from any further development. The main road cutting through the wood is well maintained, but on either side is a dark ancient forest with many secrets. Those unwise enough to run off into the thicket may not find their way back. It has long been held that the forest is haunted by the undead of those who dared try to harm it. The fey are also known to protect these woods.

SUN GROWTH VILLAGE

The only settlement in the Elissa Woods is Sun Growth Village, which is more of a town than a village in size and scope. The mayor, Eupi Salise, is always at odds with the federal government's logging restrictions, saying that the forest is overprotected and that the town has a right to expand. Tensions are rising, with some citizens wondering if the mayor will be prosecuted for ignoring the law. The townspeople are firmly on his side, though, seeing the future of their families as more important than a bunch of trees.

GM Moves

- ◆ Cut down old growth trees for profit.
- ◆ Cause tension with the local fey community.
- ◆ Hide activities from the federal government.

HUTI, THE BARON OF BARK

Aside from the human expansion at Sun Growth Village, Elissa Woods is untouched by the outside world. It is home to many giant creatures and highly magical fey folk who protect their territory with extreme force. The leader of these fey is Huti, also called the Baron of Bark by those living in Sun Growth Village. He is an oak Treant (see page 272 of the *Dungeon World* core book) who keeps the peace between the village and his people. This has proven difficult with the illegal logging camps popping up in the old growth areas. If pushed, Huti has an army of Treants and assorted fey that could destroy Sun Growth Village. If such an attack went down, what would be Carthic's response?

GM Moves

- ◆ Parley with the people at Sun Growth Village.
- ◆ Set traps for loggers in sacred areas.
- ◆ Cut off access to merchants traveling through the woods.

THE TRISIDALE GHOST SHIP

Along Slaver's Coast and around the Horn of Carthic sails the ghost ship of Trisidale. The story goes that slavers raided the town of Trisidale, capturing hundreds of citizens, including a group of adventurers. Once on board, these "do gooders" decided to help their fellow prisoners by trying to escape from the hold and take over the ship. Stories vary on what happened next, but in the end the adventures did more harm than good, killing hundreds of people by accidentally burning them alive. Those that jumped off before being caught in the flames were quickly eaten by a waiting kraken. Now the ship is eternally on fire, running into ships and sending all on board to the kraken's waiting maw.

GM Moves

- ◆ Broadside under the cover of a thick fog.
- ◆ Follow a victim ship just within sight for days.
- ◆ Distract a victim ship long enough for a kraken to attack.

CASTLE HIGHTON RUINS

Haunted, Crumbling, Dangerous

Hidden under the overgrowth of the forest, several broken towers and crumbling stone walls stand where once a proud people thrived. Water, wind, and massive roots undermine the structure on every level, making exploration exceedingly dangerous. Those rooms, still sealed above ground, hide horrid secrets. Ghosts of the former tenets still haunt the area, attacking any that might dare to uncover the castle's mysteries.

Below the crumbling structure is an extensive dungeon that has become home to many twisted beasts and restless undead. Some areas are newly made, created by someone or something in the last hundred years. These areas dig deeper into the earth and give access to the blight warrens, where corrupted Drucolen elves live.

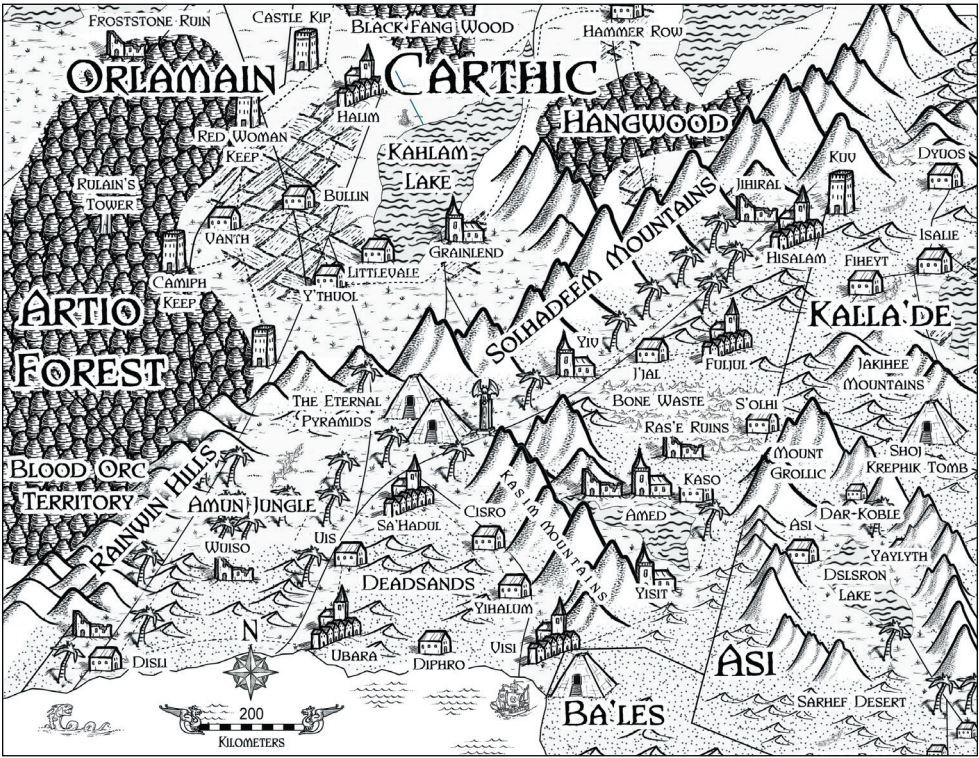
The true history of this place lays hidden in the decaying ruins and locked away in ancient books. Three hundred years ago, Carthic was ruled by generals who commanded huge armies. One of the most successful was Archon Highton. Highton had built an estate on the northern edge of the Elissa Woods, which quickly grew into a small town. His troops, their families, and several others began to live in Highton Place, but this did not sit well with the other generals. Highton's popularity grew, and with it, his power. The delicate balance within the military government was tipping, and the other generals felt they needed to do something. What transpired is locked in the ruins.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The secrets of the Castle Highton Ruins.
- ◆ About the spirits of God Helm.
- ◆ How to protect Carthic from Kahadal, the blood orcs, Orlamain, and the Athix Empire.

GM Moves

- ◆ Make the earth rumble and rip open a shaft revealing a lower section of the main castle. Is something trying to escape?
- ◆ Reveal a book that holds the truth of the castle and shows a map to a hidden treasure.
- ◆ Let a PC find an old object that houses Archon Highton's soul.



KAHADAL

Undead Dictatorship

Once a rich and prosperous land, Kahadal has become a nightmare realm where the undead command the armies of the desert and an insane lich sits on the thrown.

Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri, who ruled ancient Asi thousands of years ago before disappearing, has returned. With him, he brings wrath, plague, and unending pain. His first act was to close off the borders of the country and cut off all communications with the outside world. His undead troops, who need neither rest nor food, patrol the borders looking for those who dare escape. Any fortunate enough to get out tell of atrocities against the citizens. Torture, enslavement, and executions are a daily occurrence.



But death is not the end here. As in Abados, the dead are reanimated to carry out manual labor. Many of the living try to hide or to keep their heads down in order to avoid the notice of the new regime. Some put themselves at risk to try to keep others safe, but if they make too much trouble the local government may decide that a person would be more useful undead.

Amed-Ri was a twisted sadist as well as being a pharaoh of ancient Asi. He was a talented wizard who made sure his father had an untimely death when Amed was young. Most of his reign at the time was filled with cruel edicts and marked the start of the downfall of the old empire.

His disappearance has been debated since it happened. Scholars believe that, as his death approached, Amed-Ri decided that lichdom was the best path. After going through the transformation, he ruled for another two hundred years. Then, without warning, he disappeared, leaving behind no heir and a people broken by his rule. Ancient Asi never recovered, living through a string of ineffectual leaders. In the end, the empire broke apart.

The lich's reappearance has sent shockwaves through the world. The stories of Amed-Ri have been passed down through generations and told throughout far-flung lands. His deeds are carved into the stone of the Eternal Pyramids by those who survived his rule. The holy scrolls of Athix speak of Amed-Ri as a traitor to humanity. Even all the way across the Emerald Ocean in Oleis there are stories of the demon of the sands, used to scare children and teach of the wickedness of foreigners. It cannot be overstated that Pharaoh Amed-Ri is evil incarnate. No creature, even those who live in the Doomlands, is as feared as he is. The neighboring governments are on high alert and expect an invasion from Kahadal, but so far, besides the reports from those who have escaped, Amed-Ri has been silent.

The world waits to see what the Pharaoh Lich will do next.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The struggles of the living within the borders of Kahadal.
- ◆ Where the resistance is hiding.
- ◆ What Pharaoh Amed-Ri's next move is.

GM Moves

- ◆ Put a village in the undead army's path.
- ◆ Place spies everywhere.
- ◆ Reveal a hidden truth that gives hope.

WHERE IS PHARAOH LICH AMED-RI?

The surrounding governments have all sent spies into Kahadal to learn about troop movements and any other intel that could help. Their spies are not undead, however, so getting close to anyone in a position of power is very difficult. The loss of spies has been staggering, leaving foreign lands in the dark as to where Amed-Ri is even ruling from. Below are some locations from which the Pharaoh Lich could be running the government. Amed-Ri has no home base; he moves frequently due to paranoia. Feeding false information is recommended.

ETERNAL PYRAMIDS

The Eternal Pyramids are located near the Solhadeem Mountains, surrounded by marshlands. The limestone and garnet structures are the largest pyramids in the world reaching over three hundred meters into the sky. The sides are heavily marked with hieroglyphs from ancient Asi, telling the history of the Pharaoh Lich's reign. One of the legends states that Amed-Ri moved the capital to the Pyramids after becoming a lich. He ruled from a huge tomb, proclaiming that he was a true god for cheating death. Because the insides of the pyramids are laid out like a large city, they would still work as base of operations.

AMED

There is a fort near Fireglass Mountain simply called Amed, which is a hub of military activity. Troops and supplies have been reported coming and going at all hours. Inside, General Yitla, Amed-Ri's right-hand vampire, coordinates troop movements and runs the night-to-night operations. Making this Amed-Ri's base of power makes sense because he would be in the middle of the action. An onyx tower here could serve as his base of operations.

HISALAM

Hisalam sits on the border of Kalla'De on the banks of the slow flowing Goesu River. It is far from the big cities and undead armies of Kahadal, but it is an important strategic location. It is often used as an entry point for spies from Kalla'De, a perfect place for a cunning Amed-Ri to set up operations. He could live under the city, watching for enemies and planning the invasion.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Where Pharaoh Amed-Ri is located.
- ◆ Who can be smuggled out of Kahadal.
- ◆ What undead monsters lurk in the marshes and the desert, waiting...

GM Moves

- ◆ Create a terrible storm.
- ◆ Move Amed-Ri to the players' location.
- ◆ Give misleading information.

THE LANDS OF KAHADAL

Evil, Undead, Oppressive

Outsiders tend to think that all the desert nations have the same climate and terrain: dry, hot, and covered in sand. But this generalization is not true. Kahadal has a large river network and during the rainy seasons the banks come alive with vegetation and wild life. These marshlands along the riverbanks help farmers irrigate their crops and provide game for hunters. There are two major deserts here, the Deadsands and the Sarhef Desert, which touch all the desert nations (for more on the Sarhef Desert, see the Asi entry on page 135). To the north are the Solhadeem Mountains, which act as a natural border between Kahadal and Carthic. The snowpack on the peaks melt in late spring and help feed the rivers below. Solhadeem's waters flow into the Rainwin Hills to the east. The hills and mountains of Kahadal are home to dragons, giants, and many other dangerous beasts, making travel over them very difficult. Carthic is worried that Amed-Ri will find a way to cross and attack their lands.

There are three seasons here: rainy, hot, and cool, though cool and rainy can sometimes overlap. Movement is restricted between settlements. If traveling, a person must have a permit to do so. The river is the safest and quickest way to travel, but there are many locations that are not on the river's route, so if a person must travel by foot or animal, they can take the roads with their permits at ready. Amed-Ri's men are not there to protect the public from monsters or bandits, they are there to arrest anyone without the right papers. With the current state of the government, it may be safer to risk traveling in the wild, a long way from roads, though patrols of undead soldiers have been known to sweep these areas as well.

DEADSANDS

To those who know nothing of Kahadal, the Deadsands would seem to have been created by Amed-Ri when he returned, but this is not the case. The Deadsands sit between two major rivers that are roughly 400 kilometers apart from one another. It also stretches from the coastline in the south to the city of Sa-Hadul in the north.

The Deadsands were named for the strange sand towers called the Dead Watchers that form from the wind and the dunes. They look like sand mummies, standing six meters high, who are always staring towards the north. If the winds change, the sand that makes these giants crashes to the ground, while nearby, another takes form. They are truly awesome and frightening to behold.

What are they watching for? In the text of the old gods, these towers of sand await the return of Sou, the god of creation and destruction. It says that when he returns, the Dead Watchers will come to life, ending the world of man. However, what many sages do not know is that Ost, Fireblade of the Pharaohs, is hidden in a chamber deep below the Deadsands.

A long time ago there were elves called the Ucult that roamed the jungles that once covered the Deadsands, before the First Chaos. They lived under the protection of their goddess, Utair, who took care of all of their needs, including providing the champion Ost. He was tasked with defending the jungle; his sword could knock down hundreds of men with one blow. The other gods became jealous of Utair and her champion Ost, sending wave after wave of monsters and temptations to kill him, but all challenges were met with his fireblade. Then, a trickster goddess named Ruimia decided that if monsters and temptations would not work, divine beauty would.

She appeared before Ost after one of his many battles and offered him wine. He was tired and, though he had dealt with the gods sending temptations to corrupt him, never had the gods tried to do it themselves. He was blinded by Ruimia's beauty and kindness, and took the wine, drinking in its corruption. It did not take long for the poison to set in, and Ost realized in that moment that he had dishonored his creator, Utair. The poison did not kill, instead it paralyzed him. He watched, unable to stop the monsters of the gods from destroying the valley and his people. They left behind a desert and the elves of Utair were no more, save for Ost.

Utair flew into a rage, cursing Ost to spend eternity trapped within his fireblade, never to escape. She then built a vault, full of dangerous traps and guardians, beneath the Deadsands. Not content, she also created the Dead Watchers, who will come to life if the sword is ever removed from his tomb and kill any grave robber who holds the sword. After she made these, she hid the entrance to the vault and went to the center chamber. She then shoved Ost's fireblade through her heart, letting go of her divinity and allowing herself to die. She believed that her people had fallen because her champion was weak, and she could no longer call herself divine.

If adventurers were to find the tomb, survive the traps and monsters guarding the death room, and retrieved Ost's fireblade, they would then have to fight their way out of the Deadsands, beset by waves of Dead Watchers.

Dead Watchers

Construct, Huge, Forceful

Sand Blast (1d10+7 damage, ignores armor, *close, near*)

20 HP 4 Armor

Habitat: Deadsands

Description: Tall pillars of sand that look like mummies

Instinct: Return Ost's sword to the tomb

◆ Blind with sand

No one has ever found the tomb that hides Ost's fireblade, therefore no one knows the Dead Watchers' purpose, abilities, or fighting style. If woken, they will do everything they can to stop the sword from being removed from the Deadsands. Standing and fighting is a fool's errand, because the winds will reform any guardian destroyed. Running is the best option.

OST, FIREBRAND SWORD

The blade that defended the Ucult elves and that became the prison of Ost, Utair's champion, has drank the blood of a goddess. It is extremely powerful and, as such, hard to wield. Ost can speak with the wielder, but he has been overcome by madness and speaks a tongue long dead. The wielder must have the blade for three months before they are able to understand Ost's language. He remembers only pieces of his former life. Some of his ramblings are lore that can be used to find ancient sites, while others are misleading and many times dangerous.

The sword has the following abilities:

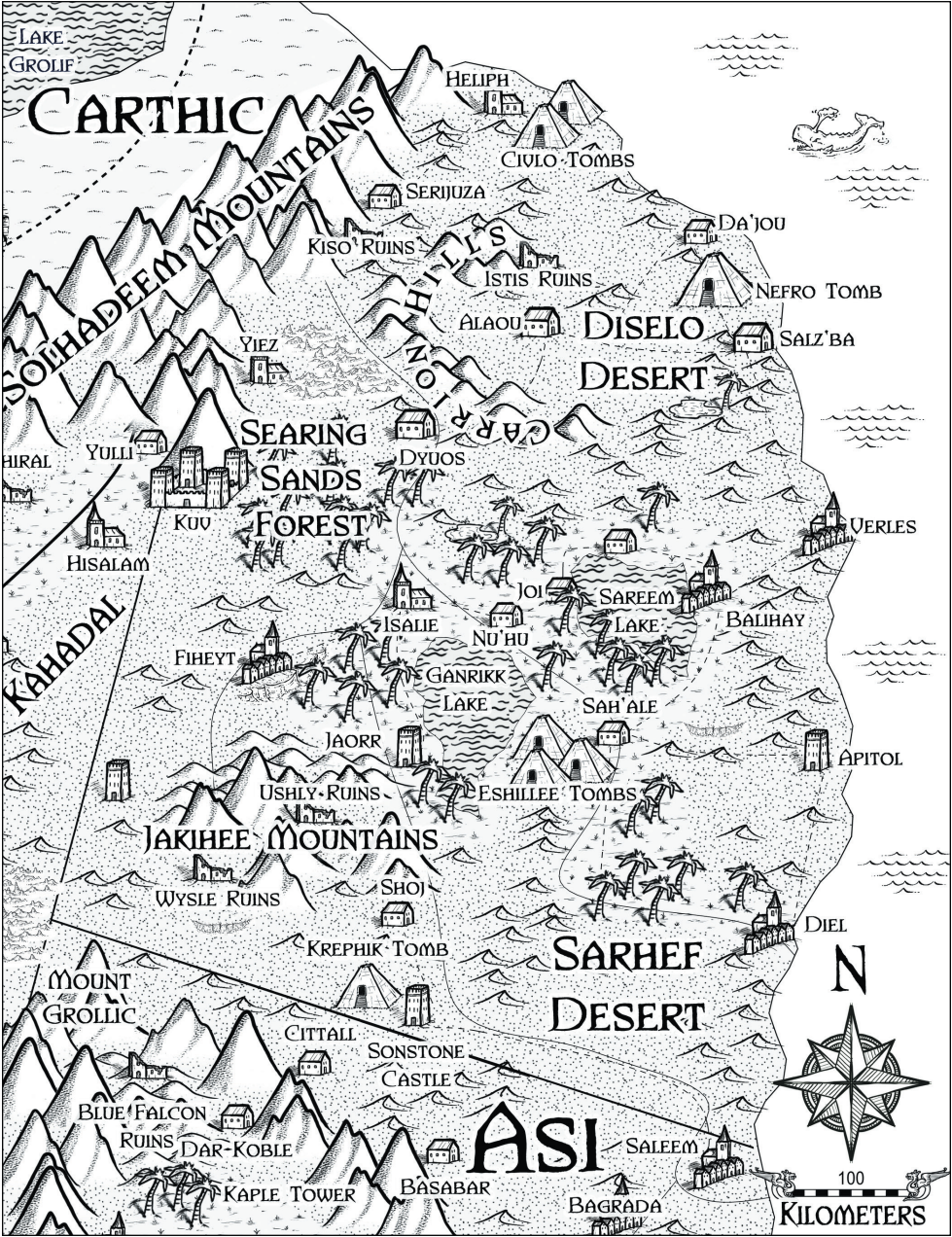
- ◆ Adds 1d10 fire damage. The blade is always on fire.
- ◆ Three times a day it can knock back any enemies designated by the wielder, taking them out of the battle.
- ◆ Ost will speak to the wielder about the past, but whether this lore is accurate is left up to the GM. His constant talking is distracting and causes the wielder to take a -2 to their *Hack and Slash* roll.
- ◆ The sword protects it wielder from extreme cold and heat. Fire and ice damage types will do no harm.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Where the tomb of Ost lies.
- ◆ What happened to Utair's body.
- ◆ What other treasures lie in the tomb.

GM Moves

- ◆ Obscure the lore.
- ◆ Set sinister traps.
- ◆ Show the wrath of the old gods.



KALLA'DE

Constitutional Monarchy

Progressive and rich, Kalla'De is a land for great thinkers, where artists push boundaries and inventors devise new experiments and creations. This is a wealthy nation, supported by the great resources from the Jakhee Mountains and the surrounding fertile lands. Exotic lumber, gold, silver, rijin spice, and wacren silk are traded every day for large sums of coin.



Philosophy, science, music, and advanced magical study are all taught. In the world of education, Kalla'De rivals Acum. Kalla'De University has schools in several cities, including classes for younger people. The result is an academic hivemind where sages and scribes research, write, and distribute new theories. Though this system is widespread, smaller villages and work camps are without their own schools. They farm massive swaths of land for market, making good coin in the process. Anyone can move to the city and get an education, but the pull of a job and good money is always strong in small communities.

Kalla'De's greatest assets are its resources—unfortunately, they also its greatest weaknesses. It is rumored that Pharaoh Amed-Ri has moved troops near the border. Kalla'De's military is weak and their leaders have little experience with battle. Sultan Azeir is trying his best to raise an army, but so far he has only been able to hire mercenaries to augment his forces. There are those in the government who feel that their lands are not under any threat and that spending money on the military is a waste. They point to the fact that Amed-Ri has done nothing aggressive since his return to the throne of Kahadal. Sultan Azeir understands the threat, though, and will not take chances with his people's lives.

A NEW GOVERNMENT IN AN OLD LAND

When Old Asi transitioned into modern Asi, Kalla'De was a vassal state. It propped up the old kingdom and, as time went on, the citizens began to resent Asi, feeling that all the country did was take. Forty years ago, Kalla'De declared independence and almost immediately after Kahadal and Ba'Les followed suit. However, instead of the entire region breaking out into a civil war, Asi accepted that times had changed and it could no longer control all the desert lands. It was a bloodless split which has led to the two countries being allies.

Kalla'De embraced the Calica faith in a different, less radicalized form than Asi. The temples and priesthoods do not hold power in the government. Keeping more resources for themselves, Kalla'De has been able to focus on things beyond religion and tradition. This does not mean that the government and temples have not had their issues. There are hard line elements who are trying to push the sultan into a more conservative direction, as well as cults of ancient gods claiming that the only way to fight Amed-Ri is by returning to the old ways.

DISTANT ALLIES

King Ulmik of Luxinvale came through on a whirlwind tour of Kalla'De and Asi five years ago, and since then trade between the two countries has exploded. Ulmik has sent several generals to Kalla'De to help train their army. In return, Azeir has sent silks, spices, and great works of art to the northern king. Luxinvale has begun to court teachers and artist to come to their lands to spread their expertise. There are currently attempts to get a Carthic airship route all the way north to Luxinvale, easily connecting it to Kalla'De. Ulmik may be coming back to the desert land, and he has threatened that if Amed-Ri's troops dare attack the other desert nations, he will personally chop the lich's head off. The people call him the Snow King, even though most of them have never seen snow.

JAKHEE MOUNTAINS

Massive Mines, Dangerous, Blight Warren

The Jakhee Mountains can barely pass as such, with only one truly tall mountain to speak of, but they are the source of great mineral wealth for the crown. Iron, gold, silver, and precious jewels are all mined here in one of the few areas in the world where dwarves have no claims to the mountains, something they are not happy about. This anger has led to the humans blaming any accident on the dwarves, which does not help relations.

Several mining cities dot the area owned by different competing companies. The name of the game is who can get the ore out of the ground the fastest. This breakneck speed often leads to horrible accidents. Miners are paid well, but they risk much. Besides cave-ins, the mines also connected to a Drucolen blight warren called Yuits deep below the mountains. With the drive to find more and more ore, companies have gone deeper. The Yuits' blight warren is ancient and full of deranged elves from Carthic and other underground monsters who now use the mines to find lunch and visit the outside world at night. Companies often hire adventures to protect their people and clear out areas; to cleanse the blight warren itself, one would need an army.

On the surface can be found several ruined keeps full of mysteries from old Asi. Ancient magical items, from when humans were just learning to enchant with raw magic, are hidden in forgotten rooms.

VERLES

Peaceful, Cultured

The capital city of Verles is a marvel of architectural opulence. The docks, guild houses, and bazaars are always busy. Elegant, beautifully designed structures soar into the sky, where the rich glide between them on magic carpets. Airships from Carthic dock just outside the city, bringing passengers from all over Euliom. It is a great modern city built on the coast of the Ala-Deem Sea, surrounded by the Diselo Desert. The city sits near a large underground water source that is pumped up to the city, making it one of the few places with advanced plumbing.

The Verles black market deals in drugs and prostitution, two vices forbidden by the Calica faith. All of this wealth has attracted the Ogbin and Rhord halfling mob families. The two have been locked in a turf war for the past three years in many of Kalla'De's large cities. Horrendous attacks happen all the time. The Ogbin family loves explosives, and they frequently harm bystanders when they hit a Rhord building. The blood shed has gotten so bad that the sultan has offered rewards for the whereabouts of the bosses. So far, the fear of the mob has stopped anyone from speaking up.

The court of Sultan Azeir meets in the Ty-Ridoul, the royal palace in the center of the city. It is white and gold with blue writing along the trim. The palace is massive and surprisingly open, with nobles and rich elites intermingling with priests and working class people during the day. The sultan can often be seen in meetings with people in common areas when he is not in closeted meetings with his viziers. Ty-Ridoul also has a menagerie, which includes several animals from all over the world. Magic is used to keep the climate just right for each animal. Security here is lax, and that fact has the generals worried, feeling that the sultan is too exposed to danger.

CARRION HILLS

Wild, Dangerous

Located in the Diselo Desert are the Carrion Hills, a crescent-shaped hill range that is over 240 kilometers long. It is the home of hostile nomadic tribes, desert harpies, sand golems, and sphinxes. Below the hills are caverns that house monsters avoiding the sun. The largest lair belongs to Fiu-Xizzizx, or Fiu for short. Fiu is an ancient dragon of the desert who has been piling up gold and magical items for hundreds of years. He rarely leaves his lair now, relying on minions to bring him meat and drink by the wagon full. He would not call himself evil or good. He sees humans as lesser beings that are meant to serve him and provide food, either through producing it or sacrificing themselves as a meal.

Fiu-Xizzizx (Dragon)*Solitary, Huge, Terrifying, Hoarder*

Bite (2d10+4 damage, 8 piercing)

19 HP 5 Armor

Breath Weapon (5d6 fire damage, once per day, *reach, messy*)*Habitat:* Lair under the Carrion Hills*Description:* A massive dragon with red and black scales, huge black wings, and one meter long fangs*Instinct:* To defend his treasure

- ◆ Control those around him
- ◆ Collect more treasure
- ◆ Fight when it is called for

Fiu-Xizzizx is happy in his lair and does not leave. Though he can fly, he seldom does. He is a fount of knowledge and, if a visitor intrigues him, Fiu-Xizzizx may be willing to impart lore. Getting to his lair means dealing with his traps and minions. If the party is seeking an audience with the dragon, killing their way to his chamber is not advised. When in battle, Fiu-Xizzizx uses his lair to his advantage. With his tail, he can spray victims with coins. He only uses his breath weapon if he feels the danger is extreme, because the heat from it can melt his gold.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What secrets Fiu-Xizzizx knows.
- ◆ Where the sphinxes are hiding a dying god.
- ◆ Who the nomadic tribes are.

GM Moves

- ◆ Have Fiu-Xizzizx patrol the hills.
- ◆ Reveal the ruins of an old village.
- ◆ Cause a desert storm.

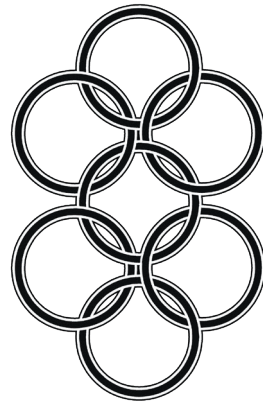


NODEN

Tribalism

“Elgrey rode his elk as fast as he could, darting through trees and leaping bushes. He had to tell his people that he’d spotted blood orc scouts crossing their border. The orcs were much further north than normal and the young elf worried a full-scale invasion was imminent. That’s when the first arrow hit a tree near him; Elgrey was being hunted.”

The world is just one part of a vast universe. All realities are interconnected. The people of Noden understand the true workings of existence more than any other people on Rothaen. They look beyond the gods and know that there is more to learn. They even know of the Void and the realm beyond it. Noden is a collection of clans, all ruled by their own monarchs. They are seen as backwards by their more technologically complex neighbor Carthic, but the Noden people are connected to nature and the realms of magic, both divine and arcane. Any one, human or otherwise, can be part of a clan, though humans make up the overwhelming majority.



THE OLD WAY IS BEST

Carthic, and many other nations of humans, were once like Noden. They were close to nature and understood the Other Worlds, but slowly they lost that connection. Noden clings fiercely to life before magic was codified and flying blimps traveled through the sky. They feel the worlds around them and respect the forces that others try to control.

Noden has four classes of citizens: druids, warriors, merchants, and farmers. All are equal and can vote, as well as have their voices heard by the local councils. Without the druid, there is no connection with nature or wisdom of experience. Without the warrior, there is no honor or protection from evil. Without the merchant, there is nowhere for the farmer to sell his goods or trade with outsiders. Without farmers, everyone starves.

The Noden's "druid" is a tough concept to understand for outsiders who are used to it meaning an outdoors spellcasting hermit or an adventurer who is very close to nature. The title is given to any person with a connection to the Other Worlds (see page 388). Wizards who protect the forest are called druids. Clerics who use herbs and healing magic are also called druids. It is not a character class distinction, but instead a title for a wise person. However, it is not uncommon for Noden druids also have levels in the druid class. Noden player characters who have the druid character class must earn the title. Until then, they will be wanderers. Although not officially rulers, druids take up several seats on the councils and are looked to as arbitrators and holy people. Kings will often seek their advice. Druids that do not belong to any clan wear white or grey robes and are called All Clan. They seek to unite the tribes. Children born to druids are often products of a fey coupling and tend to become leaders who startle both our realm and the fey.

Warriors are the largest group of the Noden, making up the ruling class and army ranks. A warrior is anyone who fights for their clan, be it with sword, fist, or spells. All warriors must hunt, which has a lot of ceremony woven into it. Farmers have goats and cows for milking, but meat cannot come from a domesticated animal. One must catch a wild animal and use all parts of the animal. Chickens are the exception, though one must perform the ceremony of thanks before killing one. Warriors are elected to leadership positions and, once they die, a new election is held. Titles are not passed to family members.

Merchants are travelers who must be able to easily fit in with whatever clan they are trying to sell to. Noden is still on the barter system, with only small amounts of silver used in transactions. Merchants take one type of goods from those who have an abundance and trade it with those who do not. A successful merchant is not the one who gets a lot of coin, but the one that keeps the clans stocked in the things they need. In turn, the clans take care of their merchants with food and lodging.

Farmers grow basic crops as well as provide dairy for their settlements. One might think that because they are not able to lead that they are lower class, but this is far from the truth. Farmers tend to be the backbone of a settlement and, as such, their voices are heard. Farmers can become part of another class anytime they like, they just have to train in those skills. Farmers tend to become merchants who hire people to tend their farms.

THE CLANS OF NODEN

The land of Noden is divided into seven clans, each with their own monarch or chief. They are all identified by a sacred animal spirit they worship as their main god, though they do worship all spirits of nature. Whatever their main animal is, they form a bond with it, and in many cases use them as mounts or as hunting partners. These mounts tend to be giant dire versions of the animal. Sharks will herd fish to the shores for the Ilsoth. Giant hawks, bears, and elks act as mounts. Wolves and pumas act as hunting partners and guards, while crows act as spies and guides. The kraken clan is special, see below.

THE CLANS

- ◆ Alyba (Bears): strong, noble, on the front line against the blood orcs
- ◆ Cawvin (Crows): cunning, not trusted, stealth over brawn wins the battle
- ◆ Cro'lic (Elks): wise, half-fey queen, fierce prey
- ◆ Eris (Wolves): loyal, family, life is about connection to one's pack
- ◆ Fros'ih (Pumas): calculating, stealthy, camouflaged, the world belongs to those who take it
- ◆ Ilsoth (Sharks): vicious, always moving, always hunting
- ◆ Rik'Oi (Hawks): heightened sense of nature, unshackled from the world
- ◆ Y'Slok (Kraken): the world must succumb to forces beyond the Other Worlds

THE KRAKEN AND THE VOID

The Kraken is the newest clan in Noden and the most troubling. It is well known that the Sharks and the Pumas would love to control the realm, but it is the Kraken who seem to have the means to do it. Several years ago, there was another clan, Siolm (Ox). The Oxen Clan was manly farmers and fisherman who worked the Dead King Coast along with the Sharks. The fishing in the north started to go badly and no amount of praying seemed to help. Soon, crops also failed and the rivers began to run dry. When all seemed lost, a strange creature came to the shore, a giant kraken. It offered fish and healthy crops in return for worshippers. Desperate for food, the Siolm agreed and changed their spirit animal to the kraken against the warning of the druids. Soon the fish returned and the rain resumed: the kraken had kept its promise.

But, as one might guess, the deal was not in the people's best interest. The kraken was an avatar of an Old One named Dagon, a god from beyond the Void (see page 388). Worshipped in nearby Orlamain, Dagon was looking to extend its corrupted reach further into the human kingdoms. As time has passed, the price for its blessings have become more twisted and evil. Its goal is to destroy all worlds, wipe out light and life, and return the universe to the void from which it came. Dagon's first step was to help Orlamain take over more of the land, turning former Siolm lands into a swamp full of hybrid deep ones.

It has become evident to the other clans that the Y'Slok Clan has become compromised and there are calls for an invasion to stop the spread of Dagon worshipers. A temple built far inland near the Wolf Clan's territory was destroyed by the druids, but they did not cleanse it properly, and evil has begun to fester there again. Even the druids who hail from this part of Noden are changing—something must be done soon, before it's too late.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What Dagon's next move is.
- ◆ Who is corrupting the druids.
- ◆ What king is about to convert his tribe to Dagon.

GM Moves

- ◆ Cause Dagon's faithful to invade a village.
- ◆ Turn the sky blood red.
- ◆ Turn all that hear the corrupted druid's words into deep one hybrids.

ONGOING WAR

In addition to the threats posed by Orlamain and the Kraken Clan, there are the flesh eating blood orcs (see page 145) to the south. They wiped out the Diasim (Elephant Clan) and now constantly attack the Bear and Crow territories. Raiding parties have gotten as far as the Elks in the north, prompting fears that Noden may not have enough warriors to hold off the threat. Carthic has helped with troops, but this is not ideal either. Noden worries that Carthic troops might decide to stay and annex their lands. The threat to the old ways has never been greater.

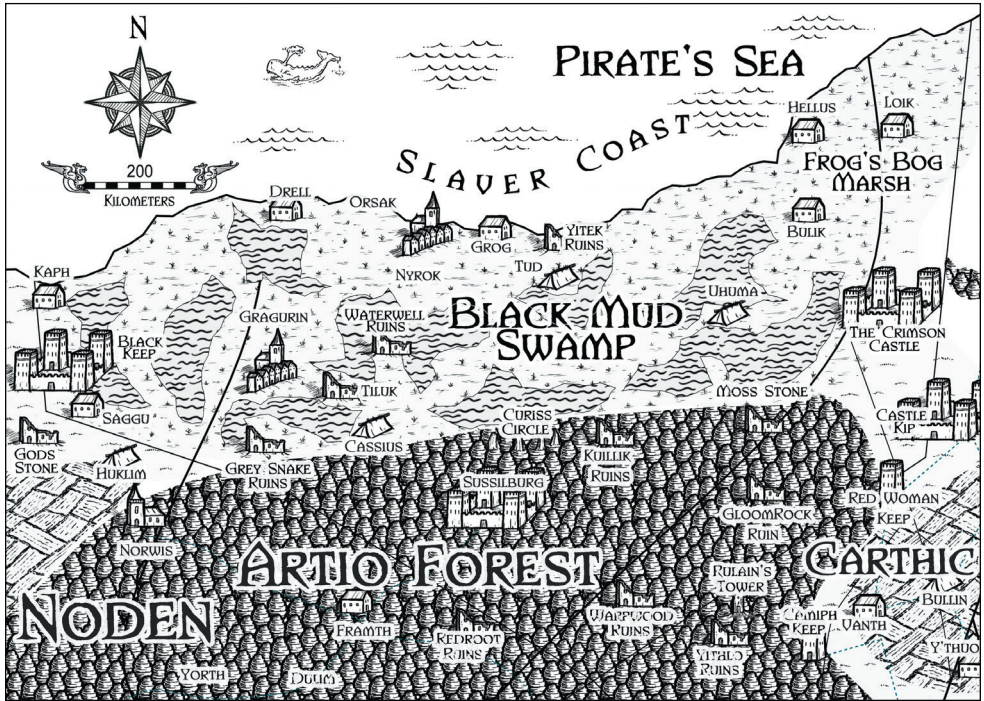
More and more Noden have called for increased technology and an expanded understanding of new magic. This goes against the tradition of oral spells passed down from teacher to student. The druids are trying to lead the populace through this crisis; the call for change may be the biggest enemy they have ever faced. Druids themselves are looking for a leader to unit them. Right now, the lead contenders for such a feat are the Bear, Shark, and Puma Clans. The Kraken Clan, for obvious reasons, has been left out of many of these discussions.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If the druids can maintain the old ways.
- ◆ What designs the Sharks have on the other clans.
- ◆ If Carthic will invade their “backward allies”.

GM Moves

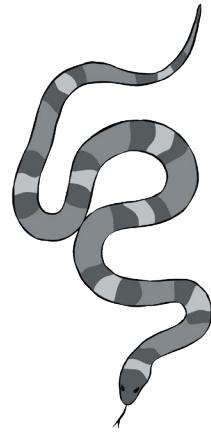
- ◆ Bait the clans into attacking blood orcs on their own turf.
- ◆ Spread rumors and misdirection from clans inside Carthic to start a war.
- ◆ Assassinate druids who are against unification with Carthic.



ORLAMAIN

Absolute Monarchy

Inhabited by several different reptile humanoids and fish people tribes such as the “deep ones”, Orlamain harbors many perils. The creatures of Orlamain are often forcibly bred with human slaves, and so there are different mutations of species here. All of these creatures are corrupt, evil, and see humans as prey and livestock. Even with traces of human blood in their veins, they have no true humanity. Mixed-blood residents could not pass for human or elf; some of their hideous corrupted traits are always apparent. Deranged humans, and even twisted Drucolen elves, live in seclusion in Orlamain’s swamps. Any non-reptilian humanoid smaller than an ogre can also be found here.



The government of Orlamain is largely a mystery to the outside world. King Ssssuisskssss, a snake humanoid, rules from the black slime city of Gragurin, where he oversees troop movements, slave populations, and business deals with the pirate nations and halfling mob families. He never interacts personally with anyone, save for his close advisers, who then relay his orders. He leads the church of Great Old Gods with input from the deep one hybrids in his court. The crown controls a large portion of the Artio Forest, where they harvest trees and raid Noden villages. Carthic and Noden have both tried to flush the Orlamains out of the forest, but cannot seem to hold any gains for long. Orlamain is known for brutal nighttime attacks on villages, taking prisoners and turning them into slaves.

Huge slave farms, where slaves are bred to sell to other nations like Kosar, are scattered across the swamp. Brainwashed slaves will fight any one trying to free them. Rescuers have a small window to find and free a loved one. Slaves are conditioned to follow the commands of their master, and without their input, the slave cannot fend for themselves. The torture that is used to reach this level of reprogramming kills many. Slaves sold to foreign nations are not brainwashed the same way. They are the lucky ones.

A HISTORY

The history of the serpent people began during the dawn of the Second Age after numerous gods perished in the Heavens War, in the First Chaos. The gods that survived retreated almost completely from the mortal realm to recover from the losses. The subsequent power vacuum left was filled by the giants and dragons of the world who, in turn, warred with one another. The serpent people first emerged from the Black Mud Swamp, creating their own empire that would, in time, cover most of the world for over ten thousand years.

Many assume that the serpent people are some form of offspring of dragons, but this is false. They are an evolution of large snakes from the first era that evolved humanoid traits over millions of years. They have no connection to dragons. Because they were not created by a god, they adopted the Great Old Ones and the other gods of the Void to worship.

This history is all but forgotten. Constant war with dragons and giants caused the snake people to decline, slowly reducing to the modern Orlamain borders. This all occurred in the middle of the Second Age. As powerful as the serpent people had become, they could not hold onto their own against the raw force of the giants and dragons. Now, after an untold number of years, there are only one thousand snake people left from an empire that once ruled Rothaen.

PURE BLOOD

There is a secret not spoken outside the halls of power: the snake people are dying out. Each year their numbers drop and there are fewer pure bloods than ever. The average snake person lives six hundred years, but egg production has fallen to one egg every two hundred years per individual. Snake people have had to look outside their species to replenish their numbers. Humans are not compatible for mating with the snake people, unlike deep ones. Magic must be used to create an offspring between humans and snake people. However, there are also other ways to make half-breed serpent people—conversion pits. Thankfully, the only conversion pits that can be found are in the city of Nyrok, which is the major port for Orlamain's slave business.

Slaves deemed worthy are thrown in the pits and transformed into half-human half-snake hybrids. This is a horribly painful process and screams can be heard throughout the city day and night. Not everyone survives it, and those that don't are lucky. The change rips away a person's humanity, leaving them hollow and cold. Their minds become twisted and the only rational voice they now understand is that of the pure bloods. These lost souls become the brute force of the Orlamain power structure. When not near a pure blood master, they must learn to deal with the fractured mind left after the change. Identifying a former loved one is impossible: the change is too great.

THE BLACK MUD SWAMP

The Black Mud Swamp has been the homeland of the snake people for millions of years. This where they evolved. It is a retched place, full of prehistoric and magical beasts, poisonous fogs, man-eating plants, and blood-sucking insects. The water depth ranges from 4 cm to 1.2 meters. As the name suggest, "solid land" is usually a thick, foul smelling, black mud, which makes for difficult terrain to traverse. Small boats are the best way to navigate through the swamp between settlements. Thick ropy trees filter the sunlight, creating a dimly lit landscape. At the bottom off these trees are large mounds of earth that stick up out of the water, covered in moss and strange hissing flowers. When enough trees are close to each other, they form an island for villages and towns to be built upon.

Rain is a way of life during the summer, during which it rains almost every day. This, mixed with the hot temperatures, leads to a sticky, muggy experience. Swamp gas and the deafening sounds of bugs and vocal plants add to the unpleasantness of this place. Winters are mild, with temperatures dipping below freezing only a few times a year. When this occurs, hail is more likely than snow. The serpent people are less active during cold snaps, staying indoors with huge roaring fires. Deep ones, on the other hand, have no issues with the cold. The winter can be the best time for slaves to attempt an escape, as the swamp mud is firmer and easier to walk on.

THE GOD LEECH

The Black Mud Swamp is home to several horrible creatures, but none is as vile as the God Leech. The size of ten elephants, the God Leech has sucked the blood from giants and dragons alike. It can swallow a human-sized creature whole, and often does. Seeing it is very difficult. It usually looks like an innocuous island sticking out of the mud. When a person walks on top of it, the God Leech rises, throwing its victims into the water and eating them. The God Leech controls all leeches in the swamp. While fighting, it will command a leech swarm of up to one hundred creatures to latch on and start draining victims. The God Leech will try to escape if it is losing the fight by summoning as many small leeches as it can while diving into a deep pool of water. There is treasure that has sunk into the mud from past victims.

God Leech

Solitary, Huge, Forceful

Bite (4d6+7 damage, ignores armor)

20 HP 3 Armor

Leech swarm (2d10 damage, *close, near*)

Habitat: The Black Mud Swamp

Description: Gigantic black leech who resembles a hill sticking out of the water from far away

Instinct: To defend its territory

◆ Stay hidden until it is time to devour

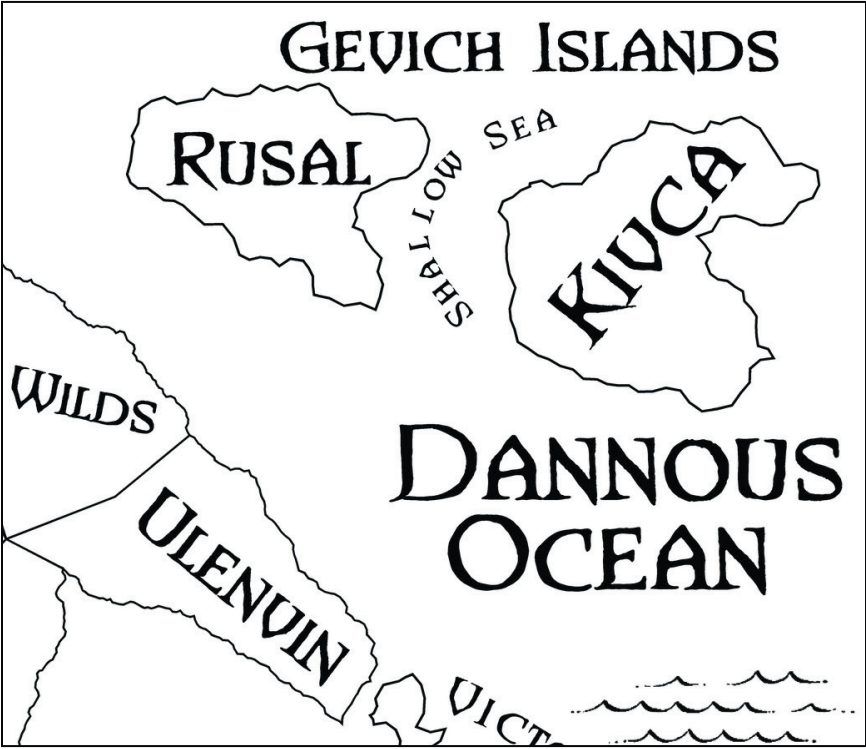
The God Leech is not truly divine, but it is dangerous and powerful. It will fight with incredible force. If defeated, a new God Leech will begin to grow. It takes about a year to reach full size. This leech is the ruler of all leeches and many insects. Though it does not call on insects to fight, it will use them to annoy and drive people away. The God Leech is corrupted by the swamp itself. The serpent people have been dumping medical waste into the swamp for centuries and it has a disturbing effect on the wildlife.

Play to find out

- ◆ What lives in the bottom of Black Mud Swamp.
- ◆ The plans of the snake people.
- ◆ The deep ones' vile secret.

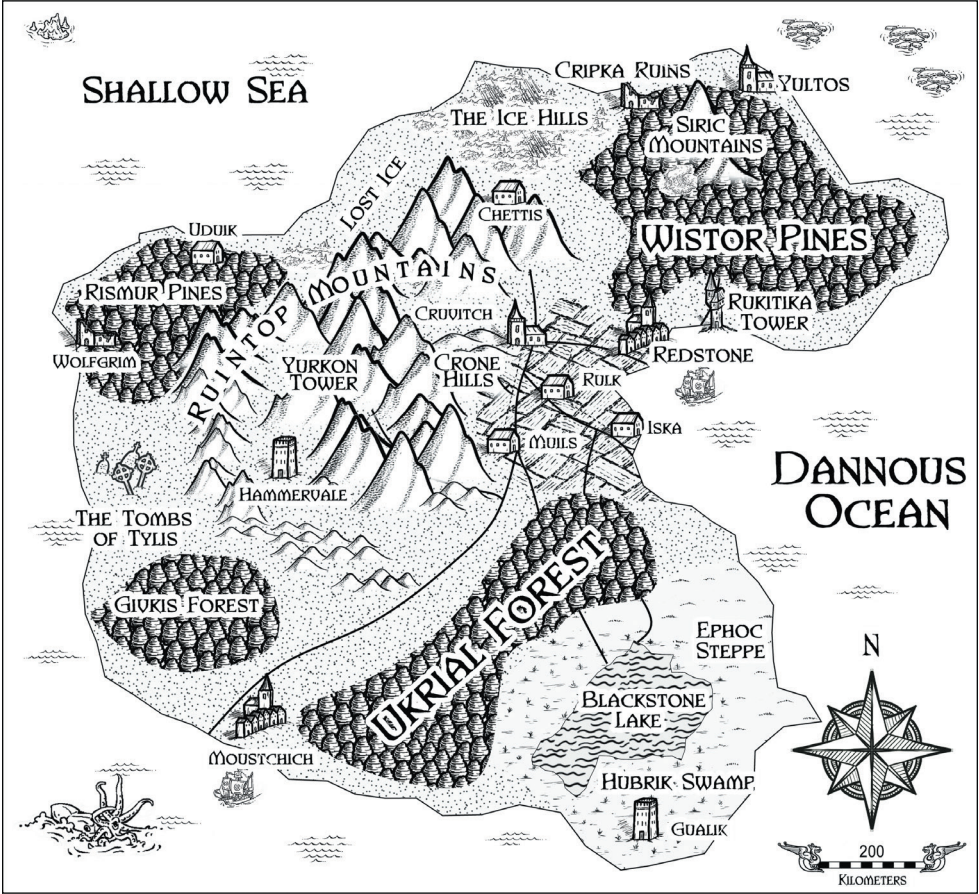
GM Moves

- ◆ Raid nearby Noden cities.
- ◆ Make it rain non-stop for two weeks.
- ◆ Reveal the history of the serpent people.



GEVICH ISLANDS

Kivca, Rusal



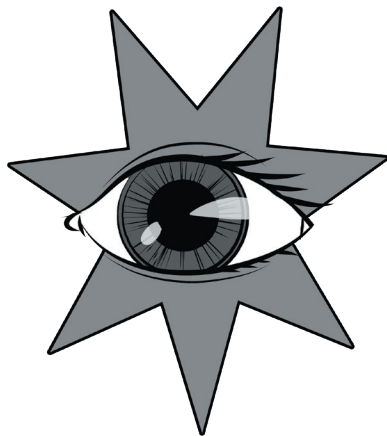
KIVCA

Absolute Monarchy

The sun has not touched the tall pines and jagged peaks of this northern ice-bound land for over a century. Beneath a blanket of perpetual night, life goes on for the citizens of Kivca, as does unlife for those who died during this night... this unending night.

The King of Kivca reigns at Redstone, a bustling and brightly lit city at the edge of a magically warmed agricultural area.

He has five major vassals. To the north, the Duke of Cripka controls little more than the port of Yultos. In the south, the Duke of Givkis and Ukrial rules over Moustchich, a dark city of undead amidst barren pasturelands. The Blackstone Baron commands the lizardfolk of Hubrik Swamp and the wolf-riding goblins of the Ephoc Steppe. In the east, furthest from the throne's power, the Earl of Wolfgrim governs the coast of the Shallow Sea as her own kingdom. Surrounded by the ore-rich Ruintops, the Baroness of the Passes makes her home in Hammervale.



THE CURSE OF THE ENDLESS NIGHT & THE GENERATION WARS

For generations, the smaller peoples of Kivca had lived in harmony with the fire giants of the Ruintop Mountains. As with so many stories, this one starts with greed. A rich vein of celestial iron ore was discovered above the Crone Hills by treaty-breaking prospectors. The King of Kivca refused to hand over the criminals to the fire giants, and instead demanded a share of the mountains' wealth for himself. The fire giants refused. Neither side baulked at war. For two generations, the hordes of the smaller people and the fire giants were evenly matched until the grandfather of the current king enlisted mages from across the Dannous Sea to end the war.

After a week-long magical ritual, their spell worked. Or, at least, it ended the war. Whether the mages intended to slay every giant in a magical genocide and whether the king knew that would be the result are questions hotly debated by historians in the libraries of Redstone and Moustchich and by the drinkers and sniffers in taverns across Kivca alike. Regardless, the giants were dying, but not dead. With one final daring strike, their own wizards spread across the land, strummed the lay-lines of their frozen land, and cursed the smaller people of Kivca to consider their crimes in a land of eternal night.

The king is reported to have laughed when he heard the curse. His mood changed when the first dead began to rise.

The people of Kivca responded to the rising dead in the usual way, with fire, sword, and holy symbol. That only resulted in increasingly mutilated and increasingly angry ancestors. Soon Kivca was embroiled in a war that the living could not win. Each death increased the numbers of the undead. Factions soon arose in the undead, especially after the death of the king. Once undead, the king contested the ascension of his living daughter to the throne and personally killed several leading constitutional lawyers, enlisting them in what rapidly became a constitution crisis. When the queen was killed in battle and her son ascended to the throne, they had realized that births had become rare.

The dead king, the dead queen, and the living king agreed to a conference to resolve the war. At the Royal Conclave, the constitutional and citizenship crises were ended and familial loyalty prevailed. The three monarchs agreed that the dead would have full citizenship rights with the living and that the dead king and the queen would stand down and retire. Once more, a single king ruled over Kivca, now a land with no births and no true deaths.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What happened to the foreign mages.
- ◆ How long the dead king and the dead queen will accept the truce.
- ◆ What schemes the allies of the fire giants nurse deep in the mountains and hidden amongst the cities.

GM Moves

- ◆ Taint with the residue of bitter wars.
- ◆ Show generational conflict between the living and the dead.
- ◆ Shadow the present with the magic of the past.

REBUILDING THE REALM

Finally, Kivca could rebuild after generations of war. Near Redstone, the king's mages entwined the land with magical warmth and light to facilitate crop growth. Elsewhere, as the temperature continued to drop across the realm, the living began to cluster near, and then hollow out, the still-warm corpses of the fire giants, creating new neighborhoods near or in their old cities. Gradually, the living drifted away from the old cities into the warmth of the new neighborhoods. Some of the undead stayed in their old homes, or moved into those newly vacated by migrants, but many also moved into the new neighborhoods.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What the side effects of living inside a fire giant wizard who cursed your people to endless night and undeath are.
- ◆ What magical toll does warming and lighting the fields take on the realm and its citizens.

GM Moves

- ◆ Show a land of refugees and migrants.
- ◆ Infect the living by the dead; infect the dead by the living.

THE HAND OF THE OLD KING

When the dead king abdicated at the Royal Conclave, many of his inner circle believed he was making foolish mistake. After all, every battle increased the numbers of the undead, so what use were the living? Accordingly, a handful of his supporters formed a secret organization dedicated to working in secret to bringing an undead king to the throne.

Strictly speaking, the Hand refers to the leadership of the organization who work through allies in the six corners of Kivca to influence the opinion of local undead citizens. The rank and file of the organization attempt to gather support mostly through word of mouth, convincing arguments, and an intricate cell structure, but higher-ranking cells in the group also take direct physical and magical action against prominent opponents, living or undead. They are especially fond of ritual curses involving animal sacrifices (to avoid human victims as witnesses), celestial ore, and fire giant flesh.

The Hand of the Old King itself is divided. A faction which may still have the ear of the dead king wishes to place their former liege on the throne once more. Another faction wishes the same for the queen. A few wish to simply kill the current king but retain him as ruler. Others scheme for their own advancement or that of secret allies. It is likely that a new civil war would erupt if the Hand ever succeeds in removing the current king.

THE DARKEST CITY

In the southern city of Moustchich, the body of the fire giant grew cold within days of death. Lacking a source of heat, the living residents moved north to Wolfgrim or to the king's lands around Redstone. As word travelled, undead who spurned the living immigrated to Moustchich. Gradually, what had been a fertile farming area was transformed into unoccupied farmhouses around a darkened city of undead.

This is the realm of the Duke of Givkis and Ukrial, a jovial vampire and former butcher who mostly ignores his titular lands to the east and west to focus on making his city a hospitable environment for the varied undead who swell its population. Although many of his population do, he nurses no grudge against the living and spends a considerable amount of his energy ensuring that those few living subjects who remain in the Warmblood neighborhood are safe from the more malevolent of his undead subjects, especially the Hand of the Old King.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What a city of the undead looks like.
- ◆ How a butcher became duke.
- ◆ What sort of living person stays in a city of resentful undead.

GM Moves

- ◆ Brandish undead resentment over the Generation Wars.
- ◆ Contrast the crowding of the city with the desolation of the countryside.
- ◆ Threaten the living.

THE SIEGE OF THE NORTH

In the far north of Kivca, the Generation Wars continue. While the Hand of the Old King and their ilk appeared to accept the outcome of the Royal Conclave but secretly worked against it, those who rejected it outright fled to the undead stronghold in the Cripka Ruins. There they elected a dead Duke of Cripka and continued their war against the living of the duchy.

This war is going very poorly for the royally-sanctioned, living Duke of Cripka. The living forces are outnumbered and surrounded in port city of Yultos. The vantage and warmth provided by the half-submerged and kneeling fire giant corpses give the defenders warning of attack, a powerful base for defensive siege artillery, and keeps the port ice-free and open to resupply. However, the guerilla war waged by the dead duke's troops in the Wistor Pines is enough of a threat to keep the king's forces at Redstone pinned down. While Yultos may be supplied, it is not reinforced.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What the dead duke will do after his forces conquer Yultos.
- ◆ What plans the dead duke has for the giant corpse.
- ◆ How the defenders prevent each casualty from becoming an enemy soldier.

GM Moves

- ◆ Attack suddenly from an angle only available to the dead.
- ◆ Punctuate with the sights, smells, and sounds of a city under siege.
- ◆ Recruit outsiders for dangerous missions.

THE GLEAM OF THE HEAVENS

The original cause and prize of the war with the giants, the rich veins of the hitherto unknown celestial iron now enriches both the Barony of the Passes and the throne. The seat of the barony is Hammervale, a city entirely created from the body of the leader of the fire giant wizards that inflicted the curse upon Kivca. Hammervale sits at the center of the broad southerly valley that contains the richest mines in the Ruintops. As well as the mines themselves, the city is surrounded by ore smelting facilities and forges, processing much of the ore locally. The palace of the Baroness of the Passes was hollowed from the skull of the wizard, and rumor has it that valuable magical treasures were found in the process.

Celestial iron is lighter than normal iron and takes an edge exceptionally well, but it is especially valued by kings and nobles across Rothaen as a durable and attractive material for resplendent and functional armor. The scholars of Redstone are experimenting to discover the metal's other properties, as are the baroness' private retainers and any other scholars and crafters who can get their hands on some of this heavily controlled resource.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What the baroness found in the wizard's skull.
- ◆ What undiscovered magical properties the celestial iron possesses.
- ◆ When the sorcerers of Yurkon Tower will strike against the realm.

GM Moves

- ◆ Overcome someone with greed for the gleam of celestial iron.
- ◆ Reveal that a dangerous opponent possesses celestial iron.
- ◆ Unveil a property of celestial iron.

THE LAND OF DARKEST DAWN

The southeastern corner of Kivca is the naturally warmest part of the realm and the only part of the land where “the seasons” are a meaningful measure of time. In the warmest part of the year, Blackstone Lake and the Hubrik Swamp are unfrozen, and the Ephoc Steppe transforms from drifts of snow to waves of golden flowers. The southeast is still a land of undeath and endless night, but summer brings the glimmer of dawn to the southeastern horizon.

The goblins of the steppe call this light “won kil a-usstor” or “the slash of the divine spear” in the common tongue. For them, it heralds the beginning of the season of the hunt, during which goblin warbands roam widely through the Ukial Forest in search of wolf cubs to tame as steeds and deer to fill their winter stores. The lizardfolk of the swamp simply call it “the warming light”. They venture from the pole-houses of Gualik to harvest fish and peat for their own use and rare flowers from the bogs from which they distill their famous potions and poisons.

Gualik is also the seat of the Blackstone Baron, the nominal lord of these lands. The current baron is Tulagi Wolfmane, a broad-shouldered goblin warrior whose flowing black locks are streaked with silver and whose dull iron armor is scarred from battle. Tulagi controls the lizardfolk through wise government and most of the goblin tribes through strength of lineage and an iron will. Their forces are not strong enough to impose their control far beyond the swamp on the eastern steppe, though. In the shadow of the forest, communities of the living and the dead, of lizardfolk rebels and independent goblins, of peaceful intent and of bold purpose, all thrive, at least as well as any can thrive in the wilds of Kivca.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What scheme from the edges of the forest threatens to overthrow the baron.
- ◆ What the lizard cults of Gualik plan to sacrifice to bring back the light to their swamp.
- ◆ Who has been raiding goblin tribes and kidnapping their finest wolf-trainers.

GM Moves

- ◆ Interrupt with the howls and clamor of a goblin hunt.
- ◆ Seize as a sacrifice.
- ◆ Reveal a treasure the snow conceals.

LAND OF THE WOLF

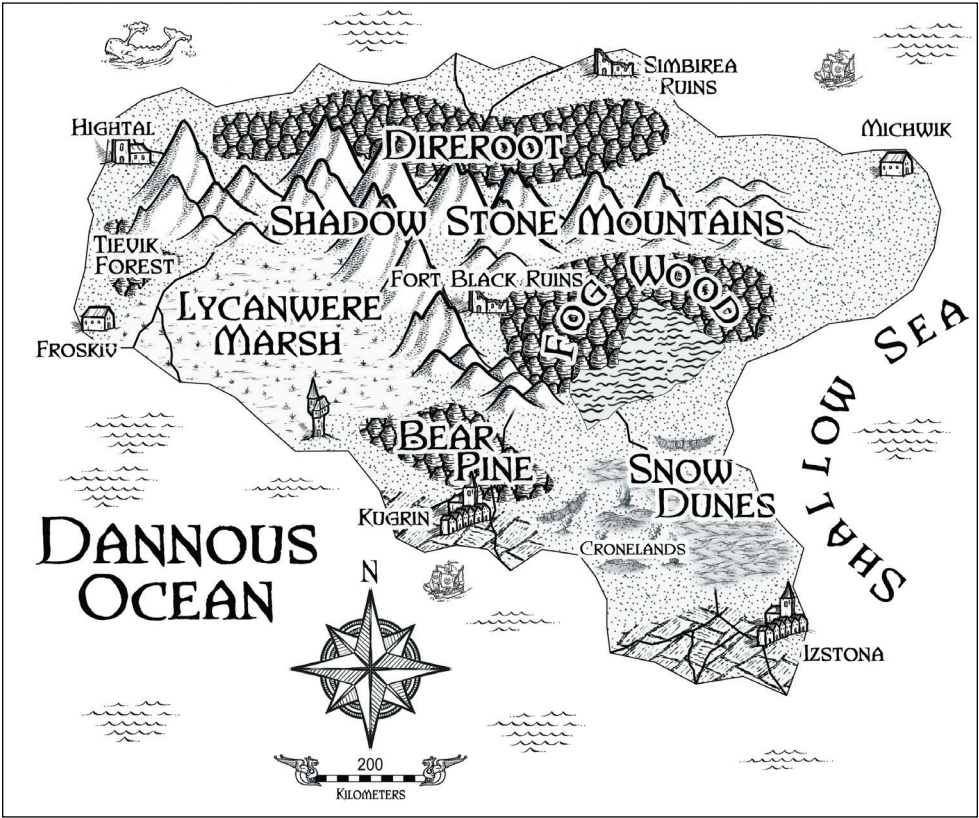
On the far side of the Ruintop Mountains, where the north wind blasts down off the ice-laden ocean, the ancient coastal fort of Wolfgrim rises jagged above the foreboding mass of the Rismur Pines. The Earl of Wolfgrim has always had a free hand in ruling the east, but since the curse, some say that the king at Redstone does not even know who holds the earldom in the west. Unfortunately, he knows all too well. The Earl of Wolfgrim is his former lover, an exiled Rusal shapechanger named Siancara. What the king and his inner circle do not know is whether or not she died in the Generation Wars. It would usually fall to the Duke of Givkis and Ukrial to act as intermediary between Wolfgrim and the throne, but the duke is focused on his city and pays no attention to his own lands, let alone those of his neighbors.

Play to find out...

- ◆ How much truth is there to the rumors that the Earl of Wolfgrim has raised an army of undead werewolves to march on Redstone.
- ◆ Who the mysterious diggers at the Tombs of Tylis are and what they are looking for.
- ◆ Why the earl was exiled and what connections she retains to Rusal.

GM Moves

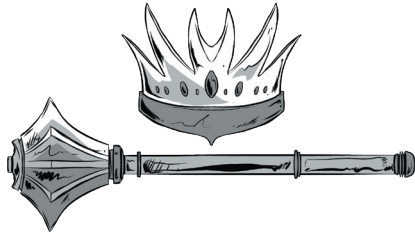
- ◆ Spread a terrifying rumor about the earl or her activities.
- ◆ Reveal a well-disguised shapeshifter.
- ◆ Coat in a patina of decay and a shroud of threatening darkness.



RUSAL

Coregency

Rusal is a land of rugged individualists, each convinced of their own self-sufficiency, paranoid of outside control, and dismissive of social organizations that might mask foreign agents or undermine their own individual autonomy. The Tzars of Rusal have been a mixed lot: the worst of whom were despots overthrown in cautionary tales and the best of whom carefully manipulate the fears and self-image of the people to exert control while seeming not to control at all. Currently, the throne is held by the Märalän, an old and respected family from Kugrin.



Rusal legends tell of an armada of ships, collectively known as the Skeap Nafem, each crewed by a single family, from an oppressive realm over the seas who fled to this unclaimed land and made it their own through toil and struggle. Each legend names a different realm, contemporary, historical, or imaginary, and each legend gives different names to the land's prior inhabitants.

KUGRIN, COURT OF THE MÄRALÄN

On the south coast of Rusal, nestled between the forest of Bear Pine and surrounded by sharply seasonal fields, lies the large city of Kugrin, more often the capital of Rusal than not. Here, most of the high houses of Rusal maintain their winter residences and summer farms. Although the city is currently home to the court of the Tzar, visitors to Kugrin would be hard pressed to identify which of the comparatively modest pine-log structures in the city was the royal court. Kugrin has no public buildings, least of all a formal palace. The current dynasty maintains their ancestral residence. Kugrin also has no public servants; all servants of the crown are simply employed by the Tzar.

Transitions of power usually reflect a shift in the balance of economic or social power between houses and a dissatisfaction with the ruling house among the common people. These transitions are usually violent and, on rare occasions, the new Tzar will be lucky enough to be able to expand their ancestral home to include or replace the dwelling of a newly dispossessed neighbor. Too much ostentation is frowned upon by the common people of Rusal, however...at least, when that ostentation is visible in the city.

Those in the know describe the current Tzar, Ylinda Märalän, as ruling with a fist made of vipers clad in a burlap sack. Outwardly, she maintains the respectful egalitarianism expected by the Rusals, but behind the scenes she strikes at threats to her position with blackened steel and ritual sorcery. She also wields the Märalän's long-standing domination of the Bear Pine logging industry to counterbalance the house's lack of traditional agricultural interests.

Other major houses in Kugrin include the Härbat, who control most of the farms to the east of the city, the Spuled, whose looms produce most of the city's fabrics, and the Drenön, who just lost many of their next generation to an ill-fated steam wight hunting expedition in the Cronelands.

Play to find out...

- ◆ How secure the Märalän's hold on power is.
- ◆ How true the rumors are that Ylinda Märalän is a demon sorceress from another world who has usurped control of house Märalän.
- ◆ How a disaster overcame experienced wight hunters like Talän and Siltok Drenön's party.

GM Moves

- ◆ Cover wealth with a veneer of humility.
- ◆ Cover sneering bigotry behind a veneer of hospitality.
- ◆ Cover dark sorcery behind a veneer of the ordinary.

IZSTONA, THE ROCK OF GLÄV

The other region with major seasonal agriculture is on the plains south of the Cronelands and the Snow Dunes. Perched above them on a strongly-walled rock, thrust jaggedly out of the cold earth, squats the city of Izstona. The social and architectural fabric of Izstona is much the same as that of Kugrin: modest, log-walled egalitarianism with a well-disguised sneer. The main difference is a fierce rivalry with Kugrin and its houses. Izstona is an occasional capital, but a frequent ally to would-be Tzars seeking to overthrow the current regime.

At the heart of many such rebellions are the Gläv, the bloody kingmakers of this frozen isle. Their farmlands are not the largest or wealthiest, but their store-rooms on the rock are the deepest, as are their pockets, thanks to unknown resources in the Shadow Stone Mountains. The head of the house, Hrantil Gläv, is the unofficial ruler of Izstona and a voracious collector of arcane curios. Under their rule, treasure hunters, adventurers, and ne'er-do-wells from across Rothaen flock through the iron gates of Gläv Tower, seeking employment under the golden tapestries that hang from its strong, stone walls.

Other major houses in Izstona include the Sagit, staunch allies of the Gläv, whose spearbands are feared across Rusal; the Todik, respected by friend and foe alike as the only house in Izstona to offer public opposition to Hrantil Gläv and his wealth; and the Jonidükön, a small house of outsized magical power, said to be the only force in Rusal that Hrantil fears.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Why the people of Izstona accept the contrast between house Gläv and every other house in Rusal.
- ◆ What force imbues Jonidükön's magic with such terrible power.
- ◆ Who house Gläv will support against house Märalän's tzarship.

GM Moves

- ◆ Dangle fabulous wealth beyond terrible danger.
- ◆ Shine a light on house Gläv's difference and on the people's strange acceptance of it.
- ◆ Interject rebellious words and deeds.

SUMMER AMONG THE LIEGS

Scattered around Rusal, hidden deep in the island's marshes, woods, and tundra, lie the actual estates of Rusal's nobles. Far from the jealous eyes of the commoners, protected by loyal retainers, curses, and blood magic, and created from a murderous desire for privacy and isolation, the wealthy Rusal maintain extravagant summer homes called Liegs. Only other nobles are invited to a house's Lieg—anyone unlucky enough to stumble upon one will usually never leave, subjected to summary execution, enslavement, undeath, or worse.

In the Rusal imagination, the noble houses are simple country folk, living hard-working lives in simple country farms and mines. Their ability to seasonally relocate from the harsh environment of their homes to the cities and towns of Rusal is a just reward for their backbreaking labor. The nobles do their best to cultivate this image by sponsoring rustic art and festivals, through strict policing, and by using powerful and collectively organized psychic magic to reinforce the egalitarian “reality”.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What happens when the Rusal discover the truth about the Liegs.
- ◆ If the noble houses' hold on the minds of the people can be broken.
- ◆ What dangers lie in bending the reality of so many people.

GM Moves

- ◆ Make someone disappear from home and memory.
- ◆ Change reality to cover an inconvenient truth.
- ◆ Submerge them in a sudden, chaotic, and unsettling rustic festival.

DIREROOT

On the frigid northern slope of the Shadow Stone Mountains lies the sprawling forest known as Direroot. Few in Rusal are willing to enter these ancient woods. Some say that when the Skeap Nafem arrived, the native people of Rusal fled north to escape the invasion and died in these bitter woods, their vengeful spirits fusing with the trees that witnessed their deaths. Some say these trees are the oldest living creatures in Rothaen, predating the gods themselves, and that they fed on the sorrowful spirits of those ancient refugees. Some say the former rulers of this land live there still, biding their time, nursing their hatred, and preparing for the day when they will return in fire and blood.

Rumors also tell of a ruined city on the far northern coast. Perhaps it is a seat of some ancient magical king, or the lair of a vast white dragon larger than Gläv Tower itself, or that it is larger than the rock on which Izstona sits, or it is even larger than all Kugrin. Or maybe it is a myth told to lure the curious to their deaths at the hands of those ancient tree spirits, or bandits, or the undead lord of Fort Black.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who the ancient natives of Rusal were.
- ◆ What the truth of the Direroot is.
- ◆ What power in Simbirea is able to twist even the bent reality of the Rusal nobles.

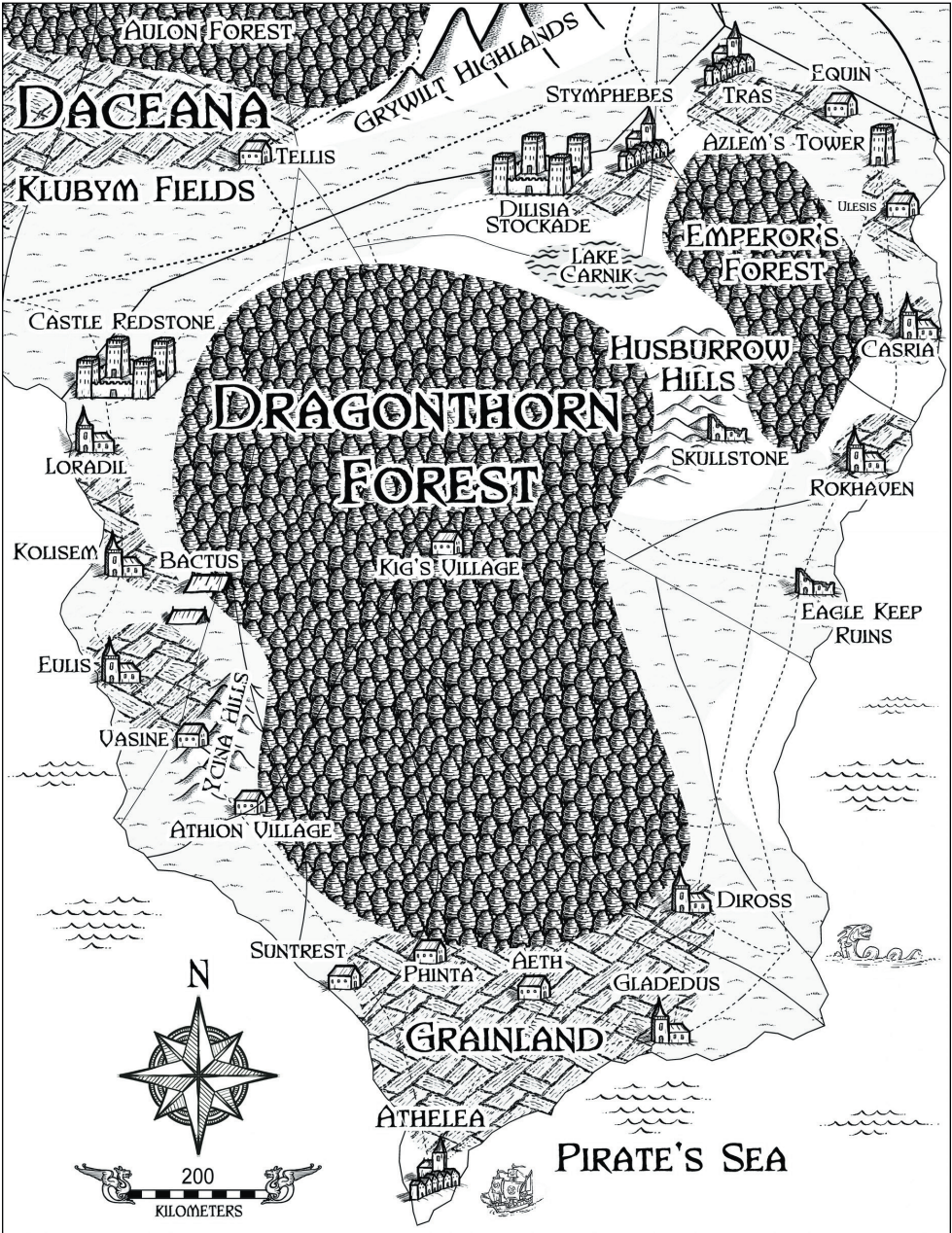
GM Moves

- ◆ Present them a map to Simbirea.
- ◆ Spread a new rumour of ancient evil, suffering, or danger.
- ◆ Show them a new reality, true or otherwise.



JORGINVER

*Athix Empire, Daceana, Findi, Jötunn,
Luxinvale, Scaldival, The Wilds, Ulenvin*



ATHIX EMPIRE

Absolute Monarchy

Once a mighty empire, Athix is now a shadow of its former self. The nation paid for its sins against its former elf slaves, their “barbarian” neighbors, and the dwarves of the Iron Blade Mountains with a long and bloody civil war lasting over a hundred years. By the end of the conflict, the country’s size was reduced by three-quarters and all of its slaves and vassal states were freed. The empire also lost its navy, leading to the current pirate epidemic. Now, with young Empress Materna Larinum XXXII on the throne, the Athix Empire is trying to find a new identity and rebuild, but it may be too late.



Most Athix citizens are ethnically Athelean and are taught from birth that they are the purest race of humans in Rothaen; as such, they believe that they deserve to rule over everyone. This singular belief helped fuel their downfall, just as it had for the Asue’Tai elves a thousand years ago. Hubris and arrogance led the Atheleans to believe their northern vassal states were not smart enough or strong enough to mount a full invasion, or that the elven slaves could not rise and break free from slavery. The Atheleans thought that the dwarves would never march against them, believing that dwarves were greedy and easily bought.

The civil war took the nation by surprise, and by its end, demoralized its people. Many still cling to their superiority complex, saying one day the empire will rise again, but a great deal of the younger generation, including the empress herself, see that it is a time to shed such thoughts. The civil war might be over, but the cultural battle for the hearts and minds of the empire has just begun.

Beyond the mental effects of the war, the empire's infrastructure was weakened. No longer having access to the resources of its vassal states, not to mention tax revenue, the empire struggles to rebuild. Without slaves, they now must pay for labor. Additionally, the dwarves have raised rates on all ore sold to Athix to recoup losses from the war. All of this has put the empire in a very bad position. Basic services have started to collapse. Road patrols have been reduced to within a few kilometers from the cities, allowing highwaymen and monsters to attack travelers. Cities themselves are crumbling as buildings go unrepaired and sanitation plummets.

Empress Materna Larinum XXXII was born very shortly before her father Emperor Gious Flavious Larinum II made peace with the north and the dwarves and proclaimed the civil war over. Then, in a twist of cruel fate, he died suddenly. Whispers of hardliners assassinating him for making peace can still be heard in the halls of the senate. There are many who feel that the war was going to take a turn and Athix could have won. Materna was only five months old when the emperor died. Her mother Agith was named Steward of the Crown until Materna reached adulthood at seventeen and could take the throne. She ruled on her daughter's behalf, but she was never prepared for such a responsibility.

After Empress Materna Larinum XXXII was crowned, she quickly learned that the nobility had been using her mother to pass laws that increased their own power and ignored reconstruction. It became clear to the young ruler that the Athix government was completely corrupt. She is trying take back the power that was stolen, while reforming the old system and rebuilding her country. Materna can trust no one, especially her royal council. Every step of the way, she runs into roadblocks. She must take control of the government and eliminate her enemies, or her reign will be short.

There are many noble families, but eight are the major power players in the Athix Empire. You can create NPCs from these family names who could be in any position in the government and can interact with the players. These families have members appointed to many different positions throughout the bureaucracy and across the empire.

THE MAJOR NOBLE HOUSES

- ◆ Larinum: Royal family with a direct line to Flavious Larinum I, founder of Athix.
- ◆ Antius: Feel that Athix should become a republic with no emperor.
- ◆ Ecitius: Loyal to the crown, but have become bankrupt from trying to keep several scandals out of the public eye.
- ◆ Galluis: Have several judges and three senate seats, as well as being in bed with the Highfoot halving mob family.
- ◆ Mindius: Vidus Mindius, their leader, feels it is time for a new family to control the throne, and that family should be his.
- ◆ Titus: Use to oversee the slave trade, now are looking for a way to stay relevant within the empire's new reality. The Titus family is at the greatest risk of becoming a minor noble house.
- ◆ Varius: Youngest family to obtain nobility. They did so through creating a vast merchant network that is now under siege from pirates and mob families. They want a republic government.
- ◆ Sulus: Second-oldest noble family in the empire, rumored to worship a demon lord and practice necromancy.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Which family will strike first.
- ◆ Who runs the beggar guild.
- ◆ Which demon has direct contact with the throne.

GM Moves

- ◆ Hire some muscle to do a dirty job.
- ◆ Pay hush money to cover up a scandal.
- ◆ Secretly enslave a workforce behind the throne's back.

ATHELEA

Crumbling, Crime Infested, Dangerous

Athelea, the former grand city of marble, red brick, and gold, is now falling apart. In the city corruption is rampant and services are underfunded. The city watch, courts, and local government offices are full of people on the take. Because of this, halfling gangs go unchecked. Three mob families, the High-foots, the Loces, and the Mastles, maintain control of certain quarters, with fights breaking out over turf often. The biggest battlefields are the city's bazaar and docks, which before the war were well-oiled machines of law and order... well, mostly. Recently, there has been a strange thing happening at the docks: low tide is lasting longer and stranding ships. No one knows why.

Another thorn in the crown's side is the rise of cults. The official state religion is Athecia, but with the loss of the war, many citizens have lost faith in the empire's gods are looking elsewhere for religion. Cults have become an alternative for a disenfranchised populace. This focus on new gods and religious leaders has eroded the Athecia church, taking worshippers and their silver coin away. The most dangerous group in Athix now is the Cult of Asmodeus (see page 411). And now new rumors say that a goddess lives deep within the earth and is the true creator of Rothaen.

Athelea can be both incredibly dangerous and lucrative. The city is massive with several districts to explore, including an ancient sewer system used by cults, gangs, and monsters. At the end of Emperor Gious Flavious' reign, he stopped paying the legions and took away the path to citizenship for those who joined. This has led to a drop in troop numbers, which in turn means mercenary adventurers are frequently hired to carry out missions. The docks are always looking for people to ride along with their ships to protect against pirates or to take the merchant wagons north.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Which sleeping goddess is a kilometer under the city.
- ◆ Why the water at the docks has started to recede.
- ◆ Who the Cult of Asmodeus has in the senate.

GM Moves

- ◆ Cause monsters in the sewers to attack the city.
- ◆ Infect the slums with a plague.
- ◆ Start a coup.

DRAGONTHORN FOREST

Rainy, Dense, Dangerous

Dragonthorn Forest sprawls across central Athix, taking up most of the country. Before the rise of humans, it was the center of the elven Asue'Tai Empire. During this time, both the forest and the Asue'Tai Empire covered nearly the entire continent. Dragonthorn Forest is hilly, with hundreds of streams, gullies, and moss-covered rocky outcroppings. There were once well-maintained roads to many villages which the forest is slowly erasing. The villages that are left survive by logging and hunting in small areas. It rains every few days somewhere in the forest and during the winter there is a fair amount of snow.

When the Asue'Tai Empire fell, their structures were devoured by vegetation and now there are hidden ruins everywhere just waiting to be found. Pwati elves patrol portions of the forest in an attempt to keep humanoids, such as orcs and goblins, from corrupting the land. They also help protect the fey kingdom of Silver Wind, an unseen kingdom ruled by the pixie King Trillup in the northern part of the forest.

Kig's Village is in the center of Dragonthorn Forest. With a mix of humans and Pwati families living here, the village is a welcome sight to travelers. You can even see some fey from time to time who will visit. There is a peace accord with the local forest folk, and trade happens between the different peoples all the time. Ethical logging and trapping makes up most of the village's trade and they sell raw materials all over Athix. It is also home to a small military fort that monitors what is going on in the forest and keeps the villagers safe. Despite the military's presence, Kig's Village is far removed from the Athix government, and the people here like it that way. The village is growing, and those who come here tend to agree it is time to claim independence.

The forest is crawling with fierce beasts and hideous monsters looking for an easy meal. Small tribes of goblins, orcs, and ogres have laid claim to the abandoned town of Gathdale, and the druid grove of Cith'Kal Glen has been corrupted by malicious wood spirits and the undead. The monarchs of the forest, though, are the green and black dragons. These intelligent, camouflaged, winged beasts do not move around a lot, but when they do, the whole forest erupts in violence.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Where the dragons hide their gold.
- ◆ What the goblins are digging for near Cith'Kal Glen.
- ◆ Kig's Village's plan to secede from the Athix Empire and take Dragonthorn Forest with them.

GM Moves

- ◆ Show the pools of healing magic.
- ◆ Hunt them with packs of beasts.
- ◆ Capture them and throw them in an ogre jail.



DACEANA

Shadow Empire

The history of the Asue'Tai elves is a long a bloody tale; if told by them it is one of immeasurable suffering at the hands of humans from the Athix Empire. Their telling of history is not wrong, but it is not the whole truth, either. They have suffered, yes, but they conveniently leave out their own crimes against humans for centuries before their empire's own fall.



The elven enslavement was a direct result of the Asue'Tai Empire enslaving humans in the first place. For centuries, humans were put into selective breeding programs, used in blood sports, and forced into hard labor. The denigration of humans ended when the Asue'Tai Empire erupted in a civil war as warring factions struggled for control. This conflict escalated when a slave revolt added to the chaos, and then the dwarves entered the fight on the side of the humans, tipping the scales.

When the dust settled, the Athix Empire was born and the Asue'Tai elves were enslaved for their brutal treatment of humans. This event marked the beginning of the "Era of Humans" and is noted in histories as being year one of the Common Era.

But history repeats itself, and just as the Asue'Tai elves had been arrogant and cruel to the humans, the Athix humans in turn were arrogant and cruel to the elves. When several northern territories declared independence a hundred years ago from the Athix Empire, a new civil war started and the Asue'Tai slaves took the opportunity to rise up and break free.

When the Athix Empire Civil War ended, several new independent states formed, included Daceana, the new elven Asue'Tai homeland to the north of what remained of the Athix Empire. The Asue'Tai propaganda machine kicked into high gear moments after the ink dried on the agreement. The plight of the elves and their harrowing fight for freedom from the evil Athix Empire is told to anyone who will listen.

ELF PURITY LAWS

Because of humans' short lifespans and the passage of over a thousand years, many people do not remember the true history of the Asue'Tai, and the elves are counting on the forgetful nature of humanity. Many of those in parliament are children of the nobles in the Asue'Tai Empire and a thousand years of slavery under an "inferior" race has just added to their rage. To them, freedom was the first step, domination is the next.

The Daceana constitution is full of laws that on the surface appear to promote elven culture, but are really meant to ensure "elven purity". However, some do question these laws. Under the constitution, only "pure elves" can be citizens and enjoy government-funded programs. Also, non-elves must carry government papers to move freely and buy items. Conveniently, "pure elves" are described as Asue'Tai elves only. Pwati, Drucolen, and Kylom elves are categorized as "sub-elves": they cannot become full citizens. Half-elves are not outlawed, but they are encouraged to leave Daceana as soon as they can—those who do not tend to disappear. The Asue'Tai elves point to their enslavement as the reason for the purity laws, stating that they must rebuild Asue'Tai culture. Daceana's towns are segregated. Non-Asue'Tai, even those accompanied by a "pure elf", are not allowed in Asue'Tai-only establishments.

These laws have forced many of the humans who had lived in the regions for generations to migrate to Scaldival, Luxinvale, and Athix. Those who stay have their lands seized and rented back to them at exorbitant rates. Non-elves speak of harassments and price gauging when they go into Daceana towns. The Asue'Tai claim that this is a natural response to the horrors they endured at the hands of humans. They claim that it will take time to rebuild trust. Some of this is true. There is animosity, and for good reason, but it is clear that the majority of Asue'Tai see themselves as the purist form of all elves and sentient beings.

Asue'Tai elves give in to The Call more than other elves and make up almost all of the Drucolen elf population. The Purity Laws forbid the execution of an Asue'Tai Drucolen elf, and those who start to change are brought to a path that leads them underground to the blight warrens. This is extremely dangerous because the corrupted Drucolen are mad and have no loyalty. So far, none of them has attacked any Asue'Tai settlements, but it is only a matter of time before they do.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The empire's next move against humanity.
- ◆ Which Drucolen elves are already on the council.
- ◆ About the humans secretly enslaved by the government.

GM Moves

- ◆ Send the Silver Knights to track down undesirables adventuring in Daceana.
- ◆ Spread propaganda about why citizens must be Asue'Tai elves.
- ◆ Bury the truth about wanting to resurrect the old empire.

THE SILVER KNIGHTS

Secretive, Powerful, Well-organized

The Silver Knights are the secret police of Daceana who enforce the purity laws. They take orders directly from the parliament and have keeps throughout the land. Their jobs include securing the border, detaining non-elves who do not have the proper paperwork, and hunting down political rivals of the Parliament of Elders. They are highly trained warriors who can be formidable foes for an adventuring party to deal with. Adventurers must have permits to explore Daceana, any magic items found are considered property of the state, and all treasure is taxed at 50%.

THE UNDEAD, MONSTERS, AND BATTLEFIELDS

Daceana was the site of several bloody battles during both the Asue'Tai Empire's and Athix Empire's civil wars. These massive conflicts were separated by a thousand years, but both have left scars on the land. There are ruined keeps, massive graveyards, and long forgotten tombs all over the countryside. These sites have mostly been invaded by monsters and the undead, but they hold great treasures. The government of Daceana considers all magical items its property and the Silver Knights search for adventuring groups with and without permits. Adventurers raiding a site and trying to make it across the border before being caught by the Silver Knights is a common occurrence and is deadly for both sides.

SYLVALEAN

Sylvalean is the capital city of Daceana, but until just thirty years ago it was a large trade port for the Athix Empire known as Gi'rus. When the truce was signed and it became clear that the Asue'Tai would be the new rulers of the land, Athix Empire sympathizers set fire to the city as they left. The elves point to this as just another indication of the human hate for elves. They set to rebuilding the city to show that no matter the degree of human hate, they would not be held down any longer. As the intervening years pass, Gi'rus has been transformed into the beautiful capital of Sylvalean. Tall gleaming crystal spirals reach up to the sky. Colorful cobblestone roads wind between buildings. Trees canvas the city, giving the impression that one is in the forest. Clear streams flow throughout, with stone bridges allowing easy passage. There are no slums, homeless people, or dilapidated building anywhere.

The city watch wears plain clothes and stays out of sight until there is a need for them to act. If someone is breaking a law, they are quickly swept up and taken away. Citizen offenders get trials; non-citizens can have their papers revoked or are banned from the city. If it is a small crime, though, only a fine will be applied with a stern warning.

Unlike many large cities, there are no halfling mob families here—the parliament has a secret deal with them. If they stay out of major cities, they may use smaller towns and villages as hubs for their businesses. They can easily move black market goods through the country, including the slaves whom the Asue'Tai want to keep out of the public eye.

Visitors to the city of Sylvalean will find a perfect urban paradise and a community that appears to welcome everyone. Certain places are designated cultural centers for Asue'Tai elves to heal from their time as slaves. These places are off limits to all non-citizens. Any visitor that does not follow the rules will be asked to leave or stay at their inn until it is time for them to depart. Diplomats have more leeway, but this only goes so far.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The Asue'Tai elves' real agenda.
- ◆ The battlefields where an ancestor died.
- ◆ The secrets of Aulon Forest.
- ◆ The passage underground to the Drucolen blight warrens.

GM Moves

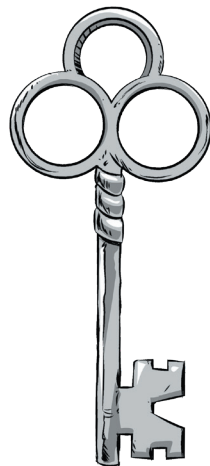
- ◆ Spy on non-citizens.
- ◆ Start a new propaganda campaign.
- ◆ Hire adventurers to find elven artifacts. (All magic items are considered Asue'Tai elf artifacts.)
- ◆ Hide working crews of slaves in plain sight.



FINDI

Bankocracy

When the dust settled after the Athix Civil War, Scaldival was bankrupt and its cities needed to be rebuilt. To generate fast gold, they sold their western lands to the Guilds of Metal Helm, or GMH. GMH is a consortium of merchants from the Greystik dwarves' city of Metal Helm, deep beneath the Iron Blade Mountains. Their members include dwarves, halflings, gnomes, and even some progressive goblins. In the deal, Scaldival provides military support for a price, but the land is owned outright by GMH as an independent country. Scaldival keeps ownership of the city of Kugum as their main port on the Emerald Ocean, including the roads leading to it from their lands.



The GMH has already put together a government to run the country, but they have run into criticism. When they bought the land, the people that lived there were given the option to relocate to Scaldival or Kugum, otherwise they would become citizens of Findi. To vote in Findi elections you must be a landowner. To be a landowner, you must be part of the GMH. To be a part of the GMH, you must be a dwarf, halfling, gnome, or goblin. This meant that over two-thirds of the population at the time of Findi's founding were ineligible to vote or own lands. Most of human and elf families became second-class citizens overnight and only received a small payout for their family property. These actions have led to the formations of cults such as the the Fist of Edik (see page 423) that call for the return of Findi lands to Scaldival.

The guild's moneylenders founded the First Bank of Findi, the first national bank. Their stated goal is to have branches around the world where people can deposit their coins and then withdraw them at any location. The major cities of Findi already have bank branches and there is talk of a branch opening in Luxinvale. The bank also loans large sums of money to other nations, effectively putting those nations deeper into the pocket of the GMH.

Hi'Rekval

Center of Commerce, Capital City

Before the founding of Findi, Hi'Rekval was a fishing port, whaling, and trading center used by dwarves and gnome craftspeople to sell goods to the surface world. Because of this, it has many accommodations for shorter folk, and thus it became the capital of the newly founded Findi. In the past ten years, the city has grown quickly and many new stone buildings have been erected. The city is now a merchant hub attracting many guilds. Hi'Rekval is petitioning to have an airship platform installed so that they can do more business with Carthic and the lands beyond. There is a black market, but it only sells minor illegal items, such as low-grade recreational magic drugs—things that are not going to get the mobs into too much trouble for selling.

Weapons must be strapped down and wearing armor is not allowed inside the city without a permit. There are blacksmiths set up outside the walls of the city who will take your armor, fix it, and hold it while you are in the city. The price for this service is often as much as the permit, but at least you get back fixed gear. It is not uncommon to see a line of adventurers donning and doffing their armor just outside the gate. Magic, however, is a tricky thing to regulate. Magic items must be registered, which can cost a lot more coin than the normal permit. Magical weapons, including staves, wands, or rods must be stored while a person is in the city: they cannot be carried. People frequently try their best to hide the power of their items.

The population has shifted a lot. Whaling and fishing are no longer the center of the economy, as many of the old fishing families have left. Those trades have been replaced by businesses working with the First Bank of Findi. Dwarven miners sell ore in large quantities. Gnome jewelry-makers ply their trade in the craft district. It is a rich town being funded by dwarven gold. The worry among some is that this large influx of gold will tank the economy. Rothaen runs on a silver standard, but gold is everywhere in Hi'Rekval and prices are inflated by merchants looking to get in on the action. Normal people who only have silver will have a hard time finding any services that will take their coinage.

Play to find out...

- ◆ How to make money with the new national bank.
- ◆ How to fight for reunification with Scaldival.
- ◆ The mob ties between Findi's government and the pirate nations.

HALFLING MOBS

GMH's halfling members are unsurprisingly part of halfling mob families. When it was announced that the Greystik dwarves wanted an above-ground country after the Athix Civil War to be controlled by themselves and other non-humans, the halflings quickly applied to join. Despite founding Findi, the dwarves have had little prior interaction with the surface or the halfling mob families. Those in mob families are interested in the First Bank of Findi, hoping to skim off the top of its profits and launder gold when needed. Right now, connected halflings are trying to lay low until the bank has expanded into other regions—then the fun will begin.

KUGUM

Scaldival Seaport

The city of Kugum, and the five kilometers surrounding it, are legally part of Scaldival. This includes the road through the White Elk Forest and all the way to Scaldival itself. When Scaldival sold the land, they made sure to keep Kugum, a busy port city, so that they would continue to have access to the sea. This has given the city an odd status. It is ruled by Scaldival, but it is far enough away that can feel like an independent city. Mayor Jugan Hondaus was recently elected to his third term in office and runs the city efficiently and effectively. He has been able to make Kugum a great place to do business for Scaldival, but business with Findi is a different matter.

There are factions, such as the the Fist of Edik, who want the lands sold to Findi to be returned to Scaldival, and they see Kugum as a great place to launch an attack. The Findi government is aware of these groups and has placed spies in the city, which in turn has heightened the paranoia among the fringe groups. The halfling mobs have been strong-armed out by the pro-Scaldival groups, which is an amazing feat. They have set up a black market to fund their political ambitions. Politics in Kugum is a dangerous game.

GM Moves

- ◆ Crackdown on groups that threaten the Findi/Scaldival alliance.
- ◆ Recruit able-bodied fighters to start a new civil war.
- ◆ The Fist of Edik is hiring people for a bank heist.

CANCE RUINS

Cance was once a farming village surrounded by kilometers of fertile land, but this changed when an evil corruption came. Long before the Civil War, the Temple of Decay was built here by a powerful and rich noble name Julif Grutan. He had been chased out of Rollek, the capital of Scaldival, for preaching about Tiston, god of rot and decay. He took his followers west, looking for a smaller, less defended place to grow his church. He bought land in Cance and immediately built a temple. At first it was advertised as a temple to Hafis, a local god of the crops, but slowly Julif started to corrupt the villagers, using fear and intimidation to take control of the village.

The local crops died and evil began to take hold. Finally, the villagers gave themselves freely to Tiston. The surrounding villages sent for help, fearing that the same fate as Cance would befall them. Bandits and monsters had started to congregated in the town as the temple expanded. Groups of adventurers started to arrive, and for years there were attempts to destroy the cult. Finally, one of these groups was able to trap Julif in a crystal; it is said to still be at the very bottom of the temple. Even with the defeat of the cult, the area remains tainted by its past.

Other villages will warn travelers to give Cance a wide birth. High grass and wild wheat blanket the area. The wooden structures have fallen to the ground, but the huge menacing temple of decay is ironically still standing, its black stone edifice dominating the surrounding countryside. The adventurers that had overthrown the cult make one mistake: once the temple was cleared, it and Julif's crystal were never destroyed, claiming that after trapping Julif in the crystal they were unable to destroy it or remove it from the room. Since then, the ruins have become infested with monsters looking for a lair. The area seems to call out to any evil, drawing it in. The new government of Findi has not paid much attention to the temple, but the surrounding villages are asking for help, believing that the cult is back.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If Cance can be cleansed.
- ◆ How deep the corruption goes.

GM moves

- ◆ Free Julif and spread decay.
- ◆ Taint the village's food.
- ◆ Have villagers look for help.

WHITE ELK FOREST

Holy Ground

The White Elk Forest is home to its eponymous magical inhabitant. The elk is said to be as old as the world and as wise as the gods. If you speak with it, the elk may speak of a secret or share great words of wisdom with you. It is protected by a band of elves that are called the Ya'tal'ik who are not Asue'Tai, Pwati, or Kylom. They, too, are believed to be as old as the world. There is no mention of them outside of this forest and the Asue'Tai have at times claimed that these elves were part of an Asue'Tai elf tribe that escaped the fall of their empire; however, these elves look very different from those elven cousins and have none of their culture or malice.

The Ya'tal'ik do not talk with outsiders at all. Very little is known about them except that they seem to be immortal and able to heal any wound suffered. The truth is that the white elk and the forest gives them this ability—any who have left begin to age quickly. If they return, they are restored. Those who enter this sacred place are advised not to hunt the elk, or they will quickly find themselves in a fight they cannot win. There are other creatures here, but they do not seem to be under the same protection. Parties will be followed, and the elk is led away from their locations through bribes of fruit. What happens if the elk dies? That's for the GM to decide.

Play to find out...

- ◆ A great secret from the white elk.
- ◆ The real reason the Ya'tal'ik protect the white elk.
- ◆ The origin of the fountain of light.

GM moves

- ◆ Sicken the forest.
- ◆ Surround with cacophony and silence.
- ◆ Imply hidden creatures.



JÖTUNN

Tribalism

Cold, unrelenting wind howling across an ice-covered landscape: this is Jötunn. It is the land of the Cuik dwarves and ice giants, a place where a storm can kill a person faster than a blade. It is not an area for the weak, and those who dare to explore here better come prepared for anything. Jötunn is a type of no-man's-land, just like The Wilds (see page 249) to the south.



The nomadic Cuik tribes are constantly on the move and hunting prey. Any permanent settlements here were built by other humanoids, such as bugbears, native human tribes, or unaffiliated humans looking for absolute freedom from outside governments.

Jötunn is also the home of the ice giants who roam the countryside looking for prey. These monsters are so large that their corpses turn into the foundations of enormous ice pillars. These towering ice pillars dot the land. Though they can be found in Rusal and Kivca, ice giants are more numerous in Jötunn. Ice giants are solitary, only congregating during mating season. They are sometimes accompanied by a dire polar bear or wolf.

Jötunn may not seem to have seasons, because it is very cold year-round, but there are. During the summer months, the days are longer and slightly warmer. There is a small amount of melting near the border with The Wilds, which creates little creeks and lakes that can last a couple of months. The temperature never goes more than a few degrees above freezing for longer than three or four hours in the summer. During fall and winter, the nights can last 12 to 16 hours, with a three-week period during the month of Aithsis of total night.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Where the ancient sites of Jötunn are.
- ◆ If you can go toe-to-toe with an ice giant.
- ◆ How to survive the brutal weather in the dead of winter.

GM Moves

- ◆ Cause an arctic storm.
- ◆ Reveal a long-lost city that still lives.
- ◆ Send dangers that fly through the air.

HIGHFOLK TOMBS

Strange Magic, Dangerous

From a distance, these tombs look like small mountains, but as one gets closer, they reveal themselves to be huge ziggurats. These step pyramids are made of a strange white stone that emits heat, so much so that no ice forms on the outside of the tombs. Every stone has an odd carving, which is part of the lost Highfolk ancient language. Climbing the stairs to the entrance of any of the tombs can be very dangerous. The cold is no longer an issue, but the high winds can lift a person in full plate mail very easily. Precaution must be taken to avoid being thrown off the tomb.

The Highfolk lived in Jötunn before it was turned into the year-round ice-covered land it is now. In climate, it was once like Luxinvale and home to a people who looked like those who live in the north today. Strong jawed, pale skinned, and blue eyed, the Highfolk settled the area during the first era, when the gods roamed the earth. This was a mythic time steeped in mystery. The Highfolk witnessed the war of the gods, and their lands were one of the many battle-grounds. Legend goes that their god, Huk-ti, died in the battle and Jötunn was born. His soul blanketed the lands with ice and snow, the likes of which had never been seen before. This event wiped out most of the population. Realizing that if nothing was done they would all die, the great wizard Jukane created the ziggurats and led his people inside to safety. Here they would sleep until a new age arrived and the winter broke.

But billions of years have passed, and Huk-ti's soul still has an icy grip on Jötunn. How much truth is there to this legend? It is hard to say.

No matter how powerful Jukane was, he was still only a mortal wizard and, unfortunately, his spell of suspended animation eventually wore off and the Highfolk rapidly aged and died in their sleep, turning the ziggurats into tombs. Not all of the wizard's spells wore off, though. The warmth that flows through the tombs comes from enchanted emeralds that lay at the bottom of the buildings.

The ziggurats were designed for the Highfolk to wake up in and be able to feed and clothe themselves as they reentered a warmer Jötunn. Unlike other tombs with this design, these structures are almost hollowed out, with large rooms that hold forests—it even rains in these rooms. The floor is covered in two meters of rich soil, and huge pine and oak trees fill up the spaces. One can forget they are in a huge building. There are also birds, elk, and wolves living here. These creatures are not like the modern-day animals found in Rothaen's wilds now. These are those creature's primal ancestors. Some do not even look the same or are larger than dire versions of the same animals. Suffice to say, it's not safe to explore these indoor woods.

The Highfolk themselves are long dead, dust in their tombs at the bottom of the ziggurats. If the emeralds are removed, the magical warmth that keeps this place alive will evaporate and the buildings will quickly turn into solid ice, killing everything inside.

Play to find out...

- ◆ About treasures from the first era hidden here.
- ◆ How ancient creatures once looked.
- ◆ If the Highfolk are truly dead.
- ◆ If any of Jukane's primordial magic still lives in magical items left behind.

GM Moves

- ◆ Flood a room with rainwater.
- ◆ Surprise the party with a gigantic bear.
- ◆ Reveal a pond of healing water.
- ◆ Make the magical emeralds faulty and drop the temperature.

BARBARIAN TRIBES

The Cuik dwarves who migrate all over Jötunn are not the only people who scrape out an existence here. There are human tribes, often thought of as barbarians by those who encounter them from outside lands. Some of these tribes have even chosen to reclaim the “barbarian” descriptor as a symbol of empowerment. The primary human groups in Jötunn are the Redpaw, the Snow Wolf Barbarians, and the White Bear Barbarians. Other humans have settlements on the border with The Wilds: Intridge, Restal, and Fritio. These settlements contain people looking for freedom from larger governments and don’t mind the weather. Many of them came here during the Athix Civil War, fed up with politics and with sending their kids off to die for an empire that never really cared about them in the first place.

The tribes, on the other hand, have always been here. Descendants of the Highfolk? Maybe. But these groups of people stick to their areas and seldom interact with outsiders, except to trade now and again. They can be hostile, but if a group shows respect, they can find a people willing to help others safely traverse Jötunn. These human tribes share several similar cultural customs with the Cuik dwarves, especially in terms of hunting and technological preferences. They do not smelt metals and therefore do not use swords, using primarily spears and clubs instead.

The tribes each have their own identities and customs. The Redpaw are ruled by the toughest warrior. The White Bear Barbarians believe that the giants are evil gods that must be appeased to avoid their wrath. Finally, The Snow Wolf Barbarians are matriarchal—woman marry multiple husbands and run the tribe. These tribes are small, averaging a few thousand members at any time. They make great hirelings for guides or muscle (see page 34 of the *Dungeon World* book).

Play To find out...

- ◆ What is killing off the Redpaw tribe.
- ◆ Who can guide you to the mostly forgotten dungeons of Jötunn.
- ◆ About the different cultures and rites of the barbarian tribes.

GM Moves

- ◆ Mislead a tribe about the PCs intentions.
- ◆ Have a tribe member show up at just the wrong time.
- ◆ Have the tribe preform an ancient warrior ritual that causes an ice giant to appear and attack those attending.

RI'S TOWER & WIULJON

There is a huge valley south of the Black Ice Mountains where the small village of Wiuljon is located. Even further south of this settlement is Ri's Tower, a white building that reaches a thousand meters up into the sky. It is bone white and dark blue and gives off a low humming sound. Ri is a very old elven wizard. There is a rumor is that he may be the last emperor of the Asue'Tai Empire, but this is not true (see Daceana page 211). Others whisper that he is one of the elves that started the Athix Civil War. Whatever the case, Ri has lived here for over two thousand years. The tower itself was built even further back, maybe as a retreat for the wizard. Ri has never succumbed to The Call, the affliction elves suffer in advanced age that corrupts them into Drucolen elves. He might well be the oldest, most powerful wizard in Rothaen at this time.

Wiuljon is home to seven hundred humans, elves, and gnomes who serve Ri. They hunt for him and the beast that protects his tower inside. They create or go searching for any magical items he orders them to find, sometimes sending people to far-flung regions such as Cixt. His servants often die trying to get an item, and so a new group must be sent. The town seems like a cult to outsiders, but after a few days, a newcomer will feel the urge to do Ri's bidding as well. Though they do not openly worship him, they are blindly obedient.

Ri rarely appears in Wiuljon, preferring that the townspeople come to his tower instead. He lives on the top floors and can teleport people to him with ease. He is thought to have a divination pool or crystal ball that allows him to see his devotees and communicate his will to them. There seems to be no end to his power over someone once they have been converted. No matter how far they go, they will be under his watchful eye and powerful control.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What traps, magic, and beasts protect Ri's tower.
- ◆ Why Ri has the control he does.
- ◆ What Ri is planning on doing with all the items his cult brings him.

GM move

- ◆ Draw the PCs to the town and slowly take control of them.
- ◆ Send mercenaries after the PCs when they meddle in Ri's affairs.
- ◆ Have the PCs learn about Ri through cult members sent abroad to find items for him.



LUXINVALE

Absolute Monarchy

Before the Athix Civil War, Luxinvale was perceived as a barbarian vassal state by the empire. Their nobles did not have a place at the emperor's court and their people were seen as soldiers for the military and cheap labor for national projects. The nobles fought over land rights that never conveyed any real power and their king was merely a figurehead. This changed with war. The people saw a way out from under the yoke of the empire. Luxinvale and Scaldival had always been allies, and when they combined their armies together and marched south, it shook the earth. The Athix Empire had underestimated the barbarians of the north.



Luxinvale emerged from the Athix Civil War with a strong forward-thinking king and cities barely touched by battle. Most of the war's battles had been fought in Athix, Scaldival, or the newly-formed Daceana, leaving those nation's cities destroyed. The fighting never reached Luxinvale, a fact that its allies point out anytime reconstruction costs are brought up.

The nation is in the middle of an amazing transformation as King Ulmik transforms cities from sod and timber into stone. His vision is not that of conquering new lands, but instead of elevating Luxinvale above its rough past. Ulmik, for all his talk of progress, is a fierce king who fought in some of the bloodiest battles in the war. This duality makes him a complicated leader. When King Jult died with no sons, Ulmik was elected by the noble families because of his war record and popularity. The nobles had no way to know that Ulmik would be more than just another war general ascending the throne. King Ulmik has proven to be an intelligent, forward-thinking leader who envisions Luxinvale as the new beacon of civilization. Not everyone is ready to capitulate to his vision, though little seems to be getting in Ulmik's way. Right now, the country is a simmering mix of old and new thoughts and traditions.

One of the new changes is religion. Ulmik follows a newer faith called Gruuse, which started out as a cult before the war but has slowly grown in enough number of followers to be seen as a religion. They teach self-reliance, piety, and adherence to a strict code of moral conduct. They also venerate a group of four gods: Juio of the sky, Hitro of the underworld, Sia of the oceans, and Ki of humanity. Ulmik has declared Gruuse to be the state religion, something Luxinvale has never had before. The populace is divided between those who worship the old gods and those who have converted. Though no religion has been outlawed yet, tensions are rising, and violence has already started in isolated areas. Many feel a war of belief could be on the horizon. Only Gruuse churches are being built, while other temples have been put “on hold”.

Another complication is the radical cult called the Disciples of the Wyrms (see page 421) who have been converting citizens in smaller villages and looking for ways to infiltrate the king’s court. They are dedicated to replacing human rule with that of dragons in a bid to bring back the Second Age, a time when dragons ruled empires. The cult has taken over a few villages with gold and the promise of more under new draconic leadership. Ulmik is aware of this threat and has already started to act against it.

Luxinvale society is made up of several noble families who run different parts of the kingdom for Ulmik. The oldest male of each family holds the title of earl, a version of the word *jarl* from Scaldival. Titles and land pass from father to son. Noble women are simply referred to as “ladies”; however, if they are directly related to the king, they carry the title of princess or duchess. Likewise, sons and brothers of the kings are called princes or dukes. A woman has yet to sit on the throne, but it could happen if she held sway over nobles during an election for the crown. The commoners work for the lords on whose land they live on. They do not have the right to vote or representation. This is one point Ulmik is not progressive on. He, like his predecessors, believes the crown and its power are ordained by the gods. The fact that he was elected by other nobles is seen as the gods working through mortals, nothing more.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The next target of the Disciples of the Wyrms.
- ◆ Who is truly loyal to the king.
- ◆ What noble family has been corrupted by a demon.

GM Moves

- ◆ Give bounties for monster heads from Ramswood Forest.
- ◆ Make treaties with far away governments to encourage trade.
- ◆ Outlaw the old gods and start an inquisition.

ESPIK, CAPITAL CITY OF LUXINVALLE

“A city that will rival any in the world! A capital that will show the greatness of a people! This is my promise and our mission. We will be the center of all things.”

—King Ulmik

The new nation of Luxinvale, and its capitol city Espik, was founded by King William Espik in 560 CE. Before this time, the land was home to various human tribes that the Athix Empire claimed to control. After over 500 years of battles with these tribes, Athix needed a way to finally gain control. Athix approached William Strongwolf, then a tribal leader of the Grey Wolves, and offered him the title of king and the support of the Athix Empire to unify his people. Of course, this new title and power came with the condition that he would be loyal to the empire and that Luxinvale would be a vassal state. He took the deal and after five years of ruthless slaughter of his enemies, Chief William Strongwolf was crowned King William Espik.

William is a complicated figure. Some believe that if he had not taken the deal, Luxinvale would have unified naturally and been able to repel the Athix Empire, while others say that Athix would have just taken what they wanted in time and that at least this way Luxinvale became a country and not a province. For his part, it is said that the king planned to one day lead a rebellion to truly win freedom, but alas, this never came to be. The city of Espik has become symbolic of both the new and old Luxinvale.

The city is the epicenter of King Ulmik's modernization push to be a symbol of an independent, modern, unified Luxinvale. Every major building is being renovated and the boom in construction has led to a growing middle class. Anyone who can swing a hammer or pickaxe can find a job in Espik. The city is growing at a phenomenal rate. With a related boom in coin and trade comes the halving mobs, unfortunately. The black market serves the vices of the working class and business is good, even with the city watch perusing law breakers.

The city is grimy, the streets are unpaved, muddy messes, people throw trash and muck out onto the street, and rats infest almost every centimeter of the city. Sanitation is another area Ulmik is trying to change. After visiting Asi and Kalla'De, he has decided to invest in indoor plumbing, trash removal, and paved streets. He had heard that the Athix cities had such things, but had never seen them until he visited those lands. He has hired dwarves to dig out a sewer system below the city and wizards to create a trash disposal portal to the plane of fire. If this works in Espik, he will try the programs in other cities.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What the mob is up to regarding all the construction contracts.
- ◆ Why there are goblins sneaking into the city at night.
- ◆ Who in the royal court is loyal to the Athix Empire and is planning the king's assassination.

GM Moves

- ◆ Hire mercenaries to guard shipments and construction sites.
- ◆ Enrage the Disciples of the Wyrms into doing something rash.
- ◆ Have the mob get rid of evidence through the trash disposal portals.

CASTLE BLACKEAGLE

Castle Blackeagle is a strange place few dare to enter. It is said to have a connection to another world in another dimension and, if one is not careful, they could find themselves on the other side. Though there have been explorers who have entered and returned with stories of rooms full of monsters and gold, there are even more stories of groups entering and never coming out.

The building itself is out of place with the rest of Rothaen. It has an aura of strange magic and changes shape periodically. There are those who believe it was not built here, that it is a copy of a castle in the alternate dimension to which it is connected. Maybe some mad god of magic built it as a bridge between worlds, no one knows. Whatever the truth is, this massive structure is full of mysteries waiting to be solved. Who knows where its magical portals lead.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who the lord of the castle is.
- ◆ What magic artifacts from the other dimension lie within.
- ◆ What lives on the lowest level.

GM Moves

- ◆ Change the rooms around.
- ◆ Animate the doors.
- ◆ Devise magical traps.

RAMSWOOD FOREST

Covering huge portion of Luxinvale, the Ramswood Forest provides a livelihood for tens of thousands of citizens. The forest is almost exclusively Ramswood pines. These trees create a bone-white hard wood that is great for magic staves, wands, and rods, not to mention building materials.

The undergrowth consists of thorny bushes and thousands of varieties of flowers and other flora. Beasts of all types hunt these woods; areas must be cleared before the felling of wood can happen. Between logging and hunting operations, people can live well here away from the king's changes, but it is not without its dangers.

There are large numbers of bugbears, ogres, and goblins that make their home in Ramswood Forest. They breed at high rates and have begun to push into human-held areas. On top of this, the Disciples of the Wyrms have been hiring humanoid monsters to attack remote villages as part of their plan to overthrow the king. For example, they have been breeding large numbers of kobolds to overwhelm these villages.

King Ulmik has offered five coins for each head of a monster brought to the authorities in Ramswood. Due to the monsters' numbers, if a full-scale war breaks out, it could lead to the fall of the kingdom, something the Disciples of the Wyrms would love.

Besides hordes of humanoid monsters and crazed dragon followers, there are several ancient burial grounds throughout the forest: Farrek's Circle, Black-wall Ruins, and Reklam Mound, to name a few. Entering these places can cause issues. Locals believe that the desecration of burial areas will upset the old gods and bring about plagues, so many of the sites are monitored. Stealing anything from here is a capital offence and will lead to a quick beheading.

In the Ramswood there are Pwati elves who are split into two main tribes: the Romail and the Yklin. Both are small and tend to stay hidden, protecting certain sites from loggers and goblins alike, such as Farrek's Circle and the elven tree village of Hurrindale. Hurrindale's location is hidden from outside eyes, a myth spoken by only a few druids. There is also a rumor of a curse, claiming that if a human ever steps foot on Hurrindale's mystical bridges, a blight will kill everything living in Ramswood.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Where the humanoid monsters are coming from.
- ◆ If the stories of Hurrindale are true.
- ◆ What lives at the top of Gariuth Tower.

GM Moves

- ◆ Awaken the fey of the forest.
- ◆ Cause an ice storm.
- ◆ Rally the kobolds to attack for their cult masters.



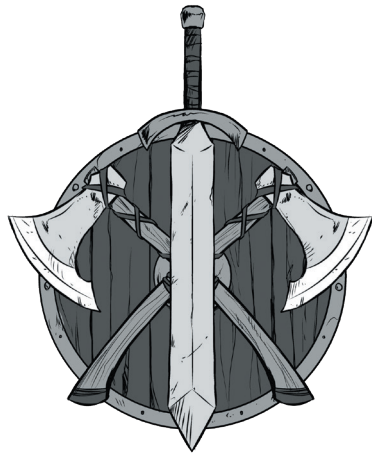
SCALDIVAL

Constitutional Monarchy

“When you ride into Scaldival, you can sense its history in the air, blades of grass, trees, and stones. It is a sad place, but one with good people and I love it here. But I’ll always be an outsider. I can never truly be a true Northman.”

—Alex Tuymadui, merchant and former Athix Empire citizen

Scaldival is a strange land of myth and monsters, of great deeds and hidden evils, of sadness, and of strength. The land is scarred by multiple wars and magical corruption. Here a person will see both natural and unnatural wonders. Its people hold goodness and honor above all else. They believe being an ethical person is a must. Honor and respect are given to the elderly, while wisdom is passed down to the young. There is a saying that one will hear often as they ride through the lands:



“There are monsters everywhere, so there is no need for a person to be one.” Does this mean that there are no evil people in Scaldival? No, it just means that, overall, the people here are ethical, good, and honor-bound.

The country has been through its share of turmoil and heartache over the years. It was once part of the Athix Empire and was seen as a backwater region of barbarians who were not equipped to govern themselves. Athix felt this way about all its vassal states and especially about any governments it did not yet control. This hubris caused the empire to fall into a civil war and Scaldival troops were on the front line through all of it. The people wanted to be free from Athix’s tyranny once and for all. But the war cost Scaldival more than any other people. The amount of lives lost was so high that whole villages and towns were depopulated. Families were wiped out and resources were burned. In the end, the war had left Scaldival bankrupt and on the verge of collapsing into its own civil war as its people starved in the streets.

It was at that dire moment that the Guilds of Metal Helm approached Queen Vinitia the First and offered many bars of gold for the western part of Scaldival. Facing civil war and famine, she reluctantly said yes, with the requirement that the coastal city of Kugum and its connecting roads remained under Scaldival's control. The dwarves agreed, and the deal was struck. This move sent shockwaves through the land as families who made their living in the west were given a choice: move to Scaldival soil or become a citizen of Findi. Most migrated back east, swelling the population there. Those who stayed found that they were now second-class citizens at best; some lost ancient family lands as the new owners plotted out their plans. Nobles who had owned large swaths of the west coast lost everything, as there were no new lands for them in the east. There were riots and people calling for the queen's head, but when wagons of food and supplies started pouring in from all over Jorginver, the tide shifted in the queen's favor. She fed, clothed, and housed her people, which in the end was more important than the land lost, at least to most. There is a cult of veterans called The Fist of Edik (see page 423) that has sworn to depose the queen and take back the lost western lands.

Queen Vinitia's decision was a very smart one. It is not known just how much gold was given for the property that is now Findi, but it was enough to pay off all of the country's debt as well as stimulate the economy and begin rebuilding. In the thirty years since the war, all the damage from that time has been erased and grand statues commemorating the war have been erected. The other achievement that can be linked to selling the lands was that the depleted population of both the west and the east came together. Towns now had enough people to function and grow. This move was not popular with many of the noble and loyalists, who saw the crown as a traitor for selling ancient lands, but it saved Scaldival from being annexed by Luxinval.

There is talk among the nobles about possibly expanding south and east, taking lands by force from The Wilds, the Athix Empire, and Ulenvin, but these plans are reckless. Queen Vinitia the First saved her people, but she is now well into her seventies and her daughter Princess Aslog will have to take over soon. Many wonder if Aslog will be as cunning and adept at court intrigue as her mother. Time will tell.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If Aslog will rise to the challenges of modern day Scaldival.
- ◆ If the Fist of Edik will topple the current monarch and rally the people to war.
- ◆ If the nobles can seize lands from The Wilds to replace lands lost in the west.

GM Moves

- ◆ Have nobles move against the queen.
- ◆ Pay for adventurers to scout The Wilds for the nobles' expansion plans.
- ◆ Crown Aslog queen.

ROLLECK, CAPITAL OF SCALDIVAL

Rolleck is the crown's seat of power and the center of education, trade, and military might. The city is not fancy, in fact, it is said to reflect its people: understated, practical, and made of stone. The castle sits in the center of the city on a motte several meters high, giving its towers a view over the surrounding countryside. The castle is not more ornate than any other buildings, just bigger. At one time, it could hold every person in the city, but those days are gone. The city expanded quickly with the sale of the western lands and, over the past thirty years, there have been two population booms. New outer walls and docks on the Osuo River were built, increasing trade with Luxinvale.

The city is surrounded by farmlands as far as the eye can see, but this does not mean that they are safe for travel. Creatures from the Asmodeus Pit and the Gnarly Root Steppe attack farmers and cattle on a regular basis. The farmers of Scaldival, in turn, are extremely tough and not to be messed with.

As with most major cities, there is a strong halfling mob presence in Rolleck, but here things are a bit different. The Green Hill Shire, located on the east coast of Jurillin Lake, is home to the Loce and Mastle families, as well as several other smaller non-connected halfling houses. For the most part, these two do their best to stay out of each other's way. They also have strong ties in Findi. The shire is an independent land, by virtue of the crown, therefore the mob families must tread very carefully to maintain their deal. If the queen decides that the mob families are a problem, she could send in troops and wipe out the shire in a day. In Rolleck, the queen understands that having a black market can be a good thing, especially when the shire pays taxes on their earnings.

Play to find out...

- ◆ How the Loce family is planning to gain more power in the city.
- ◆ What comes crawling out of the sewers at night.
- ◆ Where the best place in town to learn of adventure is!

GM Moves

- ◆ Summon a demon!
- ◆ Hide an enemy in the crowd.
- ◆ Call into question a noble in the city.

ASH WOODLANDS

The Ash Woodlands lie north of Rollek along the Osuo River. The leaves of the trees here are multiple shades of gray and the air has small white lights floating in it. The floor of the woods is covered with blue water with brightly colored flowers floating on top. These colors are in stark contrast to one another. The sound of the forest is thick with birds and insects. Unlike many other forests, there are no Pwati elves here. In fact, this forest is believed to be devoid of people. There is talk of a portal to the realm of shadows, or even to the forge of Strogjörn, creator god of the Hurwick faith. Because of this, the woodlands are believed to be a sacred place, one whose secrets should be left alone. It is said that exploring them will result in a curse, but this rumor tends to draw more into the woods than it keeps out.

The truth is that the woods are the home to a wizard named Eluk, who has polluted the area with magic for decades. The Ash Woodlands are his laboratory, where he experiments on the plant and animal life. After so many years of raw magic seeping into everything, the woods and its inhabitants have forever been changed. Eluk lives alone in a small stone building. His advanced age has made it difficult to walk around the forest as he once did, but he can still be found wondering the woods, casting spells, and taking notes on their effects. Below his house is a treasure trove of magical knowledge and items that he has created over the years.

There are many vicious beasts and man-eating plants in the Ash Woodlands, but they all fear Eluk. The monsters here have all been changed and enhanced in some way and are loyal to Eluk. Monsters in the forest get a +5 to their HP.

Eluk (10th level wizard)*Solitary, Old, Intelligent*

Energy strike, Wand of Eluk (2d10 damage)

10 HP 4 Armor

Robes of Mana

Special Qualities: Eluk has access to all wizard's spells, as well as having the advance moves **Empowered Magic**, **Enchanter Soul**, **Arcane Ward**, **Counter Spell**, **Master**, and **Protective Counter**.

Description: Eluk is an elderly human, with a bald head and long white beard. He wears robes of deep blue and gold. His eyes are blue and his hands are boney.

◆ Drain intruders of life force.

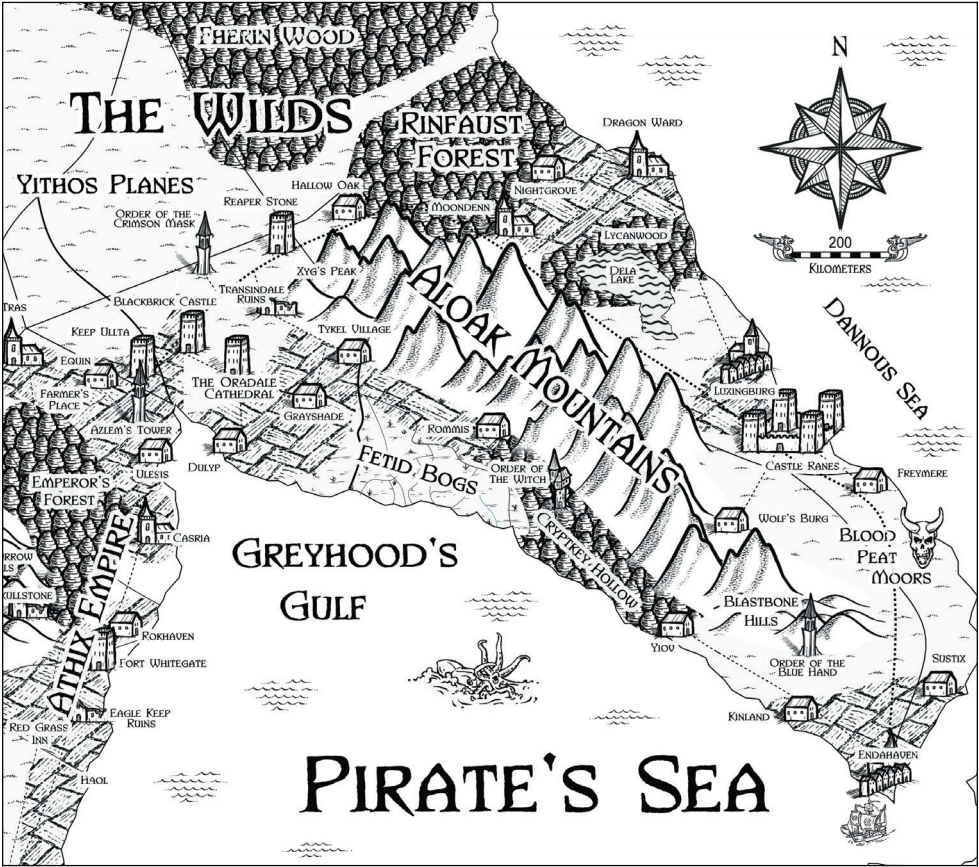
Eluk is dying. He has been using magic for years to keep himself young, but now the magic is failing. He has been draining life force from the forest, especially the trees, but even that is waning. He will see intruders as a source of energy. First, he will send monsters to wear them down, then he will attack. He uses a magical skull to drain his victims. Once he speaks the words to activate the skull, it will start draining HP from all those around it besides Eluk. It will drain 1 HP per the time dictated by the GM that best fits the narrative. The skull has 10 HP and 2 AC, if it is destroyed, so is Eluk. Killing Eluk and not the skull will result in Eluk regenerating. This takes several weeks. Eluk has started the path to becoming a lich to cheat death.

Play to Find Out...

- ◆ What secrets are hidden under Eluk's house.
- ◆ The effects of the magic-saturated fruit the trees grow.
- ◆ What the orbs of light do when night falls.

GM Moves

- ◆ Lay a trap.
- ◆ Reveal a shocking secret of the woods.
- ◆ Transform Eluk into a lich.



ULENVIN

Absolute Monarchy

The kingdom of Ulenvin is an ancient land cursed by witch cults, dark fey, and vampires. Ulenvin was never conquered by the Athix Empire and did not take part in its civil war. Its people are extremely superstitious, and for good reasons. This is a gloomy nation of dark magic, grisly murder, and unspeakable sins.



The witch cults, vampires, and dark fey are a threat to everyone in Ulenvin.

Seen as overly superstitious by foreigners, the fear of these evil forces is part of every decision made by the people here. The witches are not the healers found in other lands—all worship some greater devil or evil deity; many times it is the king of hell, Asmodeus himself, they venerate. There are twenty-four witch cults with three covens each, each coven having three members. The covens meet to plot their sacrifices and receive orders from their lords. Witch cults with different lords are known to fight with one another, but for the most part they are focused on the corruption of the common people.

The dark fey are any fey creatures that are evil. Malicious pixies, bloodthirsty fairies, or psychopathic nymphs are all considered dark fey. They draw pleasure from mortal pain, tricks, and killing. Many of the citizens wear several trinkets of protection to ward off such fey, but no one trinket works for every type, so there is constant fear over what horrible thing might befall a person not properly protected. Some just steal from humans or play cruel practical jokes, while others have been known to kill humans or kidnap babies, replacing them with changelings. They are mostly concentrated in the Rinfaust Forest, a strange and wicked place where the dark fey have a close connection with their home plane of existence.

Undead are common in Ulenvin. Vampires originated here and are carved deep into the psyche of its people. Several monarchs have been vampires at one time or another. Two hundred years ago, the living drove out all undead from government in a holy crusade, including the vampiric queen. But they have slowly returned and are corrupting everything they touch. King Hugran has not been seen in decades, with all decrees coming from his advisor U'tem the Wise. Some whispers say that the king is actually dead, or worse—a powerful undead who hunts mortals at night.

The state religion in Ulenvin is called Ye'Carik. Ye'Carik is the faith of the gods of light and promotes living a life devoid of sin. According to the teachings, those who are wicked will be cursed to remain on Rothaen as undead, spreading wickedness while they themselves live in constant pain from being separated from the gods. The head of the church is Pope Lue the IV who lives in the Oradale Cathedral. The pope is the public face of the church and can pass laws effecting the beliefs of the church, but seldom does. The holy scriptures are said to be perfect, and most laws have to do with interpreting their perfection the correct way. The pope is elected from the house of cardinals who run congregations all over the country. The House of Cardinals is a group of one hundred high-ranking priests which live throughout Ulenvin and oversee church doctrine. The position is a term of ten years, but popular popes are often reelected, while unpopular ones can mysteriously pass away before their term is up.

The church is very conservative and tradition is its lifeblood. If one strays from the path set out by the gods of light and the pope, that person is lost to evil. The pope was once crowned the new ruler as a sign of the church's position over the mortal throne, but ambitious monarchs did not want the church to have more perceived power than themselves and the church lost their hold over the throne. Now the king and the pope are at odds all the time. The king claims to be the head of the church, and past rulers have even resorted to killing a pope that they did not like. The church has raised an army of their own, including spies, assassins, and holy warriors to maintain their power in the region; their arguments with the crown have become a cold war.

The church's doctrine talks of peace, love, and understanding, that mortals must avoid the sins of the flesh and doubts of faith. One must be kind and generous, giving of themselves to help those in need. However, as with most, if not all mortal organizations, corruption seeps in. Priests often seize wealth from their parishioners who have recently died, claiming that the deceased

willed their belonging to the church, stealing their belongings before their families figure out what has happened. They are known to frame those who speak out against the church's interests and label them heretics, allowing mobs of true believers to do their dirty work. Not everyone in the church is corrupt, but there is always a struggle between those who are pious and those who are looking for power.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What the king really is.
- ◆ Which witch coven is the most powerful.
- ◆ What happens to those kidnapped by the dark fey.

GM Moves

- ◆ Have witches kidnap children from a small village.
- ◆ Roll in a fog of vampires.
- ◆ Play nasty dark fey tricks.

ENDHAVEN

Endhaven, the capital city of Ulenvin, is a crumbling, moldering place. The streets are mostly dirt with patches of broken stone, and the wooden walkways are decayed, worm eaten planks. It is not what one would expect when seeing a capital city. The noble houses of Ulenvin all have skeletons in their closets—some figuratively, some literally. Necromancy is officially outlawed, but one wouldn't know it by looking at the ruling class, many of whom dabble in the dark arts to increase their life spans. Throughout the kingdom, plague strikes down the poor at an alarming rate. In most countries, there are clerics and acolytes going from village to village helping the sick and poor, but here there is a shortage of divine casters. Necromancers have no shortage of raw material to work with.

The cold war between the church and the throne is hotter here than anywhere else. The Cathedral of the Holy Light is the center of Ye'Carik faith in the city, as well as being where rulers are ordained. By tradition, all nobles, including kings and queens, must come to the cathedral to be blessed by the high cardinal or, in some cases, the pope. This has happened less and less, and the church uses that fact to call out leaders who they feel are working against

the state religion. A pope has not stepped foot in Endhaven for several years, claiming that he cannot allow himself to be near such great sin without acting to stop it. Since he has not been welcome to do so, he stays away. This backwards logic is more because the pope fears for his safety in the city.

The economics of the city have been in a downward spiral for some time. The pirates make sea trade very difficult. Coupled with the decline of the Athix army, Ulenvin's biggest trade partner, and the king's withdrawal from the public, the economy is under great stress.

The nightmarish reality of the economy has been a boon for the black market. The Kurte and Highfoot mob families have been able to get their goods to the docks because of their connection to pirates. Some items, such as basic food like wheat, is kept at a low price so that the mob can endear itself to the people. Other, more specialty items, are marked up. Magic enhanced alcohol and potions are a big hit in the city. Addiction to these items is at an all-time high and it is taking a massive toll on the population. Mob wars also break out, which can lead to a reduction of food for the most vulnerable.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The true corruption behind the throne and the church.
- ◆ What effect the illegal potion market is having on citizens.
- ◆ How hot the cold war between the church and the throne really is.

GM Moves

- ◆ Reach out with a mob family to do some dirty work.
- ◆ Kill a prominent noble and point the finger at the church.
- ◆ Make the king finally leave the castle and reveal what he is.

THE FETID BOGS & CRYPTKEY HOLLOW

Running along the coast of Greyhood's Gulf are two of the most treacherous places in Ulenvin: the Fetid Bogs and Cryptkey Hollow. This sparsely populated region is home to several witch covens who serve Asmodeus and other demon lords. Those that do live in the bogs or the woods tend to be old, retired adventurers that the witches know better than to mess with. There are also zombies, vampires, ghouls, and other undead who call the region home. A temple called the Order of the Witch is also here, where the brides of hell are wed to their new masters.

The town of Yiov and the farming village of Rommis are 850 km apart along King's Road, which has led to small inns being built to allow travelers a place to rest for the night. They are located 50 km apart, just about 8 hours by horseback. Sometimes witches will set traps along King's Road to make sure travelers cannot make it to the next safe point. Then, as the sun falls, victims are attacked and eaten. After Rommis, King's Road cuts through farmland, giving a buffer between travelers and the Fetid Bogs, making it much safer.

If a coven has decided it really wants a person, it may even attack an inn, and thus these places are warded against dark magic. But witches are cunning, and they have found ways into inns through basements or pretending to be lost travelers by hiding their true nature magically. Traveling the countryside can be a bad idea for an unprepared group, but it can also hold many treasures, both in lore and coin. The church has offered fifty silver pieces as a reward for witch heads. One might think that this means that anyone's head would do, but a witch decays quickly, leaving a distinctive skull covered in abyssal writing.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What lies behind the walls of the Order of the Witch.
- ◆ Where the biggest vampire nest is.
- ◆ Who is setting traps to slow down travelers.

GM Moves

- ◆ Burn down an inn.
- ◆ Raise undead.
- ◆ Unleash a dragon from the bog.



THE WILDS

No Government

The Wilds are an immense, untamed land on the continent of Jorginver. On some maps, the region includes Jötunn and the Iron Blade Mountain to the north, but this is hotly debated by the surrounding governments. The area has long been targeted for expansion by Athix, Ulenvin, and Scaldival, but the massive Wycoso tribe has kept out armies through brute force. This Pwati elf tribe is the largest in the world, and their goal is to make sure no harm comes to the land. This means no settlements, no logging, and no mining. Wycoso's views of outsiders go from cautious skepticism to outright hate.



The Wycoso's exact numbers are not known, but their population is estimated in the hundreds of thousands. Their homes are in the trees or in the saddle of horses on the plains. In Ricwood, there are two Pwati settlements north of the Diroc Lake, Biysleaf and Hoblen. Biysleaf is built in the trees with as little disruption to the forest as is possible. It is a trading post and a place where outsiders with the right respect can come and learn about the area. Hoblen is much smaller and sits right on the shore of Diroc Lake. It is made of a collection of yurts and other tents. Outsiders are not received well here.

The majority of Wycoso sleep under the stars, much like the Molati of Iros. Wycoso create a "nest" that they construct high in the trees where they sleep. They hunt, fish, and pick wild berries for food. There are no farms or crops. During winter, they migrate to the Iron Blade Hills or to Biysleaf to wait out the cold.

Between the Iron Blade Mountains and Jötunn to the north, The Wilds receive severe weather fronts all the time. It is more likely than not to rain on any given day in any part of The Wilds. Freak ice storms can move in during the middle of summer, and hurricanes happen every spring. The temperatures during the

winter are below freezing and during the summer hot and muggy. In short, the weather is a challenge here. Wearing metal armor is dangerous in hot weather. Leather needs to be looked after in wet weather. Sleeping is never easy without proper shelter, unless you have lived here for years. Sure, the Wycoso can sleep in trees, but they are experienced here and they know what they are doing.

ADVENTURERS & THE PWATI ELVES

Unlike many other places throughout Rothaen, there are no ancient ruins in The Wilds. It is truly an unspoiled land. The Wycoso live in harmony with nature. They only hunt for what is needed and they keep an eye on animal populations. But the land is home to many more than the elves. Other humanoids, giants, dragons, and dire beast of all kinds make their homes here, and though the elves do a great job defending the forest, they also have no issues taking a little help from adventurers who want to hunt monsters. Why risk their own population when someone else is willing to do it for you?

Before adventurers can explore The Wilds, they must first talk with tribe elders at Biysleaf to get permission, the token of which is a special seal burned onto a piece of leather. The adventures must carry and produce it whenever a Pwati asks for it. If you are caught killing anything without that seal you will be subdued and taken in for a trial. Also, it should be noted that natural animals, such as elk, bison, and wild turkeys, can only be hunted for food by the group while in The Wilds. All parts of the animal must be used or donated to the local tribes that protect that area. Wolves and bears, even dire ones, are protected.

These restrictions are not extended to evil humanoids and other “monster” races. The Wycoso do not care about treasure, so the lairs of these enemies can be ransacked. If a group kills a hundred orcs and presents their scalps to the elders of Biysleaf, they will receive the following item:

The Bow of Wycoso: This finely crafted bow is blessed the elders of the forest as well as the spirit fey who embody all the natural elements of the world. It is a symbol that its owner is an ally of the Wycoso people and can be trusted to protect The Wilds. The bow grants a +1 to all **Volley** moves when used. It also gives a +2 to all **Parley** moves when dealing with the Wycoso.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What lurks in the Ricwood that could wipe out the Wycoso.
- ◆ Who the spirit of Diroc Lake is.
- ◆ Where the lair of the black dragon Augimx is.

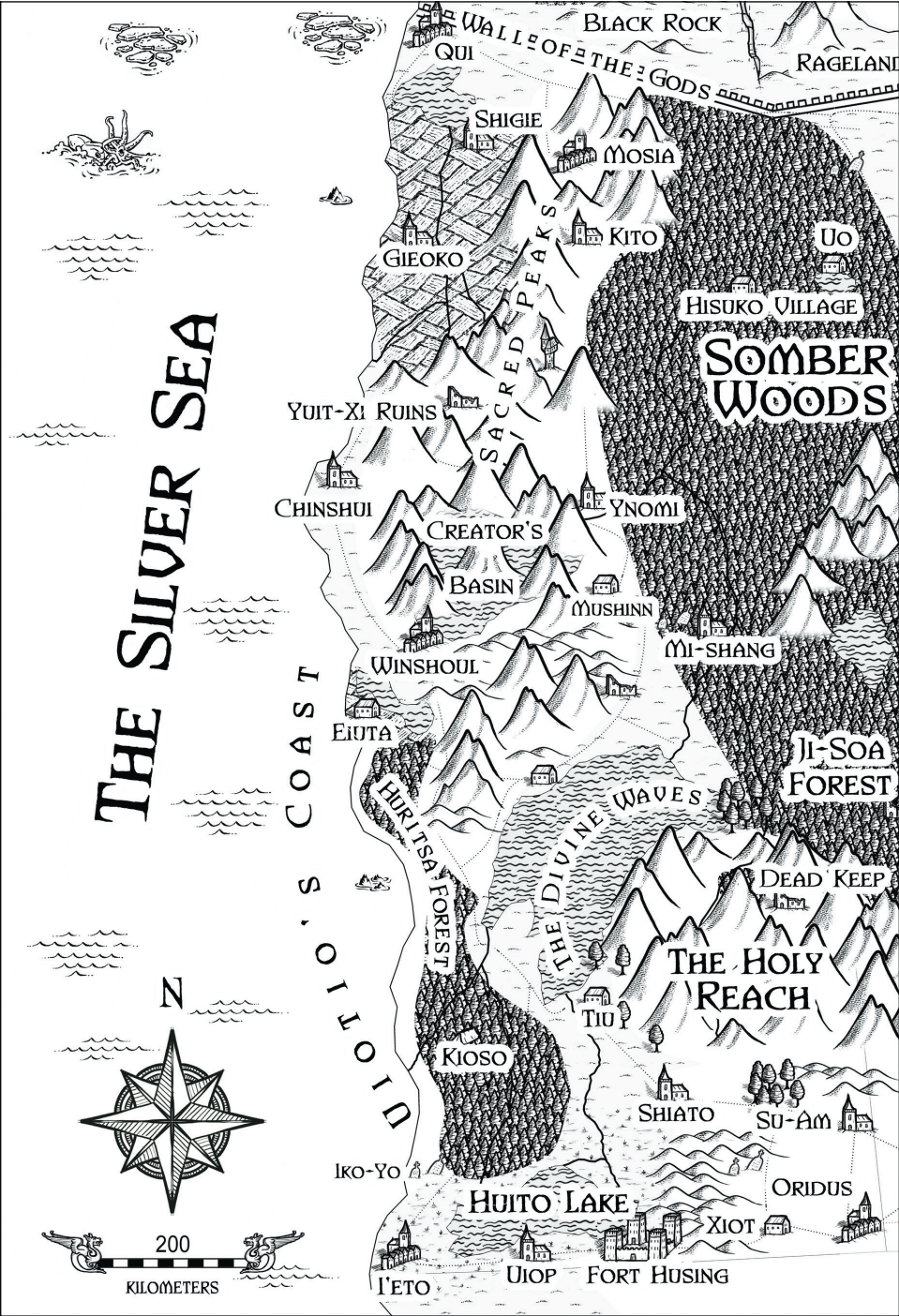
GM Moves

- ◆ Swell the orcs' numbers.
- ◆ Roll in an arctic storm from the north.
- ◆ Offer a forbidden prize that will cause grief.



IROS

*Acum, Chiatex, Cixt, Doomlands,
Molati Horde, Oleis, Ritona, Tutacami, Yulima*



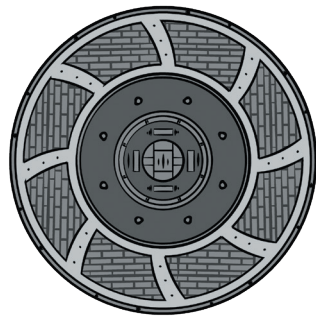
ACUM

Theocracy

“Acum, high holy land of the Wusol religion. Its people are the wardens of the Doomlands and the keepers of the one true faith. Acum is the holy land, and our unity is what makes it the closest realm to the gods.”

—Speaker Atol Xhin, from a speech given to the High Holy Council

The above statement is not all together true. Acum, for all its claims of virtue and religious enlightenment, is a country splintered by religious sects, corrupt local leaders, and the ever-present threat from those imprisoned in the Doomlands.



Speaker Atol Xhin’s job is a perilous juggling act of all the negative forces that threaten to tear down his holy land. He often overreaches and uses his power to oppress those causing him problems. Rival holy sects are looking to replace him as the head of the council. Beyond the sects, several generals from the Army of Light want to turn the country into an autocracy. Atol’s hold onto power comes down to his appointment by the Hidden Empress, she rules over Oleis, Acum, and Yulima, but it also doesn’t hurt that he has a vast network of spies.

Patrolling the magic barrier that surrounds the Doomlands is the most important thing Acum does. Even with all the infighting and wrangling, they cannot fail at this job. When a child becomes an adult, if they are not to join the Wusol clergy, they must serve in the army for no less than 3 years. In the past, there was a small number of prisoners who escaped the Doomlands and had to be hunted down and returned. This one threat of a large-scale failure of the wall is enough to keep Acum focused.

Note: Players can create an opposing holy sect of Wusol or be a part of the main temple structure. They can also be followers of a general who is looking to take over the government in favor of military rule. The decision should be a group effort worked out at the table.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If the corruption of the Doomlands is seeping into Acum.
- ◆ Where the secret shrine of the Hidden Empress is.
- ◆ Which sect is about to overthrow the government.

GM Moves

- ◆ Accuse a sect of heresy and persecute their followers.
- ◆ Start a program to cleanse evil from the cities.
- ◆ Use morality laws to frame dissidents in the priesthood.

KEEPERS OF THE WALL OF THE GODS

Lawful, Strong, Dangerous

Surrounding the Doomlands is the Wall of the Gods, a magical barrier keeping those banished trapped. The Wall is mostly invisible, with small streaks of blue magical energy shooting across the surface from time to time. It gives off a strong humming sound that becomes louder if something evil on either side approaches it. Any non-good creature that touches the Wall suffers an extremely strong jolt of magical energy, resulting in 4d10 points of damage. Although referred to as a “wall”, it is really an enclosure that reaches over the mountains and several kilometers into the earth to prevent prisoners from escaping. It is truly one of the great wonders of Rothaen

But why was this wall was created? This is a mystery. Acum has long trapped evil beings in the Doomlands, creatures that could not be utterly destroyed; this includes humans who almost became gods, crazed Drucolen elves who once ruled empires thousands of years ago, and demons who, if they were to escape, would destroy the world. The Doomlands also have countless lesser evil beings that have been banished beyond the Wall. Acum’s strict morality laws allows those in power to often send people they feel are sinners to the Doomlands; some of these poor souls are victims of vindictive priests, lying neighbors, or vengeful family members.

The Army of Light is responsible for patrolling the Wall of the Gods, in addition to maintaining order in Acum. There are times when the magic weakens in sections and creatures escape. When this happens, it is the army’s duty to hunt them down. If the escapee is mortal, they are dispatched for their effort.

Theoretically, good creatures can come and go as the please though the Wall, but very few do. Some imprisoned mortals convicted of breaking the morality laws are still good and can escape. If they succeed, they must flee Acum, or maybe even Iros.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who profits the most for ratting out their own people.
- ◆ Where the Wall is weakest.
- ◆ What it is like to be in the Army of Light.

GM Moves

- ◆ Weaken the Wall to release a major threat during the month Sol is in the sky.
- ◆ Banish the players to the Doomlands on morality charges.
- ◆ Have a corrupt general plan to use their troops to bring down the Wall.

THE SOMBER WOODS

Rageful, Dangerous

When a person dishonors their family, friends, or lord, it can take a hideous toll on those they betray. People who put honor above all else are the most affected by such a betrayal. If the person never atones for the dishonor, the victim wronged may become something new, something twisted with rage. Shame eats at them. So terrible is the act of treachery that those who suffer from it can transform into isluys—monsters of pure rage. When this happens, they travel to the Somber Woods and call for those who have wronged them to face their judgment.

Isluys can call to those who wronged them, drawing them to the Somber Woods. One person can have multiple isluys. The guilt grows as the isluys call for justice, growing until the culprit must go to the woods and face their victims. Some are killed, while others can repent and even save their victims from becoming isluys forever. Saving a loved one from their rage is cleansing; any foul deed done is forgiven through this act of atonement.

Isluys*Solitary, Rageful*Claws (1d8+2 damage, *close, reach, forceful*)

10 HP 1 Armor

Special Qualities: Can not be harmed by those who betrayed or dishonored them.

Isluys can only be human. Their bodies are twisted by the transformations to look disjointed and grotesque. Their hands grow huge claws, becoming deadlier with each day they wait for the accused. An isluys will not attack anyone who did not wrong them unless they attack first. Killing an isluys for the one who wronged them is a very evil act and will be punished by mortal and supernatural beings alike.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What else besides isluys live in the Somber Woods.
- ◆ What the Emerald Dragon is plotting regarding the forest.
- ◆ Why some rivers have stopped flowing.

GM Moves

- ◆ Hunt those who travel the well-worn forest roads with wild beasts.
- ◆ Help a dishonored free an isluys from their rage.
- ◆ Have the forest seethe with anger.

YUIT-XI RUINS*Corrupted, Vast, Lair*

In one of the several valleys of the Sacred Peaks, hidden from view by giant boulders and ancient redwoods, is the former stronghold known as the Yuit-Xi. This keep of granite and limestone was the home to the first Wusol monks over twenty thousand years ago, long before even the Kylom elves' impressive empire, who at the time ruled Northern Iros. The monks are said to have served the Hidden Empress directly when she first arrived on Rothaen. The secluded location was perfect for the empress and her fledgling religious order.

For thousands of years Yuit-Xi was the center of Wusol worship. It is where the Scrolls of the Divine were written and the bones of the first ordained monks were buried. People from all over Acum and beyond came to Yuit-Xi to worship and learn. Great works of art were carved into the walls by holy people who never said a word their entire time in the keep. Books and manuscripts were copied repeatedly to spread the wisdom of the people to all the corners of the world. It was said the library of Yuit-Xi had the greatest collection of knowledge in Rothaen and was the center of true civilization.

But the purity of the site was not to last. Two thousand years ago a corrupted monk named Shi-Chin opened a gate to the Hell of Ravenous Spirits and allowed all his brothers and sisters to be devoured. The great library and all the works of art were lost. Fortunately, a few monks escaped with the Scrolls of the Divine. The site, tainted by the evil spirits, was completely abandoned. The capital of Acum was moved to Mosia. As the years passed, the keep was all but forgotten, save for some mentions in history books.

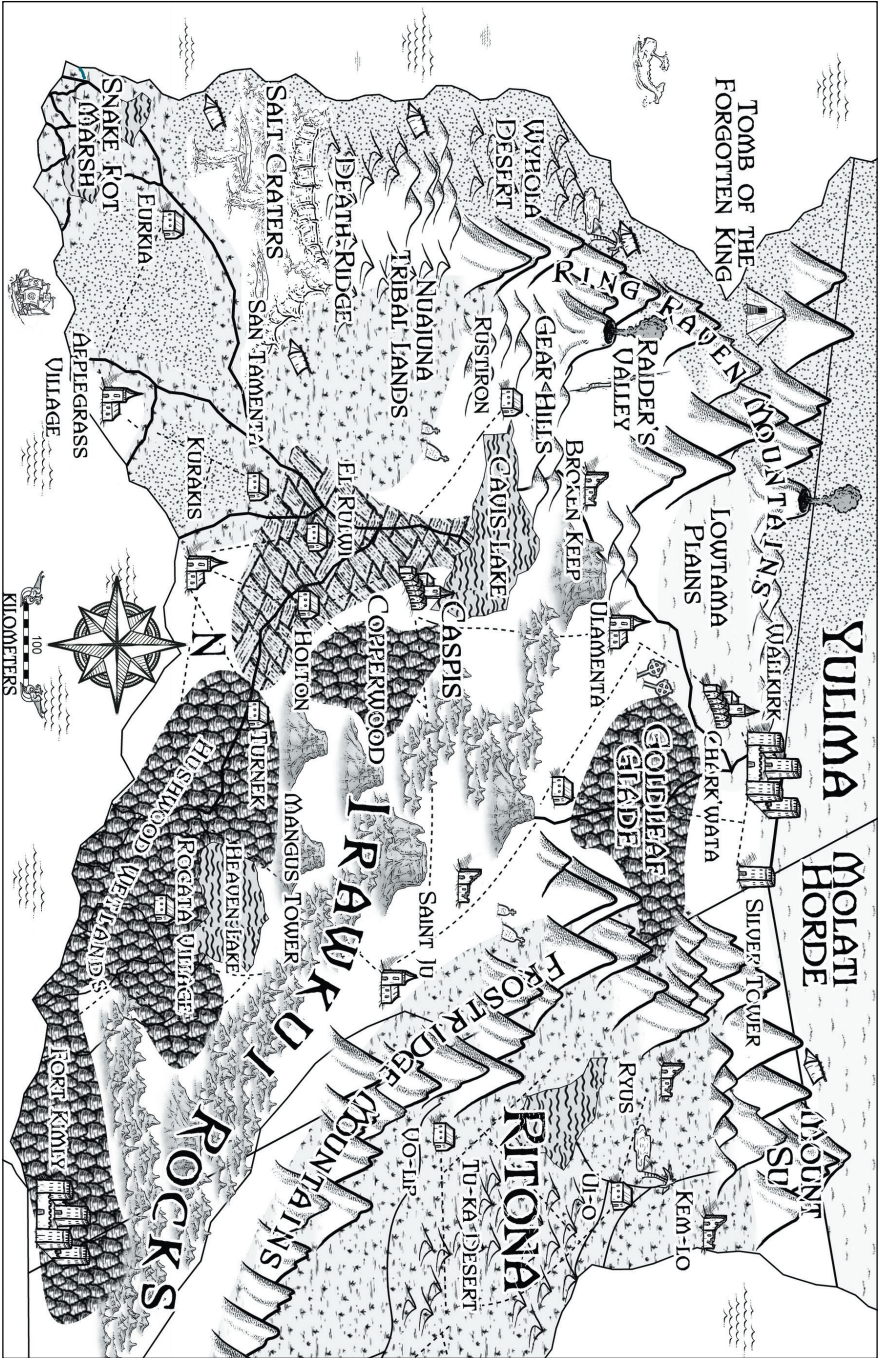
Adventurers have recently been interested in exploring Yuit-Xi, but many of these groups have never been heard from again. Those who do survive talk of a vast dungeon, once the underground catacombs of the monks, now haunted by ravenous spirits and unfathomable evil creatures who lair there. The rumors of great treasures left behind by the monks keep adventurers interested, but those who dare go to Yuit-Xi should know that the evil they face may be older than Rothaen itself.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What ancient evil lives here. Could it be the Emerald Dragon himself?
- ◆ If you can help a new holy sect of Wusol take back Yuit-Xi.
- ◆ If the gate to the Hell of Ravenous Spirits can be closed.

GM Moves

- ◆ Reveal a bigger betrayal.
- ◆ Fill the catacombs with magical traps.
- ◆ Promise great rewards for heroic deeds.



CHIATEX

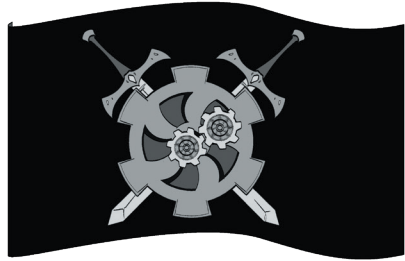
Free City States

“Look Willif, I’m the law in this here village and the law says no weapons. Hand over your long sword, short sword, crossbow, dagger, second dagger, slingshot, ball bearings, battle axe, spear, javelin, and letter opener, real slow like.”

“I’m afraid that’s not going to happen sheriff.”

“... OK, carry on.”

Chiatex is the great frontier, a place where people don’t ask a lot of questions and laws are loose. It’s a place for those seeking freedom, small government, or just a place to lay low for a while. Chiatex is also a destination for inventors looking for wide open spaces to test their new contraptions and keep them secret from competition.



Surrounded by mountains, rich in natural resources, and far from the major powers of Rothaen, Chiatex is not invaded often due to the natural barriers between it and the outside world coupled with the dragon breeding grounds in the far north, but there are those from the Molati Horde and Yulima who are willing to risk the journey to get resources.

Each village, town, and city only controls a few kilometers surrounding its borders. Don’t like one place’s laws? Move. The settlements will band together in defense against a common foe, usually a monster that needs to be dealt with, as well as trade with one another, but folks like the decentralized nature of the land so that is the extent of communication.

Chiatex settlements rarely trade with other nations or have extradition treaties. Bounty hunters who arrive to drag a person back to their homeland to stand trial often end up under a couple meters of dirt. The outlaws are often also the peace officers, maintaining order. Local law can be avoided with the right amount of coin. The golden rule in Chiatex is simple: don’t cost a powerful person gold, because that can mean the end of the line for you.

NUAJUNA HUMANS

The Nuajuna tribe is made up of the indigenous humans who have lived in the arid lands of the west coast for thousands of years. There is speculation that they are related to the Molati due to the similarities in some of their customs, including dress. Unlike the Molati, they are not as war-like: they don't raid villages or take others' food. The Nuajuna have an uneasy truce with outsiders. They will trade pelts and other raw materials for weapons and textiles. There are places where the Nuajuna will attack anyone who enters the area, claiming it as their land alone. Though peaceful, they are versed in the ways of magic and war and should not be underestimated.

Players are free to create Nuajuna characters. They tend to be druids, rangers, or clerics, but can be any class allowed to humans.

GM Moves

- ◆ Accidentally cause outsiders to release a great evil that must be contained by the Nuajuna tribe.
- ◆ Disappear horses from the tribe's herd.
- ◆ Rob sacred sites and ask, "By who?"

CASPIS

Charlatans, Inventors, Dangerous

The city of Caspis is the largest in Chiatex at around ten thousand people. Its mayor is Sir Hughley Yates, a conman from Carthic whose real name is Tid Froc. Froc is hiding from the powerful Lord Uilon of Carthic who wants him dead for stealing his gold and impregnating Lord Uilon's three daughters, some say at the same party. This tale of theft and debauchery is just one of several similar stories. A majority of Caspis's inhabitants are in hiding, looking for a quick buck, or have nowhere else to go. Cons are the name of the game, and charisma is the weapon. It can feel like every person in the city is playing an angle.

But there is another side of the coin: good people work and live here. Many inventors work together, pushing the envelope of what technology can do. The steam engine is the biggest project right now. The gnomes of the Gear Hills have been moving to the city to work on the project. A non-magical steam engine would be huge leap forward, if they don't cause an explosion that kills them all.

TOMB OF THE FORGOTTEN KING

Dangerous, Hot, Strange

The Wyhola Desert stretches up the west coast of Chiatex and is bordered by the Ring Raven Mountains. It is a hot, dry, dangerous region where even the Nuajuna do not go. But, for those brave enough to travel along the coast, at the northern most point of the desert is a huge pyramid and the ruins of an ancient city referred to as the Tomb of the Forgotten King. Strangely, if a person didn't know they were standing on the continent of Iros, they would swear they had somehow found an ancient Asi city. The city ruins encircle the huge tomb complex, which has no visible entrance. At each of the four corners of the pyramid are columns that have ancient Asi hieroglyphics on them. They reveal the story below to any who can decipher them.

Pharaoh Tolmak Alza ruled a thousand years before Amed-Ra in the golden age of old Asi, years before anyone from Euliom had traveled across the sea to Iros. Tolmak was a powerful wizard who had unlocked a great magic that allowed him to travel across dimensions. Through his magical travels, he learned of his impending death at the hands of the witch Cazzar. To avoid this fate, he transported the entire city of Uti, with his family and subjects, to Iros. Unfortunately, the spell drained his power and aged him greatly. He died a few weeks later. In the end, it was only the threat of Cazzar that killed Pharaoh Tolmak Alza.

The citizens he teleported with the city built him a massive pyramid, sealed it, and magically warded the area. Then they left. Some made it back to Asi, while others sought new lives with new people. The city decayed, blasted by sun and heat, and the king powerful enough to move a city was forgotten. The pyramid has several levels, false rooms, magical guardians, and horrifying traps. Like so many Asi tombs, there isn't a visible entrance. The old entrance is on the north side of the pyramid and can be uncovered with a successful ***Discern Realities*** roll.

GMs who are planning to use the Tomb of the Forgotten King can make it the center piece of a large quest. Players could have started in Asi and traveled the globe, putting together clues about the city of Uti and learning of Tolmak through investigation. The king and his people were magical pioneers, harnessing the raw power of mana. The temple is well warded against intruders. There are portals which will teleport monsters into an area to attack intruders.

WHAT MIGHT BE FOUND IN THE TOMB:

Tolmak's Staff (*powerful, relic*): Inside his burial chamber is the pharaoh's staff. This magic item allows those who wield it the power to cast a 1st, 3rd, or 5th level wizard spell twice a day.

The Well of Thought: Those who drink from this well permanently increase their intelligence by 1, unless the stat is already at max.

Portal of the Abyss: This portal is a defense against grave robbers. It allows demons to come and go, but it will also allow mortals to enter the Abyss to explore.

The Book of Nul: The book of Nul is an early history of Rothaen. Those who take the time to read it will discover the locations of two ancient sites. The nature and location of these sites is left up to the GM.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who the forgotten king was.
- ◆ What haunts Copperwood.
- ◆ Which city is run by a trickster god.

GM Moves

- ◆ Kick up a dust storm that comes in from the west.
- ◆ Open a portal to hell on Death Ridge.
- ◆ Show the way through the mountains to the Tomb of the Lost King.

FROSTRIDGE MOUNTAINS

Creating a natural border between Chiatex and the Molati Horde are the Frostridge Mountains. Made from a glassy black stone called kynionrite, the peaks of the Frostridge Mountains are covered in snow and devoid of plant life, causing winged beasts of all sorts to lair here and patrol nearby lands for food. Towards the bottom of the mountains, several types of humanoids and giant kin live. They usually stay out of the desert.

Deep below the surface of the mountains is Firemorgue, a city of goblins, bugbears, hobgoblins, and other humanoids. The cavern housing this sprawling city also contains a giant river that runs through it, providing fresh water. There are large luminescent fungi attached to the top of the cavern walls as well, bathing the city in multiple colors and low light. The buildings are a hodgepodge of different styles and quality, leading to some of them falling regularly. The river runs under Ritona all the way to the Keck Ocean underground, which means that goblin merchants can move items in and out of the city without dealing with the Eslia. The city is massive, reaching eight square kilometers from the center palace. Mayor Roug, who is the first ogre elected to the position, has been in power for the past year. As mayor, Roug has found a way to unite the different races and bring about focus, or at least as much focus as they can manage.

It is not uncommon to see humans and other races from the surface in the city. Visitors need papers or they will be detained and possibly eaten. Part of the city's income is derived from surface raids in Tutacami, Chiatex, and Yulima. Extensive underground caverns and river systems are used to move the raiding parties. The city is a well-kept secret, with outsiders tending to keep their mouth shut about it for fear of assassination.

Play To find out...

- ◆ What the goblins are plotting in Firemorgue.
- ◆ If there are treasures in the vault of the city.
- ◆ Who is really running things.

GM Moves

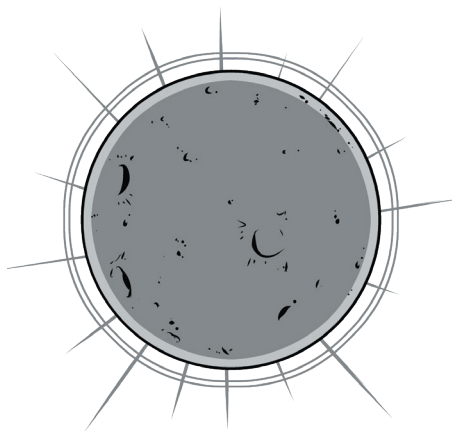
- ◆ Expose the city's location.
- ◆ Increase patrols on the streets.
- ◆ Sound the alarm!



CIXT

Evil Theocracy

Dominated by thick jungles and huge, prowling creatures, Cixt is a dark, sweltering land of strange customs and vile, evil gods. Pwati elf tribes stalk the treetops, while the human empire below makes blood sacrifices in strangely angled cities. The corrupted priests of twisted gods impose their will on the populace, causing pain and prompting fear, anger, and despair.



Cixt was once a part of Tutacami.

In Tutacami, the Zanafrieti religion is followed (see page 393). Its worshipers believe that the gods are made from pure emotion and that once a person dies they ascend, joining with the god their emotions in life most closely matched. There are as many different gods as there are emotions, and some are different versions of the same feelings.

The people who formed Cixt also follow Zanafrieti, but they only worship the gods of hate, loathing, sadness, anger, malice, and rage. Their goal is simple: force everyone to constantly experience these emotions so that when they die they make those gods stronger. The priesthood of Cixt is literally trying to tip the balance of power towards dark, evil emotions. The plots of the dark gods venerated by the priesthood are known only to them, but from the actions taken, they include the domination of Tutacami. Both nations have had several battles along the border as Cixt has tries to capture more territory.

The emperor of Cixt is selected by the priesthood and holds the position for life. When chosen, the emperor is crowned and theoretically given complete authority over the nation, but few wield any power. The emperor is merely a figurehead; the priesthood runs the nation. Emperors tend to be older, ensuring no ruler is in power too long. Emperor Tolitctitima the Eighth is well over eighty years old and can barely form a sentence, and that is just how the priesthood likes it. They stuck him on a throne and his handler whispers what he should say in his ear. Half the time, no one hears him anyway.

CIPHATA, THE SECRET POLICE

Control is the most important thing to the priesthood. The empire has spies everywhere. Neighbors are paranoid and will often turn on each other to gain favor with the Ciphata, the secret police. The Ciphata subdue magic as well maintain control over the populace. Anyone who shows signs of magical ability is offered training in the priesthood. Those who say no disappear. Adventurers are outlawed; only guards and the Ciphata may have weapons and armor. Outsiders cannot walk into a city without being confronted and questioned. If they refuse to hand over their weapons, they will be attacked. If the group stumbles across the Cixt border, it is a great way to start a survival game. There are small groups of people who try to resist the empire's laws and misdeeds, but they are scattered and have no one leader to unify behind.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Which emotion is strongest.
- ◆ Which gods are being summoned.
- ◆ Where the priests hold their secret meetings.

GM Moves

- ◆ Start a fear campaign in a city to raise up paranoia and murder.
- ◆ Kidnap citizens of Tutacami to sacrifice.
- ◆ Summon a monster to punish a town.

COQUEQRAO

Dangerous, Giant, Seat of Power

The capital of Cixt is Coqueqrao. The city sits on the border of the Kastain Swamp on the banks of the Black River. Before declaring independence three hundred years ago from Tutacamai, Coqueqrao was a merchant hub with incredible wealth. This wealth led the rebel leader Ycutica to claim Coqueqrao as his first prize in the civil war. It is now the seat of power for the empire, and though the temples need the money the city once generated, the priesthood's draconian laws have led to commerce drying up.

The city has become a hub for all the horrors of the empire. Forced labor makes sure food, weapons, and textiles are made. Quality clay pots, furniture, and rugs are all crafted solely for the priesthood, while the regular citizens must cobble their own out of whatever materials they can find. There are no thieves' guilds, mob families, or black markets here. Halflings are outlawed and any who are found are executed on the spot, even if they have done nothing wrong. Slaves are "outlawed" but, really, everyone who is not in the priesthood or part of the army is a slave in all but name.

The city is divided into four districts with the temples of hate, loathing, sadness, anger, malice, and rage resting in the center. The other three districts house the noble's mansions, the workhouses, and the slums. Most people live near the district where they work and seldom venture far outside the city's borders. Built upon a tall hill, the temples overlook the entire city. The priesthood uses magic to gain entrance into the temples. No layperson is allowed entrance unless they are there to be sacrificed. In the districts, order is kept by the Ciphata—they are judges, jury, and executioners.

GM Moves

- ◆ Hold the monthly celebration of the gods and sacrifice those who did not meet their work quota.
- ◆ Impose curfew.
- ◆ Raid homes suspected of hiding rebels.

KASTAIN SWAMP

Hot, Overgrown, Bug-infested

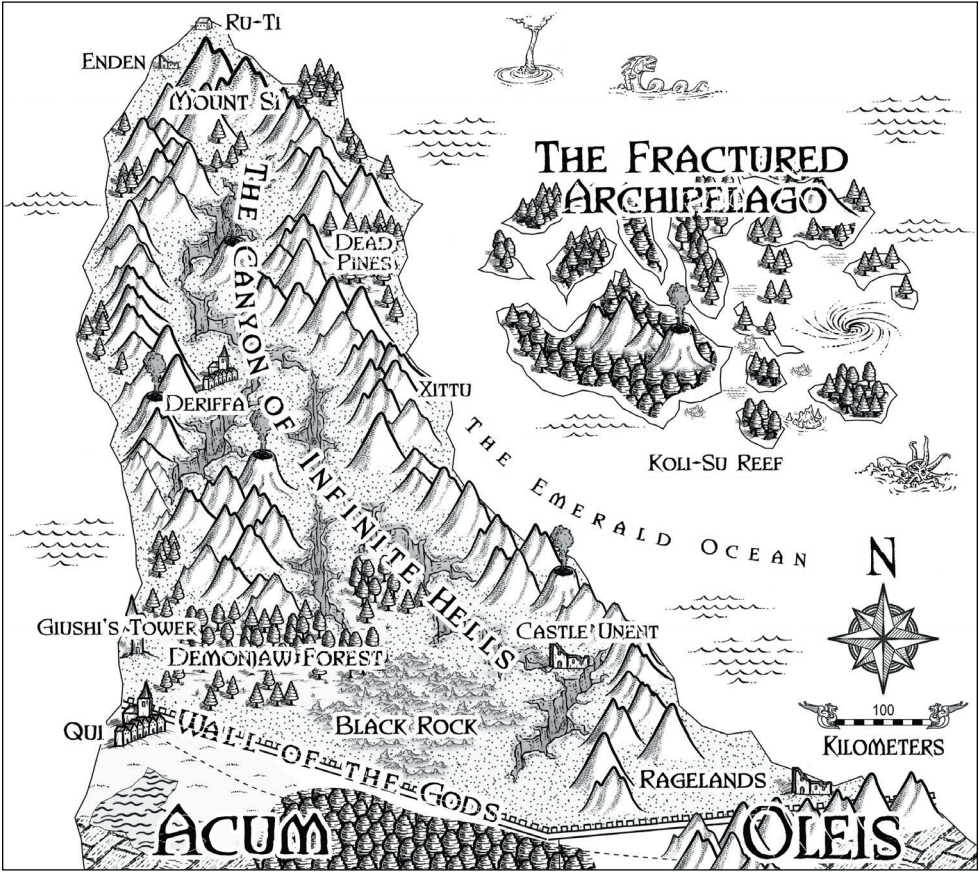
The Kastain Swamp dominates most of the southern portion of Cixt. There are hundreds of rivers and streams that drain into the area, causing a massive and deep swamp. It rains here almost every day, and when the sun does come out, swamp gas is released into the air. It is always hot and humid, and jungle rot is a problem. The water is green and dark brown in most places, which hides predators lurking below. If you are going through the area and value your life, you should hire a guide. Unlike other parts of the empire, the priesthood finds it hard to track people's movement in the swamp. It is the only place in Cixt where residents have privacy. Though the empire cannot monitor the area, they do use the swamp as a dumping site for their human sacrifices; the swamp is now thick with undead. This is not by accident. The empire figures that if they cannot control the region, they can make it that much harder to survive in.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If you can find kidnapped victims before it is too late.
- ◆ Where the hidden treasure of the Tyi Mountains is.
- ◆ The dangers of the Church of the Lost.

GM Moves

- ◆ !*@#, Dragon! RUN!
- ◆ Make the hurricane season come early this year.
- ◆ Attack small villages with the angry undead, including ghosts, ghouls, and zombies, looking for revenge.



DOOMLANDS

No Government

Black, jagged mountains, scorched by millions of combat spells, tower above acidic, smog-filled valleys. Green chain lighting streaks across the sky and the unnatural sound of demonic thunder follows close behind. These are the Doomlands, a prison at the northern tip of Iros where some of the worst evil is trapped. The terrain is extremely rocky and rough, the soil is tainted, and only poisonous vegetation grows here. Creatures that need to eat must hunt the weak for food. There are areas where mortals require magical means to breath, and clean water is a very scarce commodity.



Acum, to the south, patrols the Wall of the Gods, making sure no inmates escape. The divine magic that powers this barrier is said to come from the Hidden Empress herself, but this may be just propaganda. Only Acum priests know the teleport spell to banish a being to the Doomlands.

There are several permanent open portals to the multiple hells. These are not like the other teleportation arcs that dot the world. Instead, these massive red and black stone arches reach twelve meters into the sky and are only found here. When struck by lightning, they activate and allow creatures to pour through for a few minutes, then they close. Any creature caught in the portal when it closes is destroyed forever. The portals open several times a month, but so many die in combat almost immediately upon escaping that the population is consistent. These creatures cannot use the portals to escape, once here, they are stuck. Sages believe that new troops are allowed in to keep the wars going and the inmates from trying to escape.

The super powerful beings jailed here control large areas and are always looking for ways to expand territory. Do to constant battle, settling down and creating towns is rarely an option. The best a leader can hope for is a large cave near a clean water source or a ramshackle settlement used as a base of operations. The life span of a normal human imprisoned here is maybe a year, but this does not apply to those more powerful mortals. Other creatures, such as dragons, can hold power in a region for centuries. Power structures are always changing, and GMs can mold this to fit their games.

LOST CIVILIZATION

This area was not always the Doomlands. Before it became a prison, it was part of ancient Oleis. There are ruins of cities all over the land, many of which have been taken over by some major force. There are great treasures to be found in such places, both of value and knowledge, but the danger in exploring them is high. Creatures who lair in ancient ruins will fight hard to keep others out because of the safety and small level of comfort they afford.

The best known of these sites are Enden, Deriffa, and Xittu. Major battles over their rule happen all the time. Each ruler expands and excavates the ruins hoping to find lost magical items that can help them escape. Xittu was once a fishing town. All that is left are the stone buildings. Enden was a major city with several large structures that are frozen in time. One can walk between the residents and see what they did in their final moments. Deriffa is in the Canyon of Infinite Hells and has become a neutral place for fighting parties to meet and negotiate.

THE CANYON OF INFINITE HELLS

Natural, Dangerous, Kilometers Deep

This huge canyon stretches north to south along most of the Doomlands. Without magical assistance, it is impossible to travel to the bottom. Small shantytowns rest on ledges throughout the canyon. They tend to be near portals from the hells. Demons and devils emerge from these portals with no knowledge of the world. They think they have escaped the horrors of their home plane, only to learn that this new place is more of the same. The people in the shantytowns are recruiters. Their job is to talk the new arrivals into joining their lord's army. The more powerful the lord, the more they can offer to new recruits. These recruiters spy on the competition and report troop acquisitions. They also notify their lords of demons that could raise their own armies.

Many caves honeycomb either side of the Canyon. Here, too, are portals from other realities. One can use these tunnels to travel further down into the canyon, but they are infested with monsters. It is a tossup on what is easier, using the steep paths on the cliff faces or walking in the caves. High winds kick up and can knock people off the trail, as well as other weather flair ups. Flying monsters love to swoop in and grab travelers off the trail.

Why would anyone come to this part of the Doomlands? Well, freedom. No one rules this area. It is a neutral place because it hard for armies to navigate and hold. There are rumors of portals that allow escape from the Doomlands to other places on Rothaen. The most popular is from an explorer who told stories of a white castle at the bottom of the canyon. They claimed that when they got close, it disappeared. They are convinced it is a gateway out and have spent their life trying to unlock its secrets. Others claim it is a delusion. The lower levels of the canyon are extremely dangerous and require magic to be able to breathe.

GM Moves

- ◆ On one of the cliffs a pool of pure water appears. Clean water is worth more than anything, so this spot will be highly contested.
- ◆ Reveal a fugitive from a lord's army who needs help and can reveal a secret.
- ◆ Weapons smiths and merchants are using the neutrality of the canyon to help keep the wars going.
- ◆ Make Aukain, lord vampire of the Ragelands, move on the canyon's portals.

Ru-Ti

Ru-Ti is the furthest northern settlement on Iros and the only human village in the Doomlands. This tiny community is next to the ocean, but because of the Wall of the Gods, those that live here cannot fish so instead they hunt monsters for food. Unlike everywhere else in the Doomlands, this village has children. It was started by prisoners many years ago and over time it has formed into a community of survivors. Everyone who lives here now was born here. These are extremely strong people who have no knowledge of the world beyond the wall. To them, this is the world and how life is.

Players can be from this village if the GM wants to run a Doomlands-only game. The area is very remote and that is why it can stay independent from the more powerful prisoners. Running games centered on Ru-Ti will have a survival horror feel to them. GMs can add nearby ruins that new parties can explore in order to find food and to train.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The location of a falsely accused inmate before it's too late.
- ◆ Where a magic item is before it falls into the prisoners' hands.
- ◆ If there is a way out.
- ◆ If you can survive.
- ◆ How to stop a crazed god from taking down the Wall.

GM Moves

- ◆ A creature breaks through the ice and snow and attacks the village!
- ◆ The ancient axe of dead King Su-Ling calls from nearby ruins, wanting to be found.
- ◆ A nearby army makes its way through the area and the village must hide.



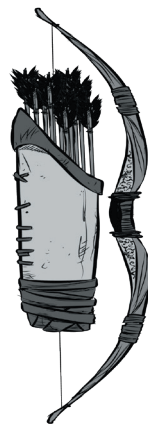
MOLATI HORDE

Absolute Monarchy

“On the back of a horse, riding under an open sky, that is the only life for the Molati. We take what we need from those who have chosen bondage over freedom. Let them build their cities and waste their lives, it makes no difference to us.”

—Rieghis Killuc

Rieghis Killuc is called the Butcher of Northern Iros, Vampire Dragon, God Slayer, and is the most feared man in Iros. To those who have faced his horde of screaming horsemen and their flying arrows, Rieghis is the devil incarnate. But, to his people, he is a living god who has shown them the real meaning of life. The Horde has over three hundred thousand of human men, women, and children in it. They are broken into large tribes that roam the open planes of the Great Steppe Expanse, as well as parts of the River God's realm, whom they worship. All of these tribes have sworn allegiance to Rieghis and will fight to the death for him. The Horde has attacked Acum, Koeis, and Yulima repeatedly. If it were not for the mountains in the south, Ritona and Chiatex would also be targeted.



THE GODS HAVE SENT ONE OF THEIR OWN

Rieghis Killuc claims to be a living god, ordained by the River God to lead the Molati. If he is truly a god, he is a god of charisma and battle. Leading comes naturally to Rieghis, and he has been able to unite all the Molati people, something no other person had been able to do. That he has never been defeated only adds to his power as a Killuc. Rieghis is a master speaker and brilliant tactician. He has sacked countless towns and cities and laid waste to their fields. No one can be sure of his death count, but he is feared as much as any prisoner in the Doomlands.

However, there is of course more than one side to the story. Before the Horde attacks a city, a rider is sent to offer terms. The settlement is given a demand for food, clothing, and weapons according to the size of their city. If they refuse, the city is destroyed, but they are not completely wiped out. This means they can rebuild and then give tribute next time. Larger cities in Yulima put up a good fight, but in the end, they make a deal.

THE MOLATI WAY OF LIFE

Freedom is the core principle of Molati philosophy. One tribe's ramshackle settlement will be abandoned without care and then later resettled by a different tribe. They hate feeling pinned down by anything—what many outsiders do not understand is that they feel like the rest of the world needs to be free as well. They see cities, nations, and all the trappings of civilization as prisons. They do not take slaves because it is taboo to take another's freedom. One must fight to stay alive. You are in charge of your happiness and freedom, no one else. The Molati are very similar to the Cuik dwarves of Jötunn in this regard.

The tribes have leaders who act as judges over very basic laws, such as no robbing or murdering a fellow Molati. Crime is not really an issue for a people constantly on the move and living to live. If there are disagreements, they tend to be settled by combat or trials of skill. Life is short for the Molati. They live hard, and their battles are brutal, not to mention that the dragons in Yulima love swooping in and eating a Molati-horse combo.

The nomadic Molati do not stay in one place long. There are two major steppe settlements used for trade, Miola and Sutowt. Many times, these places are empty. After a large conquest, a tribe will arrive to trade the bounty with other tribes. Once done, they move on. Adventurers who do not attack or are not a threat can trade here as well, though they will be mocked if wearing armor—armor is worn by the weak; one only needs their horse, bow, and blade to live free. Druids and clerics are normal in Molati culture, but not wizards. Wizards are seen as demons who fight for those who live in cities. The Molati feel they must rid the world of these demons, which is another reason they raid. This fact makes the wizard nation of Ritona grateful for their huge mountain ranges.

THE LAND AND THE SKY

The Molati have lived on the Great Steppe Expanse for as long as there have been humans on Rothaen, but before Rieghis Killuc they were a scattered people marginalized by the Divine Empire. Their population was large but broken into many dysfunctional tribes. As Yulima spread east into the Great Steppe Expanse, they pushed the Molati into a smaller and smaller area. This was the backdrop that Rieghis grew up in: multiple tribes, fighting for a small space and scraps. As a son of a minor chief, he was able to take over his father's title, some say after killing him. His rise to Killuc is retold through stories of the Molati people. He challenged tribal leaders to one-on-one combat for control of their men. He provided food to the people and led them to the worship of the River God. As his numbers grew, he trained his people to fight back against Yulima.

The lands that the Molati inhabit are their sacred right. The fast-growing grasslands, the herds of elkson and caribon, and the open sky make the Molati who they are. To outsiders they may seem like a horde of bloodthirsty barbarians, but they are more than that. Those who are a part of the Divine Empire should not be in middle Iros, and the blood spilt because of their presence is their own fault.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What hidden wonders dot the Great Steppe Expanse.
- ◆ If you can win the Molati riding contest.
- ◆ What lurks in the Sunken Jungle.

GM Moves

- ◆ Move the horde and shake the world.
- ◆ Reveal an ancient truth.
- ◆ Invade the north.

THE RIVER GOD'S REALM

Gigantic, multicolor cypress trees lace their branches over the River God's realm, seeming to magically protect it from the weather beyond their borders. Rain is always present, be it a hard-down fall or a gentle mist. Sounds of fey animals and creatures mix with natural wildlife to create a chorus like no other. Vibrant flowers canvas almost every piece of ground, while rivers, streams, and creeks wind their way through the soft fertile grounds. No mortal ruler can lay claim to this land, for the River God walks here.

The Molati people have always worshipped the nature gods. These gods have fought next to them in critical battles, offered both hardship and pain, and their veneration is a core part of being Molati. The River God's realm is something they can visit anytime, and his influence spreads well beyond his realm's borders. His throne sits in the center of a glen where river spirits and fey serve him. The waters here heal all damage and cure all disease, but there is a catch: it also slowly turns you into a water spirit. If a person drinks the water, in two days they will feel compelled to return to the rivers and shed their mortal shells to serve their new god.

The Molati leave offerings at the border of the realm, which the fey bring to the god. They are aware of the consequences of partaking in the water. Once a year, a group of Molati will give up their mortal lives to serve the River God. This act is to appease him and is seen as a great honor. Outsiders that know about the practice are quick to point out the irony that the Molati are willing to give up their freedom to serve a god, but the Molati look at it as a sacrifice to a god and believe that once you drink from the water you no longer are human or bound by cultural identity.

River Spirits

Drowning (1d6, close)

Horde, Amorphous

8 HP 2 armor

Habitat: River God's Realm*Description:* River spirits look just like normal clear water, though they can change their color and luminescence.*Instinct:* Drag below the water

River spirits flow into the River God's realm to be close to him. He can command them from anywhere in his kingdom. Normally they are passive, but if the rivers are harmed in any way they will attack. Drinking from the river will heal 2 points per day. If the spirits do not like the person for whatever reason, or maybe on just a whim of spite, the water will cause 2 points of damage. If they have been commanded to attack, they will try to pull their target into the river and drown them.

Play to find out

- ◆ If the myth of the Marsh Giant is true.
- ◆ What hidden fey cities exist in the River God's realm.
- ◆ What creature is corrupting the marsh.

GM Moves

- ◆ Have the fey play practical jokes on the party.
- ◆ Attack them with man-eating plants.
- ◆ Reveal an ancient fey ruin, full of magic.



OLEIS

Empire

Oleis is the Hidden Empress' seat of power. This is where her majesty appeared after leaving heaven to make sure the Emerald Dragon never gained his former glory again. She used all her power, save for her immortality, to keep him bound. But magic is strange, and former gods can come back, so she stays on Rothaen, ruling an empire of followers and watching for signs of the Emerald Dragon's return to power.

Oleis is a magical land of traditions and faith. It is said that the Hidden Empress lives in the Palace of Dreams located in the capital city of Cugwuan. No one has ever seen the Hidden Empress, but her existence is never questioned. The country is divided among the families who have been given the Empress' blessing. She communicates to the Joi of the family through her avatars known as "whisper priests" who cannot be seen by mortals. These beings are the ghosts of the most devoted worshippers—they've been rewarded by being blessed with closeness to their goddess for all of time.

The patriarch of each of the ruling family are called Joi, or regent. They are minor kings who rule over parts of Koeis, the capital city. Land titles and inherences are passed along the male side of the family. Often, families will war over borders with the goal of gaining new lands. Marriage outside one's borders is rare. It is said that if any Joi is able to conquer all the families, they will become Koeis' monarch above all others in the empire save for the Hidden Empress. This is not a fact, though. The Empress always makes sure no family gains more power than the others, though her moves to do this are never seen.



Oleis is also known for its traditions, including sacred tea ceremonies, ancient theater performances, and rites of death. Honor, loyalty, and tradition are at the center of Oleis' lifestyle. It is better to die with honor than to live without it. Each Joi have a clan of warriors called the Oath Sworn. Warriors without a Joi are called Wanders. Wanders often fight as mercenaries. Breaking an oath to one's Joi is seen as treason and one of the highest forms of dishonor.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who holds the real power among the Joi.
- ◆ What court intrigues are there in the capital city of Koeis.
- ◆ The ways of the Oleis people.

GM Moves

- ◆ Start a war the Hidden Empress did not see coming.
- ◆ Test the player's honor.
- ◆ Entangle them in court intrigue.

SINTO'S MAZE

The tragic legend of Sinto's Maze is told throughout Koeis. Sinto was a princess born to a powerful family. She was expected to marry a warlord to cement an alliance between the two families. When Sinto reached the age of marriage, fourteen, she rebelled and refused to marry the much older man. In a fit of rage, her father cursed her and cast her out into the wilderness. Isna, god of curses and fate, heard the father's curse and acted on it. Isna created a hedge maze that covered the entire northern plains of Oleis and placed Sinto in a castle at the center. There, it is said, she must live until a brave soul can survive the maze and save her.

The maze stretches for kilometers in all directions and no one has ever claimed to have reached the keep. Those venturing into it will find skeletons of past explorers as a grim warning. If you try to fly over the maze all you see is a dense fog. Besides the challenge of the maze itself, there are traps and monsters waiting to thwart those who try to find the castle. Due to the maze's size, finding the building can take thirty days if the explorer makes no mistakes. The following move must be made each week a group is in the maze by whomever is leading them.

Walking Through Sinto's Maze

To reach the castle, one must make this move at the start of each week you are in the maze. You must make three consecutive rolls to find the castle. If you fail, no one else in your group can attempt it until the next week of searching starts. Roll +INT. On a 10+, you stay on track and make it closer to the center. If this is your third success, you will arrive at the castle at the end of this week of travel. On a 7-9, you are lost this week and will spend the time trying to get back on the right path.

It should be noted that this move is to keep the party heading in the correct direction. What else happens, in the form of monsters or other dangers, is left up to the GM. Sinto's Maze and what lies inside is also left up to the GM. Is the myth true? This area, including the castle, can be a great mega-dungeon challenge for a group.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If the story is true.
- ◆ What treasures can be found in the maze.
- ◆ If the maze's curse can be lifted from the land.

GM Moves

- ◆ Move some walls.
- ◆ Hunt them with a vile monster.
- ◆ Set up a trap.

THE TIUM MOUNTAINS

The snow-covered tops of the Tium Mountains are shrouded by clouds. They are some of the highest elevations in Rothaen. The green rock called tium makes up the majority of the stone found here, is close to granite in composition, and has been mined to build in the region for centuries. Massive quarries produced the large stones that founded the cities of the Divine Empire. But now the work has slowed. Most mines are abandoned or have been taken over by dwarves who have started creating subterranean cities. Aboveground, giants and orc tribes call the lower sections of the mountains their home. On the peaks are roc, cloud dragons, and dragon wolves who are said to serve the Emerald Dragon and do not appreciate visitors. The peaks are also the home of the Kylom elves, with several ancient temples on the mountain slopes that are still in use to this day. One can even find ruins of the Kylom long forgotten here.

Certain dragon wolves are tasked with recruiting humans to worship the Emerald Dragon. They will visit villages at the foot of the peaks and offer a boon to those who pledge themselves to the Emerald Dragon and the fall of the Divine Empire. Villages that have taken this deal will at first seem normal, but if travelers stick around, they will start seeing strange rituals not based in the Wusol faith. If not receptive to their faith, travelers are run out of town or worse.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What else lives in the mountains.
- ◆ The secrets buried in long lost Kylom cities.
- ◆ Which villages have been corrupted by the Emerald Dragon.

GM Moves

- ◆ Reveal an abandoned Kylom temple.
- ◆ Cause an avalanche.
- ◆ Attack the sleeping.

Dragon Wolf*Solitary, Intelligent, Magical*

Bite (1d8+1 damage, ignores armor)

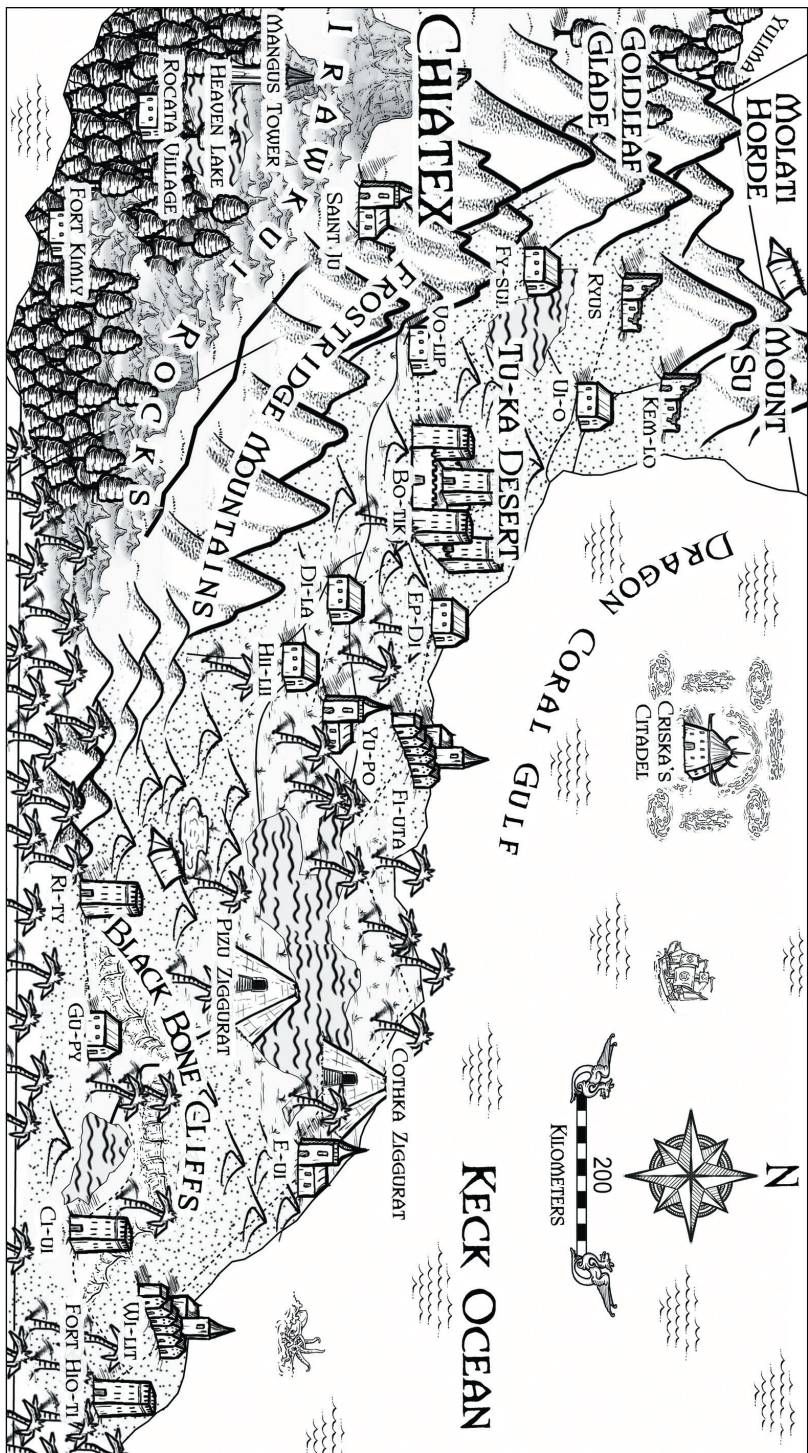
8 HP 4 Armor

Frost breath weapon (1d10+5 damage, can only use once per day, *ranged*)

Habitat: Tium Mountains in Oleis*Description:* A canine body of colorful mist with a large green dragon head*Instinct:* Serve the Emerald Dragon

- ◆ Speak lies that seem truth
- ◆ Attack without warning

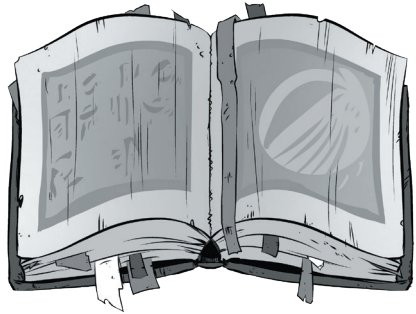
These creatures live on the snow-covered tops of the Tium Mountains, waiting for orders from their creator, the Emerald Dragon. If encountered in their lairs or on the peaks, they will attack intruders and will call out to others of their kind. They have been known to start conversations to get in close and then attack. There are also those tasked with converting the people who live at the bottom of the mountains to the worship of the Emerald Dragon. These special servants will approach a village with gifts, including silver, magical healing, or some other needed resource. Villages that refuse are often attacked.



RITONA

Magocracy

The Tu-Ka Desert is an unforgiving land with the hottest temperatures in the world. Spring and summer can reach 65° Celcius, while fall and winter only slightly dip to 62° Celcius. The rivers that feed into Ai-Uty Lake flood during fall and winter as rain and snow fall increases in the Frostridge Mountains. The areas around the lake and rivers become lush and fertile until the start of spring when the temperatures go up and the lake recedes. Surrounding plant life, except for the palm trees, die until winter reconstitutes the lake. Humanoids, including humans, do not want to live here and stick to the mountains. This is great for the Eslia (see page 51) who have lived in the Tu-Ka Desert for thousands of years and wish to be left alone.



The Eslia have created a magical society in which all their needs have been met. The study of magic, art, and science are at the forefront of Eslia culture. Magic provides all types of servants that take care of maintaining the cities of Ritona. It is a socialist society that provides for all the needs of its citizens. Food, a basic wage, and healthcare are all rights.

To many, this might seem like a paradise, but there is an ugly side to Ritona. There is the belief that life should be lived only one way, within the confines of the old traditions and the study of magic. They are a closed off society and to thrive here one must be gifted at magic and follow the rules. Anyone born different, such as with psionic powers or devoid of the ability to cast magic, is seen as a threat to the society at large. “Fit in or be run out,” is the mantra of the Eslia. Because of this, Eslia living outside of Ritona are those who did not fit the society’s mold.

THE CITIES OF RITONA

Infused with magic, Eslia cities are invisible and float over 30 meters above ground. To the naked eye, the interior lands looks devoid of humanoid life, no farms, no villages, nothing, while the nation's coast have port cities for a small amount of trade. However, even these coastal cities are not like other destinations in Rothaen. A visitor will see a large dock area with magical workers and Eslia handlers, but no city beyond because it is invisible and floating in the sky. The cities themselves were carved from sandstone and black rock from the local mountain range untold eons ago. The buildings are painted in pastel colors and silk cloths are used as colorful banners that hang above streets in a crisscross fashion. The roads are cobblestone, but there are no carts being pulled by beasts of burden in Ritona. Instead, summoned elementals do the heavy lifting or citizens use magically scribed teleport pads to move goods and themselves throughout the city. There is no garbage in the streets, there are no homeless people, and there are no offending odors. The cities are patrolled by sand golems who keep the peace, but the reality is that crime rarely happens here; citizens report on any strange behavior before it can cause issues.

Visitors are rare beyond the ports, and if a non-Eslia does enter a city they are closely monitored. Unknown traders that arrive from other nations tend to find unwelcoming docks and a stern warning to watch one's crew. Only the captain and the first mate are permitted to leave the ship and negotiate trade. It is seldom that an outsider is given a trade license for Ritona. In fact, there are magical wards in place that make sailing the coast difficult.

The Cult of Curre and the hivemind god's crimson teleportation arches cannot be found in Ritona's cities because the Eslia have found a way to block Curre's portals from manifesting. One can find the arches on the lands below, but they have no connection to the cities. The Cult of Curre has also been outlawed to avoid intrusion from Curre himself.

AGAINST THE STATE

There are Eslia who are not content to stay within the confines of the rigid society of Ritona. Artists who resent the strict laws governing their work sometimes find ways to lash out at the state. Writers spread subversive prose among the people, looking to shake them from their obedience. Illegal music that does not conform to state guidelines is played at the private parties of the rich as well as the poor. Under the surface of conformity and repression beats the heart of passionate people.

All forms of expression that fall outside the strict guidelines are believed to be a threat that could one day cost Ritona its power. The nation is full of wizards and priests, more than anywhere else in the world, who have agreed to maintain a certain set of laws dictating their pursuit of magic. The concern with breaking state law is that it might lead to one of the more powerful wizards trying to take over and plunging the state into a civil war. Ritona was ruled by a succession of wizard kings that used magic for terrible things for thousands of years. Their absolute power had to be stripped away to save the Eslia, and now the nation fears the rise of such a monarch again. But their decision to enact such laws stifles opinion and actions and has led to a society where a person, no matter if they are good or evil, cannot rise pass a certain point within the caste system.

THE THOUGHT POLICE

The state is not only worried about free-thinkers, but also masterminds (see page 81)—Eslia born with psionic abilities. To the public of Ritona, masterminds are myths, boogiemens who do not need to use magic to affect the world around them. They are ascribed all sorts of powers, from moving small objects with a thought all the way up to controlling the entire population. The real threat to the state, though, is that masterminds' abilities cannot be controlled or countered easily with magic. In a nation where control is paramount to the governing body, a group of people with natural powers separate from magic is a terrifying thought.

THE MASTERMIND'S JOURNEY

Masterminds are rare and tend to hide in plain sight. However, they cannot perform magic, something most Eslia excel at, which means that they cannot hide for long. Most non-magic using Eslia either leave Ritona or are put somewhere out of public view. An Eslia may not know about their gift until long after they take up a life of adventure.

Masterminds will feel a pull to the Temple of Thought at the peak of Mount Su: their dreams pull them to the temple. Scaling Mount Su is dangerous, as it is home to giants, unfriendly humanoids, and magic beasts who love eating Eslia. The biggest danger, though, are the granite hags, dark fey from the Other Worlds. Part of the trial of a mastermind is to survive these obstacles on their ascent to the Temple of Thought.

Granite Hag

Mind Drain (2d6+1 damage, ignores armor, reach)

Covens, Ravenous, Dark fey

Flesh Form: 15 HP 1 Armor

Rock Form: 25 HP 4 Armor

Habitat: Mountain tops in Ritona, especially on Mount Su

- ◆ Feast on the thought waves of mortals
- ◆ Find a way into the Temple of Thought and eat Anum-Kas' brain

It is believed that the psionic power generated from Anum-Kas is what draws the granite hags to the Temple of Thought. They feed off the brain waves of others, draining a victim's creative force and adding to their power. Like gargoyles or some trolls, granite hags turn to rock during the day and back to flesh at night. If an adventurer sees three pillars of rocks during the day, it is a granite hag coven. These creatures live in covens at the top of the mountains, as close to the temple as possible. Towards the top, there is a forest of these rock pillars during the day. Entering the temple at night is very risky to say the least.

TEMPLE OF THOUGHT

The Temple of Thought is a gigantic stone and glass structure completely held together by the mental power of Anum-Kas. His power is so great that he can keep the structure together while performing other mental feats. Anum-Kas lives in the center of the temple, behind a door called the Inner Seal. The four trials to reach the inner seal are always changing and usually revolve around thought puzzles and combat test. GMs should create trials that fit the players in their campaign.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who the state really is.
- ◆ What dangers lurk on Mount Su.
- ◆ If Criska's Citadel is the true castle of the gods or a gateway to infinite hells.

GM moves

- ◆ Loosen the restrictions on foreigners.
- ◆ Cause a floating city to fall.
- ◆ Cause a cold snap in the summer, signaling the anger of the gods.

TUTACAMAI

Absolute Monarchy

The Empire of Souls and the birthplace of the Zanafrieti faith (see page 393), Tutacamai covers most of Southern Iros. The government is a loose network of tribes that elects an emperor for life. The emperor is usually a chief from one of the tribes. The emperor is not only the head of state but also the leader of the Zanafrieti religion.



Two massive forests grow here, the Itticitic and the Eztu Jungles. The temperature is always temperate to hot and rarely changes. It rains almost constantly. The Tutacamai have adapted to the jungles and are able to mostly live off what it provides. There is farming, though, as well as hunting. The west coast has been cleared for farming and cattle ranches, while in the east there are areas that break up the jungle, both natural and man-made. The people of Tutacamai hunt, farm, and fish within their large families. Families send a portion of their goods to their local chief, who might oversee up to a thousand families in an area. They are responsible for the defense of their people as well as the adherence to the Zanafrieti faith.

Armor is not usually worn due to the heat and moisture. Textiles are purchased from Koeis in Oleis, which include cottons. Leather is only used for footwear and leg coverings. Warriors use shields, spears, and swords, but seldom wear anything that would encumber them or cause heatstroke. If a character insists on wearing armor or carrying a lot of gear, GMs should use encumbrance moves to make their lives harder—giving a player a -1 to all move attempts while wearing armor or carrying large loads is acceptable.

THE ONGOING WAR

Dire-panthers bound through thick undergrowth with Tutacamai warriors on their backs, brandishing spears and wooden shields, hunting Cixt kidnappers. Warlocks from Cixt call for the gods of terror to drive enemy villages insane with fear. Bloody jungle fights draw the attention of hulking red apes and other monsters looking to join the fray. And so goes the back and forth battles of Tutacamai and Cixt. Once one people, now divided, fighting an epic war of good and evil.

Tutacamai fights both to stop further invasion of Cixt into its territory and to stop Cixt's attempts to corrupt the emotional balance of the Zanafrieti faith. The war has been boiled down to small jungle fights and rescue missions, but every so often there will be a large battle that costs thousands of lives. Cixt does not have the numbers to combat the Tutacamai warriors toe to toe, but they do have the stronger magic power, and so encounters often becomes a cat and mouse game with troops leading one another into traps.

At this point, the war has raged for several generations, giving the gods of anger, fear, and loss more power and tipping the balance in heaven. This is a constant worry to the members of the Zanafrieti faith who say that the war is doing just what the Cixt want: empowering the negative gods of emotion. There are those in the government calling for new tactics, some of which are extremely brutal, while other plans, such as building a navy, no one has any idea how to implement. The navy idea is the one most called for, with the belief being that troops could raid cities currently out of their reach and tip the balance of the war. For Tutacamai's part, they do not just want the Cixt nation to stop attacking their lands, they want to take back lands lost.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who will build a new navy.
- ◆ If the panther cubs can be protected.
- ◆ If Tutacamai can break the stalemate war.

GM Moves

- ◆ Attack Tutacamai citizens with black magic.
- ◆ Use the jungle to your advantage.
- ◆ Kidnap a loved one.

SPIDER VALLEY & TEMPLE KERI

Despite being called a valley, this area appears to be more like a giant hole where the earth was cut out in one huge slab. The sheer cliffs reach down below sea level 60 meters and there are no safe paths to walk down—one must climb to the bottom. Each person should do the following move to safely make it up or down the cliff sides:

Climbing Cliffs in Spider Valley

When attempting to make it up or down the sheer face cliffs of Spider Valley, roll +DEX. On a 10+, you can make it up or down with no problem. On a 7-9, pick one of the following: put in a bad spot, 1d4 damage from a short fall, draw attention to yourself. On a 6-, the GM picks one of the following: 1d10 damage from a hard fall, make a tough decision, or lose an item of the GM's choosing.

As a person makes their way down into the valley, a noise gets louder... the sound of movement on the floor. The tropical trees in this place are covered in white spider webs. The sound one hears is that of billions of spiders of all sizes moving around. One will notice huge cocoons where animals and humans are wrapped up to be eaten later. The floor of the valley is passable, but it is all very rough terrain. Most of the victims in the spider sacks are adventurers trying to get to Temple Keri, which sits in the center of the valley. Parts of the valley, the trees and the ground, all appear to be moving due to the numerous types of arachnids living here. The sound of this movement and eating is constant, like the crinkling of paper. Adventurers may think they only have to worry about the midsize to giant spiders, but the swarms of tiny poisonous spiders can be more deadly and harder to notice.

In the center of the valley is Temple Keri. Keri is a goddess that embodies the emotion of fear. She was one of the first humans to ascend to godhood according to the Zanafrieti faith. The stories say that Keri was fearful of everything. She seldom left her home and, as she got older, her fears grew. Leading a very sheltered life, she tried to avoid all the things she saw as dangerous. A shut-in when she died, her fear even overshadowed her loneliness. When she passed, her soul became the embodiment of fear. Now all others who die feeling fear more than anything else become part of Keri and the gods of fear, making fear itself more powerful.

It is believed that the surrounding valley and the temple were created here to maximize the fear of those traveling who want to pay their respects to the gods of fear. Spiders are a common fear and climbing down from a tall height is also a common fear: it is all meant to bring one's emotions to the forefront. If a pilgrim shows proper respect and fear, it is said that the spiders will let them pass, but this may or may not be true.

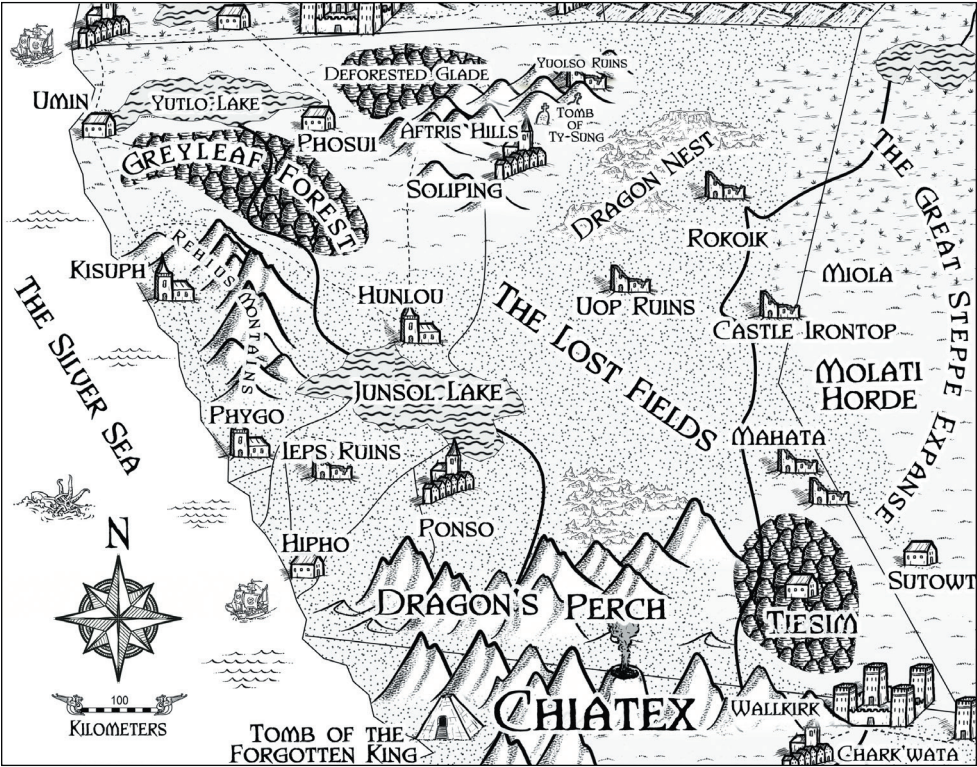
The temple itself is a place of great danger. Those who enter must prostrate themselves, show true fear, and crawl though the temple to the inner chamber to appease Keri. Once there, they will be rewarded for their humble offerings of fear. Few people are willing to climb down a sheer cliff and walk past a forest of spiders to praise Keri, whose temple is also full of horrors. There is no priest stationed here. Myth says bravery in the temple invites death by the teeth of a dragon, but those who have survived speak of an ever-changing temple that is always summoning new ways to induce fear.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What lies in the center chambers of the temple.
- ◆ Who really created the valley.
- ◆ What older caverns lie beneath the temple.

GM Moves

- ◆ Create a spider swarm.
- ◆ Release a fear toxin.
- ◆ Cause personal fear in those who walk the valley.



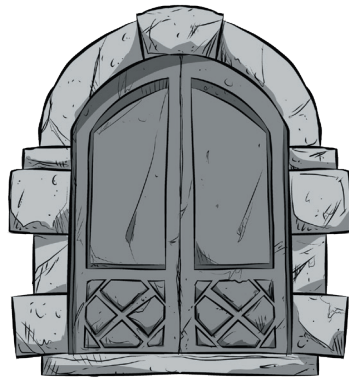
YULIMA

Vassal City-States

“This was once a great land. A Jewel in the crown of the Hidden Empress. But her Grace has forsaken us. It’s only a matter of time before every city in Yulima falls.”

—Grand Mayor Biuun of Ponso

Yulima is technically a part of the Hidden Empress’ empire, but in actuality it is a collection of city-states that have been left to fend for themselves. Between the dragon mating grounds in the mountains and the Molati Horde to the east (see page 279), the Yulima are a warrior people who are fighting to survive.



Before the Horde’s newest leader, Rieghis Killuc, the Molati people would only attack small villages during late spring. Now the sound of thunderous hooves can be heard any time of year, bringing death and destruction with them. All settlements east of the Junsol Lake have been reduced to ruins. Those cities that are left have fortified their walls and trained every man, woman, and child over the age of ten to fight. However, the Killuc has never lost a battle.

These cities-states are ruled by grand mayors and each have their own identity. They control their city and up to 16 kilometers beyond it. Lands past this border are called “wild country”. The cities have long since claimed independence from the Hidden Empress, knowing that she will never send troops while the numbers of the Molati Horde are so high. No actions have been taken, but Acum and Oleisstill see Yulima as part of the empire. So far, the raids on the cities further west seem to strike less frequently, and there is word of the Horde planning to head north.

DRAGON'S PERCH & DRAGON'S NEST

Dragons can also be a menace to Yulima. Separated by almost 80 kilometers, Dragon's Perch in the south and Dragon's Nest in the north share much in common. These mountain ranges are breeding sites for dragons. Once every twenty years during early spring, a dragon will come here to mate. Depending on a dragon's migration home, both mountain ranges can be teaming with the winged beasts. Six months after laying their eggs, they hatch. Baby dragons are vulnerable for the first year of life. Rocs and other large predators try to snatch eggs or babies, so the mother stays with the young for the year while the father departs back to his home territory. The mother feeds her young great amounts of meat from the surrounding areas while their bodies rapidly grow and become more powerful.

When they reach adolescence, often weighing nearly 275 kilograms, the mother leaves the nest and the young dragons are on their own. They are still in jeopardy—many will not make it out of the mountains. Only the smartest and strongest learn to fly and hunt on their own. They feel compelled to leave the area and find their own lands, eventually returning twenty years later as very young adult dragons, ready to start the cycle all over again. Though this is not the only breeding ground, there are more opportunities for people to interact with young dragons here.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What makes each city unique.
- ◆ If a dragon youngling can be trained as a mount.
- ◆ If the Yulima tribes can withstand the Molati Horde much longer.

GM Moves

- ◆ Blacken the sky with dragons.
- ◆ Test their metal against a Molati war party.
- ◆ Besiege a city.

THE LOST FIELDS

Yulima once included the lands now held by the Molati Horde in the east. At that time, the Molati were a divided people, easily controlled and driven from their ancestral lands. They were not a threat to the Hidden Empress and her conquering armies. The generals boasted that they would bring civilization to the barbarians through kind words or sharp steel. For centuries, the Yulima forces tried to bring the Molati people to its knees. They saw them as children uneducated in the divine wisdom of the Hidden Empress. Although the priests of the Empress at the temple of Acum will tell a history of tolerance and caring, this was not what happened to the indigenous people of the land.

Murders, kidnappings, magical sterilization, and more were perpetrated against the Molati. It was horrific, and though these acts stopped years ago, the stories of this time are still in the Horde's living history. When Rieghis Killuc united the horde, he decreed that it was only right that the Yulima pay an eye for eye, that their ancestors cannot truly rest without justice. His forces flooded into the lost plains and pushed the Yulimas west, destroying crops, villages, and towns. That first large attack was five years ago; Rieghis Killuc has said he will not stop until Yulima falls and all their stolen lands are returned to the Molati people.

The Lost Fields are still seen as part of Yulima, but constant invasion, dragons, and other predators have led to their evacuation by the Yulima people. The city-states in the west are now just as fractured as the Molati were once years ago, trying to find a way to save themselves from Rieghis Killuc's wrath. Acum and Oleis have been minimally affected by the Horde, and the Hidden Empress has sent no help. They are being shortsighted: if the Horde takes Yulima, Acum and Oleis will be their next targets.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If the Yulima can unite and reclaim the Lost Fields.
- ◆ What remains of the ruined cities.
- ◆ The movement of the Horde and where they might attack next.

GM Moves

- ◆ Make them feel the wind of the gods.
- ◆ Surprise them with something sinister lairing in an old city ruin.
- ◆ Chase them across the fields with the Horde.

HUNLOU

The largest of the city-states still standing, Hunlou is located on the northern part of Junsol Lake. The land around is not heavily farmed, instead fishing constitutes much of the diet. Hunlou trades for wheat and such foods with other city-states. The current grand mayor is Shiloe Che, a formidable woman who was once a Joi in Koeis. She has ambitions to one day unite the city-states under the Hidden Empress' banner once again and destroy the Molati Horde. She does whatever she can to further the power and influence of her city, knowing separatists are everywhere. Her predecessors had declared independence, so her loyalty to the empire is a secret. If the city found out, a coup would surly erupt.

The city itself is doing very well. It sits on top of a huge deposit of silver that can be mined via the catacombs and sewers below. The mayor makes sure a large portion is sent north to Koeis. The rest is used to make life in Hunlou comfortable. The citizens here have low taxes, good schools, and free healthcare. The mining of silver is heavily regulated by the government. Many merchants risk crossing the wild country to trade here because of the city's wealth.

Halfling mob families have yet to spread to Iros, leaving local gangs to control the black market. The most powerful of these gangs is the Gi'Sing, who originated in Koeis. They are known for having magical tattoos that denote their ranking in the gang. The more tattoos a member has, the higher up the chain they are. These tattoos are enchanted with basic spells, such as protection, which will give the person a +1 to their armor. GMs should feel free to customize Gi'Sing NPCs to fit their stories, such as a crew captain may have a tattoo that allows them to cast fireball once per week. Just make sure the benefit matches their status and is unbalanced.

Play to find out...

- ◆ The connection between the mayor and the Gi'Sing.
- ◆ What plans the merchants have to get a bigger portion of the silver.
- ◆ If the mayor can keep her loyalty to the empire secret.

GM Moves

- ◆ Erupt a turf war among the gangs.
- ◆ Attack the city with the Molati Horde.
- ◆ Rally the mayor's troops to take over the Greyleaf Forest and Phosui.

GREYLEAF FOREST

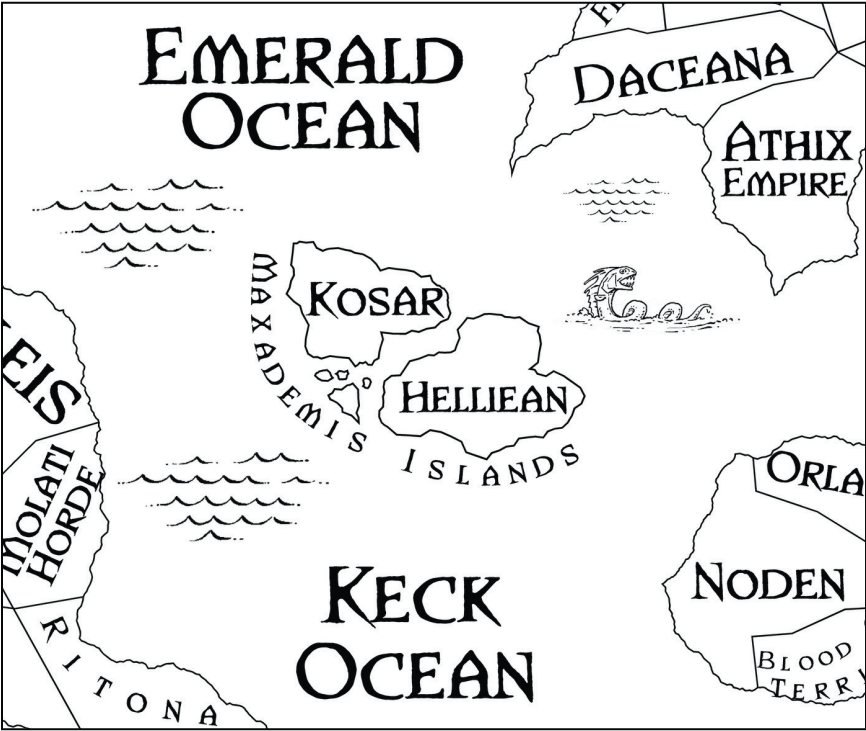
As the only major source of wood in Yulima, Greyleaf Forest is a battleground between the different city-states and their logging concerns. There is little thought for future needs as young and old trees are harvested. Phosui is an independent logging town that is used as a base by all the major cities. Inside the forest, camps try to lay claim to as much as their numbers allow. Meanwhile, the Red Foxes, a small Pwati tribe that lives here, have been trying to negotiate a deal to save the forest. Unfortunately, they have little leverage. Some elves have resorted to violence to protect certain areas from the lumberjack's axe.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Why the Red Fox tribe's numbers are so low.
- ◆ The secrets of the sacred parts of the forest.
- ◆ If the forest can be saved.

GM Moves

- ◆ The Red Fox tribe reaches out for help.
- ◆ A city-state hires mercenaries to remove the Pwati.
- ◆ Release an evil trapped in the forest.



MAXADEMIS ISLAND

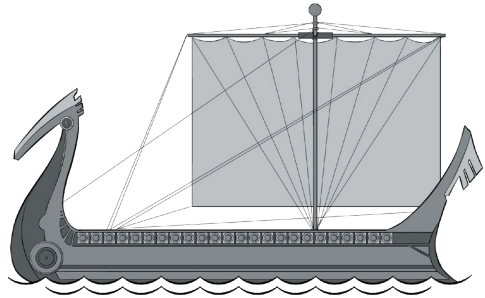
Helliean, Kosar



HELLIEAN

Constitutional Monarchy

For a very long time, Helliean was a backwater vassal state of the Athix Empire, a navy post and not much more. But when the Athix Civil War on the mainland broke out, they were one of the first to declare independence, seizing all the ships in the docks. They also



quickly freed their slaves to avoid a similar uprising. Admiral Firous tried to take command of the government, going so far as to declare himself *ketark*, or king, but to his dismay the wealthy merchants became the ones with real power. They created a small senate as well as a constitution. Free elections are also being planned, but Admiral Firous has some pull and is still seen as an asset in navel affairs.

The power of the small island nation is growing. Their navy is one of the strongest in Rothaen, and it is where they invest most of their resources. They have outlawed pirates, but do offer privateering contracts, taxed at 50% of any gained loot, to any who will harry their enemies: Athix, Ulenvin, and Luxinvale. Because the Helliean navy is so strong, and their coast is hard to raid, foreign governments have had little success pushing back against their bullying.

The people of Helliean are by blood Athelean humans, most having immigrated to the island a thousand years ago to be part of the olive and wine trade. However, over the years they have been more open to those visiting the island than their mainland counterparts. With its central location and willingness to allow immigrants in, Helliean boasts a solid merchant trade with olives, wine, wheat, and fish.

Their geographical closeness to Kosar and its pirates has caused some disruption to Helliean's trade. This is another reason they give out privateer licenses, as it levels out losses from foreign pirates to local trade. Unlike Kosar, Helliean does not allow trafficking in slaves. Ship crews found doing so will face trial and, if found guilty, a life of hard labor.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who truly runs Helliean.
- ◆ What evil waits in the Talon Cliffs.
- ◆ The plan to conquer Kosar.

GM Moves

- ◆ Declare war with Kosar to protect merchants.
- ◆ Wipe out a year's crops with disease.
- ◆ Emerge a dragon from the Talon Cliffs.

CITY OF GIROA

Southwards, on Helliean's verdant Vineyard Coast, is the capital city Giroa. The city processes grapes and olives from the vineyards. Though some smaller villages create their own brands of olive oil and wine, most of those products make their way through Giroa's ports. The city has become so rich from trade that it has been transformed into a marvel of architecture. Anyone who is willing to work can find a job here. The presses are always cranking out bottles of wine and olive oil. The docks have ships arriving and sailing out at all hours.

The standards placed on wine is very high, and to get the Giroa seal is the mark of true excellence. It is no surprise that counterfeits are a big problem. Pillernar, the local halfling mob, knows that they can mark up a bottle of copper piece wine by sticking a fake seal on it and selling it through their pubs. Of course, the fake bottles are making people not trust the seal, and in some cases people have been poisoned by incredibly bad wine.

The city watch here is a strange mix of lesser nobles with nothing better to do and farmers looking for military adventures without actually being in the military. The watch finds itself chasing counterfeiters or spies from different vineyards looking to steal secrets. PCs could easily play as city watch, being any class. The group could be made equally of lesser nobles and former farmers, giving many chances for role-playing these colliding realities.

The mayor is Joulus Medimmus, and it is commonly known that he is a demon. The story goes that several decades ago he escaped the Doomlands and found his way onto a ship before the Army of Light could catch him. He fled to Helliean and used his magic to disguise himself. At first, he just wanted to lay low, but as time passed, he got bored and started to get interested in politics. When the mayor died under mysterious circumstances a few months later, he jumped at the chance to run for office. After a hard-fought campaign, he won the position. It took about three years for the public to find out the truth about Joulus's true nature, but by that point he had turned the city around and had powerful allies in his pocket, so they let him remain as mayor.

That was 50 years ago, and it looks like the demon has not gotten bored with city politics yet. Paladins who learn that the mayor is a demon have tried, and failed, to smite Joulus. He has the city watch on a short leash and avoids the temple district or even talking about faith. He could care less about souls, hell, or anything else attached to his old life. Joulus is known for his love of all genders and his sexual appetites are well known. He has even written a few books on the subject. The first, *My Room, Your Rules*, was banned in most places across Rothaen. He is proud of that accomplishment.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Which vineyard company is the most ruthless.
- ◆ How hard it is to steal a grower's secrets.
- ◆ What the mayor's plans really are.

GM Moves

- ◆ Cause a riot by workers who want to unionize, throwing the city into chaos.
- ◆ Have the Army of Light attack the city to capture the mayor and drag him back to the Doomlands.
- ◆ Have a mad wizard curse the crops.

CISSTONI & THE FORBIDDEN FOREST

On the northern coast of the island is a small fishing village named Cisstoni. This settlement is next to a wooded area that the locals call the Forbidden Forest. The story that the forest is an evil place that no one should go to is both overly dramatic and false. Cisstoni is a pirate village, and the forest is full of hiding places where treasure and black-market goods are stashed. The pirates have hired orcs, goblins, and even ogres to live here and protect their treasure. Maybe not the greatest guards, but they can be a deterrent if the silly name doesn't work.

The village has some red flags visitors may pick up on. First, there are no children. Second, the fishers never seems to leave the docks. Third, there are more bars than a village needs. Finally, travelers are made to feel very unwelcome. If asked about the Forbidden Woods, the person asking will hear a horrible story about the woods and why no one should ever go in to them. The problem is, the story changes depending on who is asked. Are the woods dangerous? Yes, they are trap laden and well patrolled by humanoid goons. Treasure is not just lying around; it has been hidden, buried all over the place. But there is no huge, dark evil festering here.

The pirates of Cisstoni village all work for Captain Mistol La'Frey, a former mayor from the Victoire Republic (see page 125) and the mastermind behind the Forbidden Forest facade. He decided that vaults were too easy to hit, and that by burying treasure in the forest, he was protecting his ship's treasure better. The chests of treasure are buried by Mistol and six of his most trusted people. The hired humanoid goons are not allowed to follow them. This measure theoretically stops them from digging up the gold and leaving, although this has happened a few times. Mistol is convinced that this is the best way to protect their spoils, even if his people complain that it is not.

In his office above the Silver Mermaid, a complicated system of maps and codes show all the locations of buried treasure. To gain access to the system, one must sneak into a locked room and then attempt the *Buried Treasure Charts* move. This move can only be done once per day.

Buried Treasure Charts

To find the location of one of the buried treasure sites, roll +INT. On a 10+, you discover the location of a buried treasure of the GMs making. On a 7-9, you find a location, but must pick one of the following setbacks:

- Draw unwanted notice.
- Spring a trap in the office.
- Learn an unpleasant truth you must act upon.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What Captain Mistol La'Frey real master plan is.
- ◆ Why the humanoids stay away from the center of the forest.
- ◆ About the plot against Captain Mistol La'Frey.

GM Moves

- ◆ Spread rumors of a great magic item hidden in the forest.
- ◆ Cause townspeople to become suspicious.
- ◆ Attack with a goblin horde.

THE TRAGIC TALE

The Lover's Forest, The Queen's Tears, and The King's Regret are magically connected areas that represent an ancient betrayal by a king. The names of those involved have been lost to time, and no one can remember the areas having different names, not even the long-lived of the island. A force stalks each area. Many say these are spirits of those in the love triangle, while others believe it is only the wraith of the former queen.

Whatever it is, the areas radiate powerful emotions that are always changing. This force has warped the animals and monsters who live here. Their actions depend on the emotion the force is transmitting. It also changes their abilities, adding bonuses or disadvantages. These changes do not affect PCs, other than their general mood, unless they live here for an extended amount of time. GMs are encouraged to use whatever emotions that fit their campaign.

EXAMPLE EMOTIONAL EFFECTS

- ◆ Anger: +1 to damage
- ◆ Distrust: Will react poorly to PCs in social interaction. -1 to *Parley* made against the creature
- ◆ Hate: Will not trust PC and will be hostile
- ◆ Love: Will not attack. +2 to *Parley* made against the creature
- ◆ Rage: +2 to damage, -1 to armor
- ◆ Sadness: -2 to armor, will run away unless cornered

Play to find out...

- ◆ The true story behind the tragic tale.
- ◆ Where the hidden shrine to love is.
- ◆ Why the fey fear to tread in the tragic tale areas.

GM Moves

- ◆ Have the queen's spirit attack intruders.
- ◆ Tell the tragic tale through a group of encounters with the ghosts of the old kingdom.
- ◆ Impart a feeling of true guilt and sadness in the Lover's Forest.



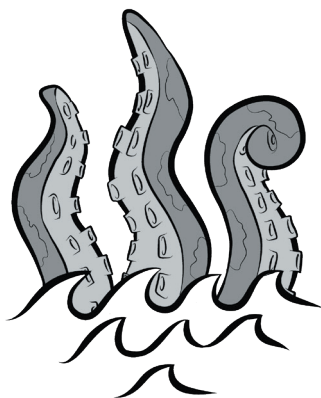
KOSAR

Kleptocratic Coregency, Slaves

“The flag of a pirate ship is a terrible thing indeed, but what is worse is when it’s a Kosar crew. If you don’t escape, you’re as good as dead.”

—Captain Gath

Like the other pirate nations, Kosar was once part of the Athix Empire, until the civil war gave them an opportunity to declare independence. Kosar is north of Hellean, across the Crassis Channel. It is an island nation of slavers, thieves, and cutthroats. The strongest and most cunning cling to power while those below them look for ways to knock them down. Their navy, which others call pirate ships, is known and feared across Rothaen. Other nations have tried to neutralize their fleet, but Kosar outmaneuvers them every time. Their connections to mob families keep them informed on merchant and military movements. Kosar crews are known for raiding ships for slaves. Those lucky enough to escape say that Kosar pirates use speed, magic, and cannons to overwhelm their targets.



The Maxademis Islands intersect the Emerald Ocean, the Keck Ocean, and the Pirate Sea, making it perfect for pirates to run illegal items and slaves. Drugs, addicting potions, and pleasure scrolls from all over Rothaen are snuck nightly into foreign ports. If that is not an option, barrels of goods are thrown overboard for the local thieves to paddle out to and pick up. These activities have made Kosar a very rich, unstable nation. With this wealth, many of the so-called pirate kings have hired inventors to increase their ship’s size and firepower. There is an arms race on Kosar.

Kosar appears to have no stable government. Diplomats who have arrived here have found nothing but pirates mixed in with slaves and terrified farmers. To the outside eye, there are no laws, no officials, nothing. But, anytime navies attack the islands, well-trained ships respond. This has perplexed foreign nations for years. They do not understand how Kosar is run, or even survives, with no government.

What outsiders do not know is that there are several pirate kings and queens who control their own areas and ships. The inland cities pay protection money to the king or queen that controls the area. Farmers produce food to avoid being sold into slavery. Rulers must maintain control and watch for mutiny, or they will find themselves at the bottom of the ocean. To some, it seems pirate nobles change as often as the tide.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What the pirates' true weaknesses are.
- ◆ Who is buying the most slaves.
- ◆ Which pirate monarch is close to starting a war to take over the island.

GM Moves

- ◆ Reveal a new source of addictive drugs.
- ◆ Cause paranoia in the pirate ranks.
- ◆ Have Carthic attack a coastal city.

SLAVE PORT

Slave Port is one of the largest cities in world. Home to over two million people, half of which are slaves, it is always busy. The city is so large that it sprawls out into the Corntia Swamp that surrounds it. The city is a hodgepodge of large platforms built on huge concrete pylons and smaller rafts where buildings are built. Wide bridges connect the platforms. As the city grows, new platforms are added near the older ones with new bridges connecting them. Small crafts can navigate between platforms, and so the waters around Slave Port are choked with boats. The massive dock area is just above sea level on the Crassis Channel. There are large bridges leading from the dock to the main platforms of the city. Flooding during spring and fall are normal. Hurricane season is during the fall.

The reason this complex, mess of a city is the center of the slave trade is simple: money. Captain Highrock Jones was one of the first pirate kings to get up and running during the Athix Civil War. His family lived in Slave Port, which at the time was called Greut. Highrock is cunning and has spies everywhere, looking for upstarts who wish to do him harm. His history in Slave Port gives him insight to the people here. As such, his home base has become where

he does business. The dock is always busy, with ships docking to trade their goods. There are no underground mobs here, instead, mobs are free to do their business in the open. Murder is normal, with corpses found floating in the swamp almost daily. Sometimes victims come back from the dead and try to take revenge or transform into bog zombies.

The slaves' lives hang by a thread. If disease breaks out, there are not enough healers to stop a mass death from happening. Slave corpses are sold to death merchants, who then sell them to necromancers and physicians for research. Sometimes the dead brings more money than the living. Women and children are held separate from men. When boys reach twelve, they are moved to the men's pens. To breed slaves, you must have a license from the city and pay fees. Freeing a slave costs double the amount of the slave's price and the owner must give their blessing. The city watch here is made up of the Highrock's men and they oversee the collection of fees and well as upholding their lord's law.

Highrock has powerful allies who use the city as their base of operations. They include the Morticians (see page 426), the Kurte mob family, and several outer-planar beings from different dimensions. This last group includes demons looking for new souls, merchants from the Happy Hunting Grounds looking to sell goods, and hags from the Astral Plane looking for material plane magic items. Highrock provides what they are looking for, and they provide an extra layer of protection. Should he ever fail to make any of these groups happy, they would turn on him in an instant.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Why the Astral Plane hags need magic items.
- ◆ How to save slaves brought here.
- ◆ What connection Highrock has to the merchants of the Happy Hunting Grounds.

GM Moves

- ◆ Take out a platform.
- ◆ Plot a slave uprising.
- ◆ Pummel the city with a hurricane.

HEXMON'S WASTE

Hexmon's Waste is magically scarred land littered with craters and large geysers. These geysers spew hot water sixty meters into the air, causing the ground to always be slick. The water is heated by lava tubes under the nearby Blacksoot Mountains. The craters that have filled with water are full of life. Bright glowing algae cling to the crater's walls under the waterline. Several aquatic life forms swim in these huge, warm, fresh water pools. The algae can be used in several different potions, many of which are addictive, and so locals harvest them for different pirate rulers and the mobs. Doing this is dangerous and requires special diving gear and skills. Those willing to put on dive suites are payed five hundred silver for every kilo brought up to the surface.

Six hundred years ago, the arch-mage Hexmon developed a new dimensional shift spell. His goal was to be able to shift himself and items he designated to other dimensions and back. He tested different spells over ten years, and each failed. Finally, after much frustration, he found a magical formula he felt would work. It required a large energy source. However, the formula was vague about how big of a power source was needed. He decided to tap into the local lava tubes running under the mountains and surrounding plains.

The spell proved to work too well. The entire region, mountains and all, was transported to the churning chaos of limbo, where it was pummeled by the raw building blocks of the universe. This lasted one minute, and that's all it took. All settlements, gone. All plant life, gone. Everything died... except for the half-mad wizard.

Hexmon stood in the center of the now ruined city of Guithick, dumbfounded by what he had just witnessed. The mountains had been reshaped, geysers had erupted from the ground, and all life had been snuffed out. Hexmon, horrified by what he had done, turned himself over to the Athix authorities. For his crime, one that cost tens of thousands of lives, sentient or otherwise, he was sentenced to be tortured and beheaded. People from all over the island watched as Hexmon was executed. His body was chopped into sections and the pieces were left, magically preserved, at locations where cities once stood.

The area's plant life has been slowly returning, some of which is imbued with the essence of Limbo. This is the source of the magical algae, for example. Blacksoot Mountains are a harsh place to travel through. Some terrible monsters have made their homes here, but one must also beware the secretive parishioners at the Deathrite Church. Little is known about this cult.

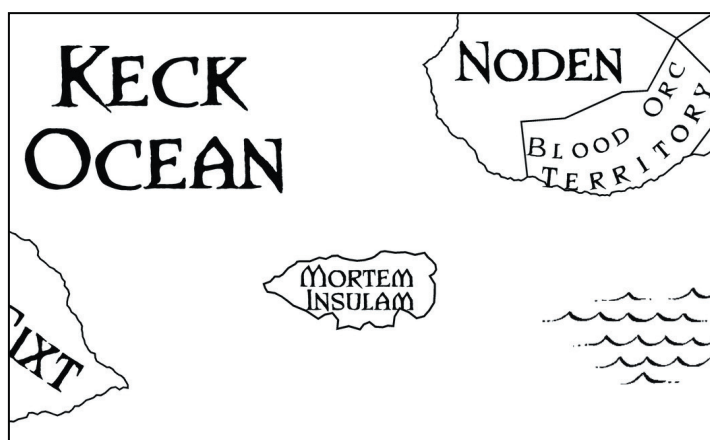
Hexmon wanted to be a great wizard, whose name would be remembered forever—he got part of his wish.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Who or what is worshiping at the Deathrite Church.
- ◆ What happens if you collect all of Hexmon's parts and put them back together.
- ◆ What monsters in the Blackstoot Mountains came back from Limbo with the land.

GM Moves

- ◆ Haunt the area with the lost.
- ◆ Patrol the crater pools with mob thugs.
- ◆ Reveal ruins of lost cities.



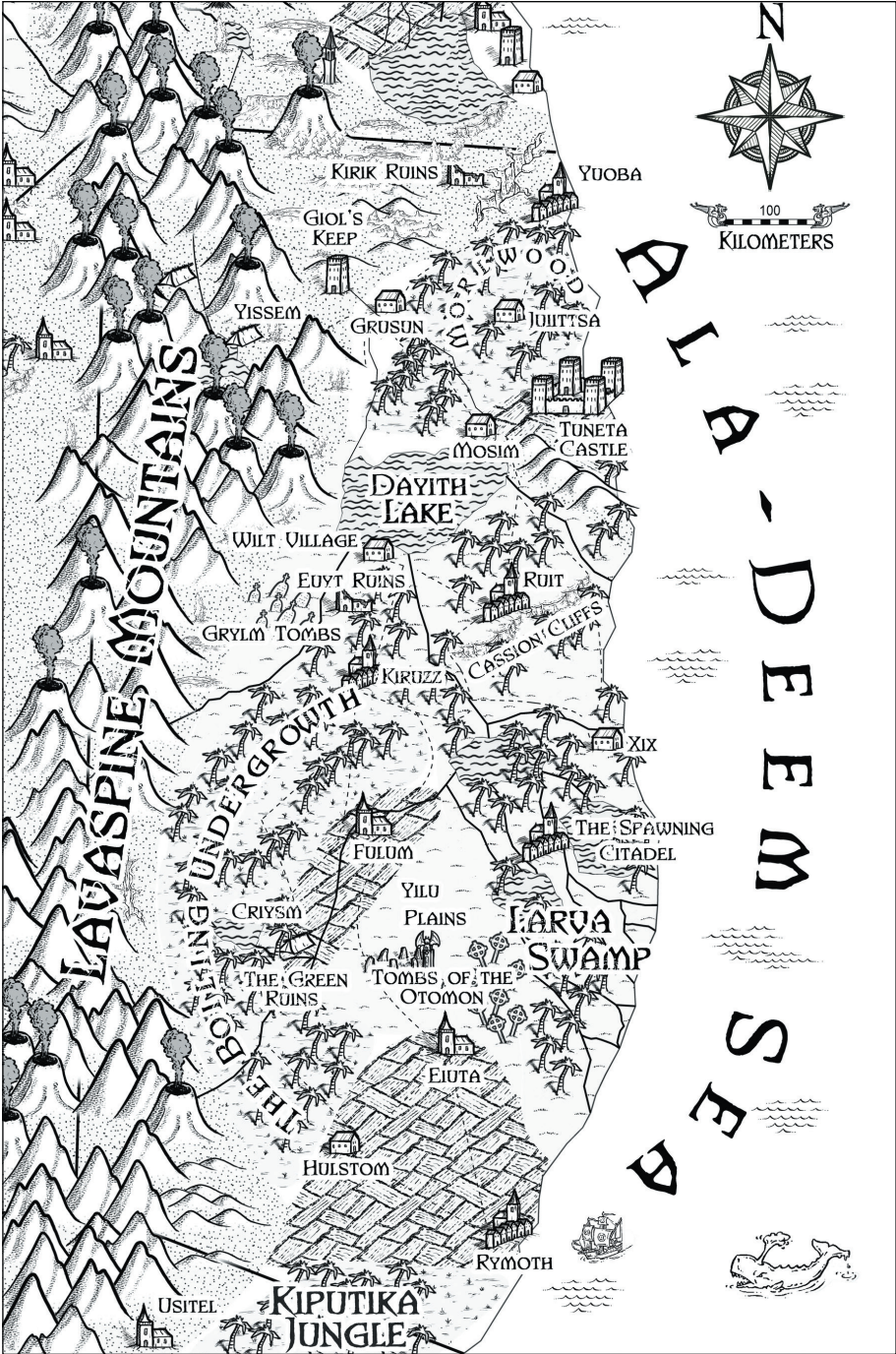
MORTEM INSULAM

This island is a mystery waiting to be explored.
What will you uncover there? Play to find out!



MURWATA ISLAND

Crysom, Malo, Taseki Empire, Wisgo



CRY SOM

Fractured Monarchy

When most people in Rothaen think of Crysom, they think of giant insects and xenophobic, cannibalistic, human barbarian hordes. Most sceptics doubt the stories about insects and believe those about barbarians. In fact, the insect stories are mostly true, and the barbarian tales are more complicated.

Taseki emperors who counted Crysom among their possessions provided the ethnologists, zoologists, arcanologists, and planographers of Pusotagitina, the Second City, with ample specimens of both for study and experimentation. Study of the insectoid specimens led to a proliferation of debates regarding their origins and ecosystem—and some notable advances in husbandry and breeding techniques—while study of the human specimens largely just served to stoke the fires of rebellion among the so-called “barbarian” nomads whose lives and cultures the Taseki shattered.



OTO AND GRYL

The ancient legends of Crysom tell of two divine siblings, Oto and Gryl, who came from across the Ala-Deem Sea to grant gifts of knowledge to the people of the swamplands east of the Lavaspine Mountains—the future lands of Crysom. Oto brought the knowledge of law and government, organizing the people into collectives and states, and bringing peace and an end to kinship vendettas. Gryl taught the people the creative arts: pottery, weaving, riding, architecture, agriculture, and warfare. These tales are accepted by most in Crysom, although the weight and value placed on each aspect of their teachings varies considerably from community to community. Those who prioritize Oto’s teachings are known as *Otomon* in the Yilu language of central Crysom. Those who prioritize Gryl’s teachings are known as *Grylm* in the Dayith language of the north.

The sedentary people of the north and south took a more hierarchical approach to the gifts of knowledge from Oto and Gryl, developing a city-state organization that is familiar to outsiders, while the peoples of the wilder places in the center of Crysom traditionally practice more egalitarian, nomadic lifestyles. While the Taseki Empire was ascendant, the imperial cities Tuneta, Eluta, Takaka, and Rumata reflected, dominated, and co-opted local practices and beliefs in different ways. Those imperial cities with a tradition of respecting local customs survived for the longest after the empire fell, but the last of those was swept away when the Yilu rose to power.

THE YILU

The Yilu arose from the plains of central Crysom between the Larva Swamp and the Boiling Undergrowth. Each of these regions has a distinct ecosystem, but they are united by a humid climate and the predominance of giant insectoid life. Yilu culture developed around their relationship to two such giant insects: the ant-like formidom and the mantis-like mantodom. For most of their history, the Yilu humans were one of many Otomon pastoralist tribes, herding their formidom across the plains on the western edge of the Larva Swamp.

Under the Taseki, Yilu tribal leaders were important allies of Rumata, the Twenty-Third City, Doves Receiving, Washed by Seas of Grain, and Euta, the Twenty-Fifth City, Sword over Crysom, From Blood, Honey. Their position on the edge of the territories of two nominal allies allowed them considerable leeway to develop strong connections with the other nomadic tribes of central Crysom and build their own power. When the magical harmony that bound the imperial cities together fell and those cities descended into civil disorder and recriminations, the Yilu consolidated their power over the other tribes.

By the time the Taseki imperialists realized the danger, it was too late. Euta was destroyed in blood and fire, Takaka was sacked, and Rumata's walls were surrounded by a sea of Yilu mantodites. The siege of Rumata lasted decades and the campaign to capture Tuneta would take the better part of a century, but eventually all Crysom was united under the Yilu.

GENDER AMONG THE YILU

Yilu variations on the ancient legends of Cryson tell that of the divine siblings, Oto and Gryl, Oto was a being of no gender and Gryl encompassed all three genders. When Gryl taught the Yilu the creative arts, they divided the arts among the three genders of the Yilu: to men, they taught the arts of agriculture and weaving; to women, they taught pottery and riding; and to mantoden, they taught architecture and warfare. As for Oto, e taught legal and political knowledge to all, regardless of gender.

In modern Yilu society, these gender roles manifest in men having a primarily sedentary role, focused on maintaining the extended family farm and raising young children. Until they become adults, children are considered “part of Oto”, a notional genderless state, although in reality most children begin to prefer their eventual gender before adulthood. Once the children are old enough to travel independently (around age seven), their care transfers mostly to the women who engage in semi-nomadic practices of seasonal herd movement with periodic stays at their farms. When the children become adults at the Rite of Gryl, they must settle on an adult gender. At this point, they may become a mantodan and enter training as a mantodite, a mantoda-riding warrior.

This, at least, is the traditional perspective; reality is far more complicated. For the most part, the genderless Oto and the all-gendered Gryl are now regarded as idealized divine forms that could not be realized by mortals. Nevertheless, there are individuals who identify with the forms of Oto or Gryl, and certain sects within the Yilu recognize and revere the individuals who conform more closely to those ideals. Although occasionally politically powerful, those sects are not part of mainstream Yilu society.

Similarly, while the gender one becomes at the transition to adulthood is supposed to be fixed and permanent, there are those who change gender later in life. The reception of such a change varies among kin groups. Some are notably more tolerant and flexible, and others considerably less so. Sometimes such a decision results in a permanent split in a family group, with one or both groups forming a new kinship group and severing all ties to the other group. This happens frequently enough that it is called “sundering”, and most families have an ancestral tale about a famous sundering.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If the Yilu can hold onto Crysom in the face of a resurgent Taseki Empire.
- ◆ If the ruling council of elders can balance between tribes and factions.
- ◆ What new and unexpected threat arises in the mountainous northwest.

GM Moves:

- ◆ Show the mobile roots of Yilu society.
- ◆ Reveal Yilu weakness and the strength of local traditions.
- ◆ Spout wondrous, conflicting myths of the past from the mouths of the wise.
- ◆ Everyone has their own problems; the world is far away.

FORMIDA

Formidom (*singular: formida*) are horse-sized insects resembling large, hairy ants. In the wild, formidom live in small groups, grazing from the low hanging branches of the broad dunsem trees which grow along the creek beds that lace the plains and along the boggy margins of the Larva Swamp. Wild formidom are aggressive if approached and will swarm creatures that threaten them, biting with powerful branch-crushing mandibles.

Yilu culture is based around the formida, which they have somewhat domesticated, thanks mostly to selective breeding of mantodom, in whose presence formidom become passive. Yilu men stew formida meat with aromatic tree-barks from the Morlwood and the jungle around Kiruzz, and they dry the meat for the women to eat while they drive the formida herds from creek to creek. The men also weave clothing from formida hair and fire-harden and layer their chitinous hides to fashion elegant plate armor for the mantoden warriors.

Formida*Group, Large*Mandibles (1d8+2 damage, *close, messy*)

8 HP 2 Armor

Special Qualities: Insectoid*Instinct:* To defend

- ◆ Swarm and bring down threats
- ◆ Crush in powerful mandibles
- ◆ Attract nearby mantodom

MANTODA

Mantodom (*singular: mantoda*) are taller than formidom, but with thinner limbs and a mantis-like form. They are quick moving and can jump long distances thanks to their powerful hind legs. Their forelimbs are large and muscular, held close to their bodies, but able to strike at deceptively long distances with remarkable precision. Mantoda attacks rely on quick strikes, torsion, and leverage to peel off the armored shells of their assailants and focus their power on the exposed weak spots. This style serves them well, whether they are hunting formidom or defending themselves against human hunters.

The mantoda is the other pillar of Yilu culture. Although wild Mantodom still exist, most have been domesticated by the Yilu as mounts, both for herding the formidom and for the sixth art of Gryl: warfare. Yilu of any age or gender may herd on mantoda-back, but only the mantoden (the Yilu’s third gender) may practice the sixth art astride a mantoda.

Mantoda	<i>Group, Large</i>
Forelegs (1d8+1 damage, 1 piercing, <i>close, reach</i>)	10 HP 2 Armor
<i>Special Qualities:</i> Insectoid	

- Instinct:* To protect
- ◆ Destroy an opponent’s armor
 - ◆ Leap from a surprising distance
 - ◆ Defend something from attack

LARVA SWAMP

Goblins, Thick Mud, Dangerous

To the east of the central plains now named for the Yilu, the land slumps into a broad area of flood-prone swampland. Visually, the Larva Swamp's three large "lakes" are barely distinguishable from the boggy marsh that surrounds them, but unguided travelers who wander into them soon discover that despite the shallow depth of the water, the mud beneath is a deadly trap. Elsewhere throughout the swamp, large mossy hummocks protrude from the brackish water. Yet, these too are deceptive. Most are simply large mossy growths that slowly absorb anything heavy that comes to rest atop them... such as sleeping travelers. The hummocks which offer a safe place to rest are only discernible by climbing to the top and waiting to see if they show any signs of sinking. From the top of the hummocks, the burned hollows of swamp goblin camps are visible.

The swamp goblins dwell throughout the Larva Swamp, but especially in the north around the so-called Spawning Citadel. Little is known of these reclusive people, but it is said that their queen lives in the bowels of the Citadel, periodically erupting forth new clutches of swamp goblins. What is known is that the lakes near the citadel are the main breeding ground of the gerradom, a kind of dog-sized water-skimming insect that the swamp goblins train both for hunting and for pulling their flat-bottomed swamp rafts. Aside from the Spawning Citadel, the swamp goblins have no cities or villages, instead they roam the swamp in small groups atop their swamp rafts and accompanied by herds of gerradom.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What the relationship is between the swamp goblin queen and the Yilu.
- ◆ Who or what is the queen. Are any of the rumors true?
- ◆ What fate awaited the last Taseki legion that marched on the Spawning Citadel.

GM Moves

- ◆ Threaten with the strange unfamiliarity of the swamp.
- ◆ Breathe life into swamp goblin civilization.
- ◆ Ambush with spear, mandible, and polite request.
- ◆ Reveal a treasure or a threat long lost beneath the surface.

GERRADA

Gerradom (*singular: gerrada*) have thin bodies, four long wide-spread legs to distribute weight, and two small clawed forelimbs to defend, to attack, and to communicate. They engage in the latter by rubbing their forelimbs together at high speed to generate an array of high-pitched chirps, whines, and keening sounds. This communication seems to be analogous to the howling of wolves: signaling the location of the gerradom, indicating the pack's territory and when it is violated, and rallying the pack to repel intruders or rescue an injured gerrada.

A single wild gerrada is of little danger to a human. However, they are seldom encountered alone. Where one is found, the pack is usually nearby, although often dispersed unless they are actively hunting large prey. Gerradom hunt fish alone by striking from above through the water and hunt large mammals in packs by herding their prey towards particularly boggy areas of swamp where they will become trapped and weakened.

Domesticated gerradom are found in two varieties. Those trained to pull swamp rafts are usually quite docile and will attempt to flee when threatened. Those trained by the swamp goblins to hunt will do so in much the same way as wild gerradom, but will herd their prey towards a more diverse array of dangers, including goblin-made traps or snares or an ambush by a second pack. Hunting gerradom are usually coordinated by teams of 2-4 swamp goblin hunters who communicate between each other and the gerradom with carefully fashioned swamp-reed whistles.

Wild Gerrada

Horde, Small

Claws (1d6 damage, *close*)

3 HP 0 Armor

Special Qualities: Insectoid, Water-walking

Instinct: To swarm

- ◆ Emit a piercing chirp to attract the pack
- ◆ Encircle and drive towards dangerous waters
- ◆ Scuttle quickly across the water's surface

Hunting Gerrada*Horde, Small*Claws (1d6+1 damage, *close*)

4 HP 0 Armor

Special Qualities: Insectoid, Water-walking*Instinct:* To herd

- ◆ Emit a piercing chirp to attract the hunters and the pack
- ◆ Encircle and drive towards danger
- ◆ Pin in place for a hunter's spear

THE BOILING UNDERGROWTH*Warring Pwati, Dangerous*

The Boiling Undergrowth traces an arc of low foliage around the agrarian western edge of the Yilu Plains. The inhabitants of these agrarian communities are mostly humans from several sedentary peripheral tribes under Yilu suzerainty who have largely adopted Yilu customs over the past centuries. However, a significant minority population are Pwati elves from the Undergrowth. These elves are far from united. Most who dwell amongst the humans of the Yilu plains are exiles or refugees from the intense sectarian squabbles between the bewildering array of Pwati tribes who jockey for power in the jungle.

The jungle itself is dominated by the growth patterns of the greater dunsem trees. While their creek-dwelling cousins grow squat throughout the rest of central Crysom, the fertile volcanic soil at the base of the Lavaspine's foothills nourishes the greater dunsem to incredible height as well as huge breadth. Under their broad, thick canopy, few other trees of notable size can find sufficient sunlight to flourish, giving the interior of The Boiling Undergrowth the look of an immense cave, carpeted with brushy shrubs and tall grasses, punctuated by tall, branchy columns. The already humid climate of central Crysom is accentuated within the stillness of the interior, the trapped air shrouding everything in a misty haze disturbed only by the lazy motion of the blood-sucking culicidom and drenching everything in a stifling blanket of moist heat.

The Pwati communities of the Undergrowth live in elegant, wood-carved pavilions, perched high in the air, around the trunks of the tree-columns. Each usually has a main thoroughfare that spirals around the trunk, with occasional auxiliary “roads” running onto the radiating branches. Access to each community from the ground is carefully controlled by a system of ropes and pulley-operated elevators which are managed by guards and identity control officers. This bureaucratic apparatus is a recent addition to these ancient communities, as are the sturdy sides attached to most of the pavilions, the battle-damaged state of many of the structures, and the wary and distrustful attitudes of all the inhabitants.

Their own legends and those of their neighbors paint the ancient Pwati elves of the Undergrowth as a passionate and fractious people, and those tendencies seem to have only become worse in modern times. To newcomers, the elves seem relatively homogeneous in culture, but each tree has its own community with its own variations on shared customs, legends, and gods. Each community also has its own subtle means of communicating and signaling their particular values to exclude casual outsiders and to facilitate identification of hostile spies and provocateurs. Since the Taseki were driven out, the elven political culture of the Undergrowth has devolved into a whirlwind of violence, terrorism, recrimination, and outright warfare, usually with motives and rationales that are thoroughly obscure to anyone but the offended parties.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Which new plot threatens to erupt from the Undergrowth into Crysom.
- ◆ What is the bloody secret of the Green Ruins.
- ◆ What seeps down from the Lavaspines while the elves squabble.

GM Moves

- ◆ Shroud the jungle in mist and paranoia.
- ◆ Reveal the murderous plots of the Pwati with one hand, show their hidden kindness with the other.
- ◆ Exclude bluntly and subtly.
- ◆ Tarnish the glories of the past with the devastation of war.

CULICIDA

Culicidom (*singular: culicida*) are large flying insects with a dog-sized body and wings as long as an elf is tall. When in rest, slow wing movements are accompanied by a humming sound generated by the fine hairs that cover their wings. When in flight, those same fine hairs produce a sound that cancels out the sound of the rushing air that their wings displace. This allows a culicida to silently and precisely land on a victim, insert their blood-sucking proboscis into a weak point, and begin to exsanguinate their victim. Culicidom prey on any warm-blooded victim larger than a dog. The elves of the Undergrowth have developed oils blended from jungle plants that they burn in street-side braziers to keep the culicidom from their settlements.

Culicida

Group, Stealthy

Proboscis (1d6 damage, 2 piercing, *close*)

6 HP 0 Armor

Special Qualities: Insectoid, Wings

Instinct: To feed

- ◆ Silently alight on an unsuspecting victim
- ◆ Penetrate and suck dry with needle-sharp proboscis
- ◆ Fly swiftly into the mists

LANDS OF THE DAYITH

Under Taseki rule, the northern part of Crysom was divided between three imperial cities: Euta, Takaka, and Tuneta. Now its cities and towns pay lip service to the Yilu while warily eyeing the resurgent Taseki presence on the coast and quietly preparing for war.

The Yilu destruction of Euta was savage and thorough—that ill-omened place is now known as the Euyt Ruins. Whether it was left as a shattered carcass of a city because of the unstill dead which roam its formerly splendid colonnaded streets, or whether the dead came afterwards in response to the call of some later sorcery, is often wondered but seldom discussed.

Takaka was rebuilt and now bears the name Xix. To say the city is a lawless frontier town would be a disservice to the four independent and overlapping sources of law that exist there. The Dayith Council who rule the city are nominally vassals of the Yilu, but in reality follow their own ancient law codes for internal dealings. Yilu law is enforced primarily in disputes between the Dayith and the swamp goblin community who occupy the southern part of the city. The relationship between these goblins and the swamp goblins of the Larva Swamp is varied. Some are exiled, some are voluntary migrants, while others maintain close connections to the Spawning Citadel. The docks of Xix are once again known as Takaka, thanks to the militarized reclamation settlement of Taseki from Pisaka. This small but highly-trained and well-armed community generally respects the will of the city's Dayith Council, but disclaims any allegiance to the Yilu, claiming to represent the will of the emperor in the imperial city of Takaka.

The Takaka settlement is the largest of a series of reclamation settlements dotting the coast from Xix to the southern border of Tuneta Castle. When Tuneta fell to the Yilu and their Dayith allies, the Dayith king claimed Tuneta as his stronghold and seat of his vassal kingdom. The current king remains loyal to the Yilu, but rumors persist of secret marriage overtures towards the Clockwork Queen of Wisgo. Whispers in the dining rooms and ale houses suggest that if the south crumbles, the clockwork armies of the mad queen will march south to accept the allegiance of Tuneta Castle and the rich spice industry of the Morlwood.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If the Clockwork Queen will wait for the Yilu to crumble.
- ◆ If there is more to the Morlwood than spices and profit. What lies beneath those ancient and fragrant trees?
- ◆ Why the Taseki are so interested in claiming a desolate line of coast.

GM Moves

- ◆ Erupt a violent past into a violent present.
- ◆ Reveal a plot that awaits a time of chaos and unrest.
- ◆ Show the machinery under the skin.
- ◆ Strike with a deniable force.

THE SOUTHERN CITIES

The southern part of Crysom consists of the rich croplands of the former Taseki city of Rumata, now Rymoth, and two important local centers, Eiut and Hulstom. All three are now vassals of the Yilu and used as grain stores and mustering stations for the border skirmishes between the Yilu and the two rival northeastern Taseki cities: Pisika the Fifteenth City, from the Jungle, Splendor, and Usitel, the Thirty-first City, The City of Eternal Peace. The Yilu were strong enough to unite Crysom and overthrow the Taseki hundreds of years ago, but their strength has not recently been tested against the Taseki of the present day. The Yilu play a delicate game with the two Taseki cities' rivalry, aiding each alike in their skirmishes and intrigues against each other deep in the Kiputika Jungle. For now, neither the imperial gaze nor the lure of conquest of Crysom has tempted the two cities to unite against Crysom, but many intrigues are afoot on both sides of the border.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What new power seeks to unite Pisika and Usitel against Crysom.
- ◆ How Discord manifests in Crysom.
- ◆ What dangers of the Kiputika Jungle have been lured back down to the southern cities.

GM Moves

- ◆ Show a society mobilized for a war that could start today.
- ◆ Entangle in multiple intrigues and conflicting loyalties.
- ◆ Contrast local continuity, Taseki imperialism, and Yilu domination.
- ◆ Reveal a new and disturbing magical occurrence.



MALO

United City States, Tribalism

Three centuries ago, Malo was a fertile and populous land, all they lacked was freedom. Now they have the latter, at the cost of the former.

For most inhabitants of Malo, their sense of history has three layers. The Wandering Times were an ancient period of freedom and magical bounty, where families and kinship groups wandered the gods-blessed lands free from predators, free from evil, and free from labor and cares. Those days were destroyed on the Day of Blood and Magic when the Mages invaded and enslaved the people of Malo, ushering in the Time of Slavery. The Day of Liberation ended the cruel rule of the Mages. Now the people live in the Time of Poison, where the earth refuses to yield fruit without backbreaking toil and the gods send down the burning rain that kills everything good.



The history of the Wandering Times is beyond any living Malan, but the conquest of the fertile windward side of the Lavaspine Mountains by the Taseki Empire was as brutal as the tales of the Day of Blood and Magic suggest, if not as quick. The Day of Liberation (or the Day of the Curse, as they call it in the south) was indeed a single day, however. A cataclysmic explosion of discordant magic left nothing of the Taseki city of Sogado but a scar in the earth as deep and violent as the scar that Taseki colonization left on the Malans.

THE TIME OF POISON

Life in Malo is conditioned by two geographical factors. The first is the westerly wind which brings frequent torrents of rain as it rises up the Lavaspine Mountains from the Ala-Deen Sea. The second is the magical residue of the Day of Liberation which poisons all of that rain, except for what falls on a small section of the coast. Those Coastlands are now the only fertile land in Malo; what remains is a magically poisoned desert, devoid of sustenance for all but the most devout.

In the middle of the land, a giant jungle unlike any other in Rothaen somehow survives, the so-called Cobra Warning. Its trees and snake-vines have adapted to the magical poison, producing an environment perhaps more dangerous than the poison-swept desert that makes up the rest of Malo's interior. In the north, nomadic tribes swathed in poison-resistant leaves harvested from the Cobra Warning range across the Shadow Dunes, picking over the remains of ancient tombs and ruins. They operate and raid trade routes between the Coastlands and the Wisgo outposts around Alliuba. In the south, slavers from Dusitakpeta raid the holy communities of the Krellito Savanna river systems and begin to dare even to spread their claws into the Coastlands.

Perhaps the most dangerous aspect of Malo for visitors is their hatred of mages. This would not surprise anyone even passingly familiar with the Malan's history of Taseki oppression and their daily experience of the magical poisoning of their homeland. Malo has no central government and the land contains many people and cultures, but one constant among them all is strict persecution of anyone who uses magic. This is so deeply ingrained that most native Malans who discover they have magical abilities will go to any lengths to remove, hide, or ignore it, including inflicting dangerous or lethal wounds on themselves in the name of folk remedies designed to purge the poison from their souls. Even those who accept their abilities and flee their communities often harbor deep feelings of self-loathing or guilt at their imagined implication in the poisoning of their land.

Play to find out...

- ◆ How the Malans adapted to the poisoning of the land.
- ◆ How a mage lives in a place like Malo.
- ◆ If the Malans can resist a second Time of Slavery at the hands of a resurgent Taseki.

GM Moves

- ◆ Poison something.
- ◆ Complicate things with a local variation in culture.
- ◆ Display a longing for the past.
- ◆ Persecute someone for magical ability, real or imagined.
- ◆ Show a contrast between slavery and freedom.

THE COASTLANDS

The settled heart of Malo is the Coastlands, especially around the land's largest city Ri'ju. Nestled between the jungle and the sea, this small patch of flat arable land is the only place where settled farming is possible. Why the magical poisoning only begins at the jungle here is unknown, but it gives the Malans a foothold that they are determined to preserve.

Each of the Coastlands' cities and towns is ruled by an autonomous democratic council of non-magical citizens, with rotating pairs of randomly selected citizens serving as executive officers for short periods: between a couple of months to a year, depending on the community. Military service (which mostly consists of guard patrols and protecting against raiding Dusitakpeta slavers) is compulsory, although it can be permanently waived in exchange for an equally permanent waiver in voting rights. In the north, the city of Gurrui relies less on sedentary farming and more on a combination of cattle, horse, and camel pastoralism, including close links with the nomads of the Shadow Dunes.

The Coastlands are peaceful, boring, and ripe for Taseki conquest.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If the cities of the Coastlands can overcome local rivalries when faced with the danger from Taseki.
- ◆ What keeps the Coastlands free of the poison.

GM Moves

- ◆ Make the mysterious mundane.
- ◆ Reveal a Taseki plot.
- ◆ Strike with a Taseki raid.
- ◆ Contrast the coastal peace with the poisoned interior.

THE COBRA WARNING

Three hundred years ago, an immense city rose above the jungles at the center of Malo. For the Malans, these magical spires were a symbol of oppression and enslavement. For the Taseki conquerors, they were collectively known as Sogado, the Bejeweled, Light of the North, the Twenty-Fourth City. Within a decade, a new epithet would be attached: Accursed of the Harmony.

The spires of the city of Sogado were famous across the Taseki Empire for the annual Festival of Lights, a vibrant display of magical color and power in the skies above the jungle, reaching to the sky and challenging the gods themselves. Such was the hubris of the Taseki. The gods answered the prayers of the oppressed on the Day of Liberation, striking down the mages and obliterating the hated spires from the world.

As the aftermath of that liberator cataclysm settled over the land as poison, the immediate environment of the former city was an immense tear in the earth. Over time, the poisoned waters of the jungle flowed into the wound, forming a new lake, named *Mutasu* in a local Malan dialect, a word that means justice.

Now the vibrant ecosystem of Malo's central jungle has been warped and twisted by the discordant magic released by the cataclysm. Both flora and fauna are hostile to unwary visitors, from the carnivorous blood vines and pit mushrooms, to three-headed jungle drakes and fire gorillas. In places, flora and fauna have been combined into horrific discordant amalgams like the crocodile-headed branches of the sleeping snapper or the feline root mass of the death tree.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What new danger arises in the jungle to threaten the Coastlands.
- ◆ How the ruins of Sogado are connected to the poisoning of the land.
- ◆ If the Cobra Warning is as full of magical Taseki treasure as the rumors say.

GM Moves

- ◆ Paint the jungle with vivid colors, strange sounds, and disturbing secrets.
- ◆ Reveal a creature twisted by magic.
- ◆ Show the destruction of an oppressive civilization.
- ◆ Turn the world inside out with magic and hold it there, stable and alluring.

Blood Vines*Group, Stealthy, Amorphous*Vines (1d10 damage, *close*, *reach*)

10 HP 0 Armor

Special Qualities: Plant*Instinct:* To ambush

- ◆ Lash out with blinding speed
- ◆ Trap prey in its coils
- ◆ Paralyze prey with secreted poison

The Cobra Warning includes a wide variety of vines at every level of the jungle foliage, from the black earth floor to the highest sun-dappled canopy. Many of these vines are harmless components of the ecosystem, but several are deadly hunters blending in with the harmless varieties. The blood vine is one of the latter.

In its predatory state, it resembles a normal vine, twisting and hanging around a strong tree at any level of the jungle. Perceptive observers may notice that these vines do not seem to have the parasitic relationship with their host trees that other vines do. When the blood vine senses its prey (how exactly it does so is a mystery to scholars), it lashes out with blinding speed, encircling its prey and injecting a paralytic poison with fine filaments from which it will then drain the prey's blood, entering a red-colored, engorged dormant state.

Pit Mushroom*Solitary, Huge, Devious*Digestive acids (1d6 damage, *close*)

30 HP 0 Armor

Special Qualities: Surrounded by pit traps*Instinct:* To grow

- ◆ Attract with the promise of deliciousness
- ◆ Swallow a victim beneath the earth
- ◆ Paralyze prey with secreted poison

These yellow-capped mushrooms grow to twice the height of a human and exude a smell of baking bread from three broad array of red gills on the underside of their caps. The mushrooms themselves are both delicious and nutritious, prized as a delicacy in far off lands. The danger lies beneath, where the mushroom burrows out a large underground hollow, leaving only a light

crust of earth supported by fungal filaments. This crust will give way when any creature of child-size or greater steps on it, dropping the victim into a deep pit full of oozy secretions which paralyze and digest them.

Jungle Drake

Vicious teeth (1d10 damage, *close*)

Solitary, Large, Terrifying

15 HP 2 Armor

Instinct: To feed

- ◆ Lie hidden on large, low branches
- ◆ Drop on prey with multiple clashing maws
- ◆ Tear prey apart between two or more heads

The horse-sized drakes of Malo have a prominent place in the region's lore, but they were never three-headed until the Day of Liberation. Those who encounter them seldom live to tell the tale, but those who survive tell of enormous reptiles with the musculature of a great bear—creatures with three heads bristling with serrated teeth which ripped apart their companions, guides, pack animals, and will to return to the jungle.

Fire Gorilla

Gouts of hellfire (1d8 damage, *close, reach, far*)

Group, Large, Magical, Organized

12 HP 1 Armor

Instinct: To enflame

- ◆ Grasp with mighty arms
- ◆ Terrify with visions of another plane
- ◆ Spout forth hellish flames

Although much has undoubtedly been warped by the magical forces of the Discord, most of the fauna in the Cobra Warning appears to be natural. The fire gorillas of the eastern half of the Warning are one of the most notable exceptions. Like other gorillas, fire gorillas spend most of their time on all fours, in which state they appear much like other gorillas. However, when excited or enraged, they raise themselves into a bipedal stance, revealing an otherworldly sight.

Sunken into the center of their chest is a bright yellow-orange whirlpool of fire which seems to recede into another world, like a whirlpool drawing the viewer's eyes into the hells themselves! The fire gorilla can shoot gouts and balls of magical flame from this hellish void. Fortunately, the dampness of the

jungle reduces the risk of widespread wildfires and the fertility of the jungle revives any burned areas quickly. The fire gorillas themselves seem to be impervious to the flames they emit.

Death Tree

Solitary, Huge, Magical, Devious, Stealthy, Terrifying

Powerful trunk-paws (1d8 damage, *close, reach*)

20 HP 2 Armor

Instinct: To play

- ◆ Stun with a powerful slap
- ◆ Move and climb with menacing grace
- ◆ Hunt with fearsome persistence

In its dormant state, the death tree appears to be a copse of short, dead, and nearly branchless tree trunks. In fact, the whole copse is the dissembled legs of one huge inverted creature. When the copse is disturbed, the trunks entwine into four large, powerful, and magically supple legs that strike at its prey, tossing it between its limbs and high into the air. If the creature manages to evade the limbs and escape, the death tree will emerge from the earth, resembling a giant jaguar made from tangled and entwined branches, and pursue, chasing down its prey and slapping it from tree to tree until it is satisfied and ready to feed.

Sleeping Snapper

Solitary, Huge, Magical, Devious, Stealthy

Snapping jaws (1d10 damage, *close, reach*)

30 HP 2 Armor

Instinct: To ambush

- ◆ Lull with quiet and the lure of wealth
- ◆ Move with incredible speed
- ◆ Snap in two with powerful jaws

While many of the creatures of the Cobra Warning rely on stealth or subterfuge to catch their prey, the Sleeping Snapper relies on complacency. This enormous creature resembles a pendulous-branched willow tree, with a strong, wide trunk from which a rare hardwood bark can be easily harvested. Drooping branches spread widely from the trunk, alternating between long-leafed branchlets and thick undulous vines ending in what appear to be the dead or sleeping bodies of crocodiles. Most of the time, these crocodile-headed vines

are only dangerous to the hearts of those novice bark-collectors surprised by their unusual appearance, but when the creature hungers, the vines become swift and unbelievably mobile, their powerful jaws able to crush a horse with ease, to say nothing of a person.

THE SHADOW DUNES

To the north of the Cobra Warning lies a vast desert of wind-blown sand called the Shadow Dunes. The name arises from the slow-moving, dark shadows which mottle the dusky-grey sands regardless of the day's cloud cover. Most local Malan tribes speak of evil spirits that swim under the sands and avoid the area, but certain nomadic bands roam the Dunes, guiding and supplying caravans between the Coastlands and Wisgo. When caravan traffic is light, these nomads travel secret ways between the ruins that dot that area, scavenging amongst the ancient tombs and forgotten cities for sacred relics of their people and valuable antiquities to sell to the foreign traders who flock to Gurruui in search of exotic curios from the desert.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Why the desert nomads avoid Hua'ja. Is it superstition or something far worse?
- ◆ That on a clear night you can see the lights atop Hitep's tomb from the walls of Gurruui. What is causing this eerie phenomenon?
- ◆ What the soldiers of the Clockwork Queen of Wisgo want in the northern reaches of the Dunes.

GM Moves

- ◆ Reveal a horrifying truth about the Dunes' shadows.
- ◆ Raiders on the sands!
- ◆ Spit forth something from a past age.

RIVERS OF THE GODS

For the most part, the Krellito Savanna is uninhabitable, but somehow a handful of river- and lake-shore communities manage to survive. For those dedicated enough to make the journey, the towns Ji'siitas, Kantabal, Bamoni, and Hesbita are remarkable in appearance. Unlike most towns, the lands around them are devoid of crops, farms, and outlying communities—just a few clay pits, which like the towns themselves, are completely covered with tent-like roofs that are somehow melded together from multiple layers of poison-resistant jungle leaves. That the poisoned rains flow mostly into the river system is irrelevant—that water was poisoned already.

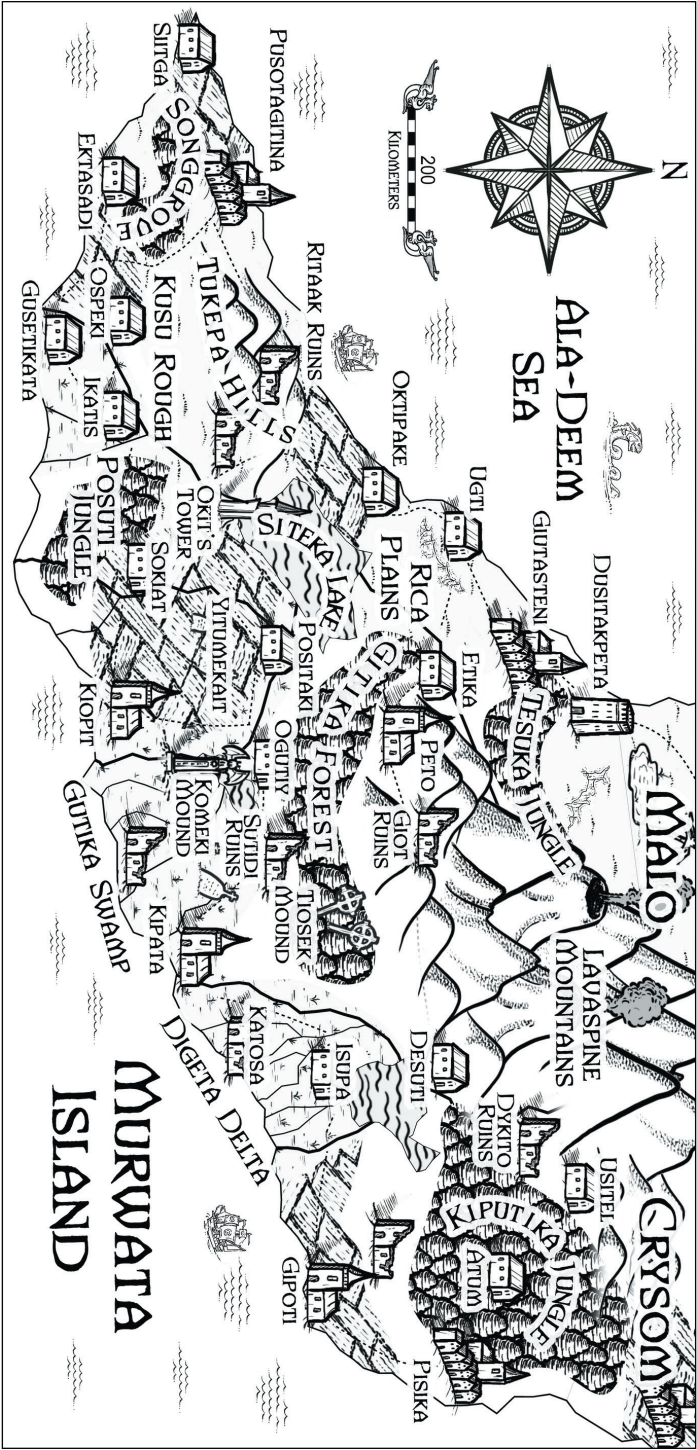
No outsider knows how these communities survive. The answer does not seem to be magic. The communities call themselves holy and persecute those who use magic just as fervently as elsewhere in Malo. Perhaps the water comes from deep wells, untouched by the Curse...but that does not explain how they grow food. The local traders who navigate these lakes and rivers to trade poison-hardened clay and stone from the Lavaspines in the coastland climate of Ganiop give no answer to these questions except “the gods will it”.

Play to find out...

- ◆ How the holy communities of the Krellito Savanna protect themselves against Dusitakpeta slavers.
- ◆ What happens if something damages a town's leaf roof.
- ◆ Why these communities live in such a hostile environment.

GM Moves

- ◆ Reveal the will of the gods.
- ◆ Show the connective power of the rivers.
- ◆ Shroud something mundane in mystery.
- ◆ Enslave someone.



THE TASEKI EMPIRE

Absolute Monarchy

The tune Chantor Kilida-to-Gipoti was humming reached a natural pause as he crumbled the last carbonized pieces of the lilyroot into place to complete the circle. He made a sweeping gesture with both hands and almost fumbled his new tune as he remembered his lack of magical servants.

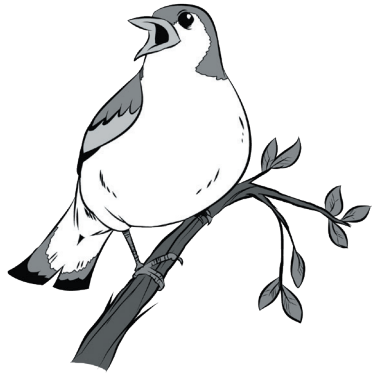
Pause.

“Keke-da!”

Resume.

His two assistants rushed forward out of their dozing to light candles and drip wax in the three-pointed star formation. He sighed internally, careful not to disrupt the rhythm of his new tune as the spell started to take shape within the careful binding structures he had assembled. As he wrestled the magic inside the bindings into the shape of a viewing portal, the bead of sweat that rolled from his brow was not from the ambient humidity—he had lived in Taseki all his life, he was used to that. The sweat was fear. He could feel the air chill in the room as the curse siphoned off any residual magic outside the bindings, lacing its way with icy fingers through the extremities of his body. As it stopped at his diaphragm, and the bindings held, he grimaced, satisfied, and focused his attention fully on the luminous portal at the center of the three-pointed-star.

“Por-tal!” he sang, “show me the da-ay, the em-pi-re fell.”



That day had been a long time coming, but for most of the Chantors and Song Magi of the Taseki Empire, it was sudden, shocking, and brutal. For centuries, the Song Magi of Kipata, the First City, had expanded their magical and political influence throughout Taseki-Kadi, the land mass that foreign scholars and sailors now call Murwata Island. Their society and government were collectively shaped by the magical chants, canticles, arias, and madrigals sung by generations of practitioners of the Taseki magical tradition. In time, they came to be guided first by the leading Song Magi, and then by the Chantors of the Forty Cities. The island thrived, the people were content, the Song Magi grew prosperous... and divided.

As far as Taseki historians, arcanists, and antiquarians have been able to piece together from sparse written evidence and the fragments of magical divination from the time before the curse, the Taseki magi-musical tradition (or Song Magic as it is commonly known) was based on the magical principle of the Harmony of Voices Unified. In essence, this principle held that by acting in magical concert, the magic of the song was amplified, and the different parts and harmonies of the singers would exert a cohesive influence on the whole spell. The particular styles and expressions of individual singers would weave together to form a stronger magical harmony.

Murwata Island is over 5000 kilometers from end to end. As long as the Chantors of the Forty Cities maintained their commitment to the Harmony of Taseki-Kadi, the empire remained strong, but local divergence in tradition inevitably drew the attention of some Chantors away from the Harmony and it weakened. At least, this is the prevailing theory among the historians in what remains of the Taseki Empire. What is not debated is the Day of the Curse.

290 years ago, on the day of the Festival of Lights in Sogado, the Twenty-Fourth City, the Harmony failed and Taseki-Kadi ripped apart. Waves of magical energy resonated throughout the island, sundering the magical communications networks that kept the Forty Cities harmonized. Civilization as they knew it was destroyed. From the ashes emerged the Murwata Island they now know: the rebel republic of Wisgo, the poisoned lands of Malo (formerly Sogado and its neighbors), the lee-lands now called Chrysom overrun by barbarians.

Now the Forty Cities exist in the archaic name of the Harmony only. The Song Magi of Taseki are divided under the yoke of the Curse. Choral singing attracts demonic forces, so the magi sing alone. The Harmony is broken. Factions within the remaining Thirteen Cities pursue their own goals. The Reunifiers plan to recover Taseki-Kadi by conquest. The Reharmonizers hope to resettle the Lost Cities and re-sing the Harmony. The Seekers focus their individual energies on discovering the origin and workings of the Curse and reversing it. The Descanti are united only in their belief that the Curse arose because the Harmony was too heavy: the way forward for each of the remaining cities lies in local variations of the Taseki traditions.

The various factions use, abuse, and collaborate with the peoples and groups of Malo, Chrysom, Wisgo, and beyond to serve their own vision for the cities of the former Taseki-Kadi and their interpretation of the Harmony of Voices Unified.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What exactly happens when Song Magi sing together.
- ◆ How the Curse affects mages from other traditions.
- ◆ How certain Song Magi knew to hide on the eve of the Day of the Curse.
- ◆ What gives the Song-grove the power to amplify the Harmonies.
- ◆ If the volcanoes of the Lavaspine Mountains were active when the ruined cities in its foothills were built.
- ◆ What lore the secretive cults from before the Curse, who still tend the ancient mounds that dot the plains and jungles, preserve.

KIPATA, THE FIRST CITY

Foreign visitors arriving at the docks of Kipata often express surprise that Kipata bears the moniker of the First City. Nestled between the Gutika Swamp and the Digeta Delta, most of Kipata is a city of pole-houses in a constant state of regeneration. Even the indigo hardwoods of the Gitika Forest fare poorly in the damp environment and must be replaced every few decades. The antiquity of the city becomes clear as you move towards the city's monumental center. Broad plazas paved in obsidian rest on deep foundations of colossal igneous rocks edged in slick swamp moss and the dusty tendrils of salt-water vines. The people of Kipata still gather here to reenact the ancient songs of Taseki and to celebrate the birth of the Harmony.

The historians of the Taseki Empire sing that it was here in Kipata that the scattered Song Magi of the Gutika would gather for seasonal rituals, gradually formalizing the body of magical learning that would become the magi-musical traditions that were the magical center of Taseki-Kadi. Those rituals became more and more elaborate after the traditions were adopted by Lord Mi-Ka, ruler of Pusotagitina, the Second City, and the first Emperor of Taseki-Kadi.

Mi-Ka recognized the power of the Harmony and adopted it as the official magical tradition of his expansionist city-state. His Song Magi tore down the walls of his enemies and molded the molten rock of the Lavaspine Mountains. His enslaved captives rowed the colossal foundations downriver and built the monumental plazas at the heart of Kipata. His banners flew atop the walls of every city from Siitga, the Seventh City, Bastion of the Sea, in the west to Gipoti, the Sixth City, Bastion of the East, and from Kiopit, the Fourth City, Bastion of the South, to Giutasteni, the Fifth City, Bastion of the North. Thus was the Taseki-Kadi born at the confluence of blood, ambition, and the Harmony.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What the builders hid deep within the Kipata plazas. Can it be found?
- ◆ What trace remains of the Song Magi who resisted Mi-Ka.
- ◆ Where their power goes, if the ancient rituals of Kipata no longer bind the Harmony.

GM Moves

- ◆ Obscure the truth in the shifting swamp.
- ◆ Reveal the secrets of the entombed past.
- ◆ Spew forth rumors of dangerous wealth.

PUSOTAGITINA, THE SECOND CITY

Long the center of empire, Pusotagitina, the Second City, City of Mi-Ka, Jewel of Taseki-Kadi, and many names besides, is a magnificent sight to behold. In the time of Mi-Ka, it was a fortified merchant city on a hill overlooking a deep-water harbor. From the reign of Mi-Ka until the fall of the empire, it received the wealth of an expanding empire and grew wide, tall, and gilded. The Old City within those ancient walls is now a sprawling palace complex, spiked with soaring spires, sparking with giant gold and silver coronation masks of Taseki-Kadi's emperors, and festooned with a regular cycle of fluttering banners, counting out the timing of the Harmony like a seasonal metronome. Beyond the walls, the city expands in a series of circles, the houses of wealthy courtiers and gifted Song Magi clustering closest to the walls like sea birds around a laden fishing boat, the homes and businesses of humbler folk receding into the distance from the giant glinting eyes of the coronation masks.

At the edge of the city, a solemn ring of deserted buildings lies half-buried by the encroaching desert. The lush farmlands that once surrounded and fed Pusotagitina were scoured of natural fertility long before the empire's fall, yet they had been granted a sort of magical unlife by the magic of the Harmony. On the Day of the Curse, that magic claimed the land's long delayed rent. Farms became desert overnight. The stench of death bathed the land as famine, war, and civic unrest decimated the people and animals of Pusotagitina and those who fled there in vain.

Pusotagitina's booming economy had outgrown the city's original harbor long before the Curse. Over the centuries, a series of floating platforms, piers, warehouses, and markets had extended beyond the natural shelter, protected from ocean storms by the strains of the Harmony. When the Harmony shattered, scouring the fields of the Second City, the harbor was cut loose and scattered to the winds. Yet, fragments of Discordant magic remained, attached to the structures, if not entirely to the mundane world. This magic preserved the ancient structures and anchored them to our world, while also tethering them to worlds beyond.

For centuries, the structures floated between worlds on the wings of dissonant music, moving unpredictably as if attached to some unseen planar cycle—one day surrounded by a bubble of air deep under the ocean waves, the next soaring with the gulls locked in the golden gaze of the city's masks, at times as solid as the earth itself, at others translucent and shadowy as mist.

Of late, these structures have begun to return, their drifting paths slowly and steadily converging on a mysterious new rocky island facing Pusotagitina's original harbor, now bustling with the commerce of an imperial elite diminished, but stubbornly clinging to the display of former glory.

Despite their loss of most of Murwata, the Taseki Empire is still a wealthy and powerful state. The decades after the Curse saw a period of decentralization, even the cities and regions that remain in the empire today largely had to fend for themselves. Opportunistic local Chantors and warlords seized power and territory as they were able. However, over the past twenty years a common sense of imperial values and a desire to reform the Harmony has united the Thirteen Cities. A new emperor has been elected by the Chantors, ushering in a new imperial age, guided for now by an alliance between Reunifiers and Reharmonizers. Pusotagitina is once again the seat of an expansionist empire, bustling with visiting Chantors and embassies competing to improve their position within the imperial court and preparing to place their candidate in the Old City should the current emperor fall.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Which faction currently holds the upper hand in the Old City.
- ◆ What disturbing sign can be seen in the Discordant Harbor.
- ◆ Whose arrival threatens to upset the balance of power in the Second City.
- ◆ Why the gilded gaze of the masks falls upon you.

GM Moves

- ◆ Reveal a magical side effect of the Curse.
- ◆ Entangle someone in a court plot.
- ◆ Display the power of a rival faction.
- ◆ Show the contrast between wealth and poverty.

EMPIRE STATE OF MIND

For hundreds of years, the Taseki Chantors ruled over an aggressive, growing empire. They used the power of the Harmony to expand their collective and individual power. It was a profitable enterprise. Now those days of imperial glory have passed, but the Chantor magocracy hasn't adapted. Chantors still see themselves as self-evident rulers and commanders, both in the lands they do control and in those they do not. This often manifests in increasing harshness towards their subjects and subordinates and in imperious aggression towards their neighbors in Malo and Crysom.

To the east, the twin-hulled four-masters of the Pisika navy ply the coast of Crysom, scouring the Ala-Deem Sea of anyone who refuses their "taxation" and protecting their coastal "reclamation settlements" from the insect-riding barbarians of the interior. To the north, Dusitakpeta desert troops enslave the inhabitants of the blasted lands of Malo, formerly the lands and vassals of Sogado, the Bejeweled, Light of the North, the Twenty-Fourth City, Accursed of the Harmony.

Play to find out...

- ◆ What Taseki has planned for Wisgo.
- ◆ When Taseki's eyes will fall on Euliom.
- ◆ What internal dissent threatens to upturn the empire. For good or for ill?

GM Moves

- ◆ Revel in the arrogance of the glorious past.
- ◆ Make someone kneel.
- ◆ Reveal an audacious and violent plan.
- ◆ Crush someone beneath the heel of empire.

THE THIRTEEN CITIES

The Epic of Mi-Ka tells that when the emperor looked back on his conquests from his deathbed, he numbered the first ten cities for the magnificence of their gifts to him. There are many variants of this epic, both specific to local city traditions and to particular factions and cults. Those who believe that Mi-Ka still lives change the setting of the episode.

They recount the following verses:

<i>Song most, Kipata first city, Harmony's mother,</i>	1
<i>Bejeweled, Pusotagitina, tower of my gaze,</i>	
<i>Ringin, Ritaak third city, the steel that I wield</i>	
<i>Grain-rich, Kiopit fourth city, bastion of life</i>	
<i>Blooded, Giutas fifth city, pride of empire's edge</i>	5
<i>[From you, always victorious, our power will grow]</i>	5a
<i>Forge-hot, Gipoti sixth city, ever outward ours</i>	
<i>Wine dark, Siitga the seventh, from you the broad sea</i>	
<i>Learned, Ektasadi the eighth, to mind then to fist</i>	
<i>Astride, Oktipake the ninth, lords of the wide plains</i>	
<i>Rockhome, Peto the tenth city, adorning our crown</i>	10
<i>[From these, bountiful and loyal, Taseki-Kadi]</i>	10a

Critical Notes:

Some modern versions give "Giutasteni five" in the second foot of line 5, preserving the Taseki epic meter while inserting the modern name of the city.

Some versions of the epic omit lines 5a and 10a as later insertions. The argument rests on the coherence of the so-called "Cardinal Bastions" (lines 4-7, excluding 5a).

As the empire grew, this pattern of imperial numbering of important cities continued. Chantors will still use these official enumerations when speaking of or with cities in the northern parts of Murwata Island (or Taseki-Kadi, as most Chantors still call it). This practice seldom reflects well on their diplomatic skills and contributes to the empire's deserved reputation for arrogance.

Today, the Thirteen Cities comprise the nine surviving cities of Mi-Ka's original ten (Ritaak, the Third City, My Right Hand, having been destroyed in the Curse), plus Dusitakpeta, the Thirteenth City, The Sacred Oasis, Pisika, the Fifteenth City, from the Jungle, Splendor, and Usitel, the Thirty-first City, The City of Eternal Peace (founded by refugees from the civil war between Peto and Dykito, the Eleventh City, Kin-slain).

THE HARMONY OF VOICES DIVIDED

The full power of the Harmony of Voices Unified was broken on the Day of the Curse, but song magic remains a powerful force in the Taseki Empire. At the highest levels of society, the Chantors still use magi-musical rituals to manipulate the strands of magic that flow chaotically through the island. When foreigners think of the Chantors, they think of the thirteen preeminent magocrats who rule the remaining Thirteen Cities of the empire, but the name is properly applied to the body of aristocratic Song Magi who form Taseki's ruling class. However, not all Song Magi are so entwined with the official structures of Taseki's government and society.

Few outside elite circles have the leisure and financial security to spend their days practicing arcane magi-musical rituals to hone their skills and develop the control needed to master song magic, but occasionally amateurs with an ear for the strands of magic can become proficient through self-study or through the tutelage of other Song Magi. The Chantors pejoratively label these practitioners Discordants, but that label disguises two clear types of Song Magus.

On the one hand, you have the individual practitioners scattered across the empire in small towns and villages who use song magic to contribute to their own livelihoods and the daily life of their communities. In most cases, their relationship with their communities is harmonious, but occasionally resentment, bigotry, or outright violence rear their ugly heads and the targets of such abuse flee to the safety of isolated areas, choosing to take their chances in the wilds rather than the oppressive environments of their former homes.

On the other hand, and the true target of the Chantors' suspicious gaze, are those mages who gather together in Choirs to practice song magic free from the social confines of the Taseki aristocracy. These Choirs have a variety of goals and worldviews, ranging from village mages who band together for

safety or community, to exiled aristocrats practicing types of magic illegal or considered immoral in the Thirteen Cities, to rebel groups devoted to the overthrow of the empire's magocracy. Some are welcoming to newcomers, others are exclusive and elitist. Rumor has it that among these Choirs there remain lineages of magical teachings stretching back to the days of the United Harmony, whose practices preserve the secret to overcoming the Curse and re-establishing the Harmony and the empire's full power.

SONG MAGI CHARACTER CLASSES

Player characters can have access to the Chantor and Choir Mage compendium classes if they meet the prerequisites. Below is a brief description of these new classes. For full details, see their respective entries in the Compendium Classes & Playbooks chapter.

TRAINED TASEKI CHANTOR (PAGE 78)

You received training from the finest Chantor academics in the Taseki Empire. You sing alone. Your fear of Discord springs from a deep knowledge of its dangers; nevertheless, you know the power you command and you expect respect for it. To receive Chantor training you must be a spellcaster born into the aristocracy of the Taseki Empire or be a spellcaster sponsored to study at an imperial university by a Chantor.

CHOIR MAGE (PAGE 79)

You have joined with a band of like-minded mages to further your craft beyond the control of the Chantors. You sing together, suppressing your fear of Discord with the knowledge that purity of heart or vision will protect you. To become a Choir Mage you must be a Trained Chantor, find a Choir, pass their entry requirements, and be inducted into their community by whatever rituals they deem necessary. Individual Choirs may have additional requirements based on birth, profession, or status.

FACTIONS WITHIN FACTIONS

The Taseki Empire has a long, bloody, and shadowed legacy of political and magical intrigue. Even just to enumerate the legitimate political factions among the Chantors of the Thirteen Cities themselves would be a lengthy task, let alone the criminal and magical underbelly of those cities, other towns, and small cities of the empire, or of the many hidden factions and cults that lurk behind the cold stares of blacksmiths and in the edge in the cheery voice of the wandering minstrel.

For the most part, four respected factions exist within the Chantors: Reunifiers, Reharmonizers, Seekers, and Descanti. The balance of power in the Imperial Court is held between the militaristic Reunifiers and the imperialist Reharmonizers. Both aim at the recovery of the former empire, but the equivalence of their goal and the closeness of their methods do not dampen the viciousness with which they pursue power over each other. Beyond the court, the Reunifiers are strongest in Dusitakpeta, the Thirteenth City, The Sacred Oasis, and Usitel, the Thirty-first City, The City of Eternal Peace, while the base of the Reharmonizers' power lies in Pisika, the Fifteenth City, from the Jungle, Splendor and Kiopit, the Fourth City, Bastion of the South. The intrigue of the capital has become covert warfare between Usitel and Pisaka in the Kiputika Jungle, and some people fear that the fires of another civil war are being lit in the northeast.

By nature, the Seekers are less interested in political or military matters, but rather the accumulation and deployment of knowledge. The center of their power is in the sprawling universities of Ektasadi, the Eighth City, First in Knowledge, where their best and brightest Chantors scheme to bring the world's knowledge to bear on mastering the Curse and restoring the Harmony. Ektasadi is often seen as awash with foreigners, mostly flocking to join the well-funded expeditions that depart on a weekly basis to confirm or refute the mystical theories that crawl from those darkened libraries.

The Descanti can be said to control Siitga, the Seventh City, Bastion of the Sea, Oktipake, the Ninth City, Horse-lords, Peto, the Tenth City, Rockhome, and Gipoti, the Sixth City, Bastion of the East, but in fact the uniting feature of the Descanti is their devotion to the local expression of their Harmony. Their name is derived from the Taseki concept of the descant, an epic song that is said to embody the spirit of the local people in magi-musical form. So, while the Chantors of these four cities are united in their belief in the importance of local affairs over imperial affairs, they agree on little in practice.

CULTS WITHIN CULTS

This fractured situation is little different at the cult level. It would be safe to assume that any culture or significant political idea that has existed within the Taseki Empire preserves its history, ideas, and goals within a set of orally preserved cultic songs or descants which give motivation to at least one small cult in contemporary Taseki. Particularly common are cults based on mythical occurrences in the ancient epics, cults devoted to abhorrent pathways to imperial power, cults devoted to the protection of local sacred areas from outsiders, and cults devoted to Discord and Discordant beings.

Representative of one strand of mythically-focused cult is the Ancient and Revered Association to Prepare the Throne for Our Shining Lord's Return. The Association's many members are active in the southern foothills of the Lavaspine Mountains and the Gitika Forest, particularly around Peto, the Tenth City, Rockhome, and the towering Giot Ruins. The Association believes that Lord Mi-Ka, ruler of Pusotagitina, the Second City, and the first Emperor of Taseki-Kadi, did not die gazing from the towers of Pusotagitina as the histories tell, but that he slipped away in the night and lived for centuries more in the Tower of Giot. They say that when that tower was destroyed by the forces of Dykito, the Eleventh City, Kin-slain, in the civil war with Peto, Mi-Ka vanished to an unknown plane from where he will return to retake the empire.

Members of this association scour the Giot Ruins searching for clues left by Lord Mi-Ka and defending this sacred site from anyone investigating rumors of the great magical treasures said to be found in the inky black basement-quarries that riddle the bedrock beneath the ruins. Among the would-be desecrators of the ruins are members of the other cults of Mi-Ka, who hold that his last centuries on earth were spent in a different sacred site.

A Discordant cult active in Oktipake, the Ninth City, Horse-lords, is the Kiln of the Burning Blood Harvest. When the Curse scoured the land around Pusotagitina, Ritaak, the Third City, My Right Hand, was shattered. The hardy shepherds and farmers of Ritaak's hinterland fled north to the closest city capable of helping them, Oktipake. Since then, Oktipake has been a hybrid city, home to a blend of two ancient cultures, the original and the transplanted, inseparable to all but the most learned Descanti scholars. The Kiln of the Burning Blood Harvest is one of many Oktipakan cults who claim to represent "true" Oktipakan culture.

Depending on the fervency and hatred of the individual member, they plot to rid “their homeland” of Ritaakan interlopers with varying degrees of violence. Their vision of the ideal society varies widely between members and tends to rest on personal prejudices and grievances; the Kiln are just as incapable of unpicking the strands of Oktipakan culture as a casual visitor to the city.

DISCORD

Until the Day of the Curse, no one suspected that the Harmony of Voices Unified would resonate throughout the planes and attract the attention of the demonic forces now known as Discord. Even today, there are many competing theories as to why Discord ruptured the Harmony and, thus, there are many competing theories as to the best way to repair it. Some believe that Discord and Harmony represent two ancient forces of Evil and Good, locked in an eternal struggle against a cosmic foe. Some believe that Discord is a powerful extraplanar being that smells powerful magic from afar and hungers to consume it. Some believe that Discord is the herald of the end of days, the vanguard of a cosmic army that will inevitably consume all of Rothaen. Some believe it is a momentary wrinkle in a cosmic pattern that simply needs to be ironed out if the appropriate harmony can be composed and performed on a sufficient scale.

Regardless of its origins and motives, Discord has concrete effects on the physical world of Rothaen. These, too, are varied: malevolent spiritual beings, violent magical disruptions, subtle whispers in the minds of magical practitioners, and more besides. Discord also has its adherents among the Song Magi of Taseki, although far fewer than the Chantors would have you believe. Nevertheless, some of those labelled Discordants are in fact in thrall to Discord and seek to increase its power in Rothaen. There is no discernible unity or coordination to these groups and individuals, but they and their plots pose a variety of dangers to Rothaen.

ASSAILANTS

Many who follow a path of Discord make use of the spirits known as Assailants. These possess creatures of Rothaen as hosts, either willing or unwilling, and twist them into plane-touched horrors resembling the image of the original creature as if shattered in a mirror. Those discordant shards of spirit and flesh are both form and weapon, shredding soul and body alike. While they inhabit the creature, they guide it with their own otherworldly intelligence, but when they leave, the creature becomes little more than a savage and maddened beast.

Embodied Assailant	<i>Solitary, Stealthy, Planar, Terrifying</i>
Shards of spirit and flesh	12 HP 4 Armor
(1d10 damage, ignores armor, <i>close, near</i>)	(magical)
<i>Special Qualities:</i> Extra-dimensional spirit	

Instinct: To possess

- ◆ Ensnare in unknowable plots
- ◆ Possess and twist a creature
- ◆ Escape to further its goals

Twisted Creature	<i>Solitary or Group, Stealthy, Amorphous</i>
Shards of spirit and flesh (1d10+2 damage, ignores armor, <i>close, near, far, forceful</i>)	19 HP 1 Armor
<i>Special Qualities:</i> Plane-touched magical creature	

Instinct: To destroy

- ◆ Rampage indiscriminately
- ◆ Lash out with focused agony
- ◆ Escape to nurse its wounds

HEART KINGS OF THE BURNING SKIES

Ambitious Organization, Cabal

A Discordant cult that poses an immediate danger to the Taseki Empire calls itself the Heart Kings of the Burning Skies. This is one of the larger cults in the empire, with several cells in Pusotagitina, the Second City, City of Mi-Ka, Jewel of Taseki-Kadi, and individual cells in most of the cities of the empire. The Heart Kings have members in all sectors of Pusotagitanan society, including the imperial court. Each of these cells is involved in local plots to undermine the empire with the ultimate goal, known only to the inner circle, of replacing the emperor and all the Chantors with Assailants who will sing a new Discord of Voices Fragmented.

THE DISCORD OF VOICES FRAGMENTED

Grim Portents:

- ◆ Cells enact bizarre local plots
- ◆ Key local leaders and opponents die in mysterious circumstances
- ◆ Cells gain influence through new appointees
- ◆ Cultists occupy key positions throughout the Taseki Empire
- ◆ A Chantor is possessed
- ◆ The possessed Chantor departs their city to attend a private meeting with the emperor
- ◆ The emperor and several Chantors are possessed
- ◆ The remaining Chantors are possessed
- ◆ The Chantors sing the Discord of Voices Fragmented and the empire falls

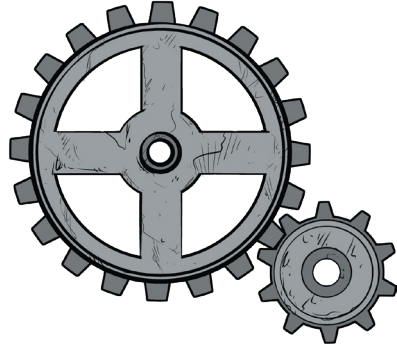
Impending Doom: Discord envelops the Taseki Empire and physically takes form in Rothaen (*Rampant Chaos*)



WISGO

Dictatorship

In the shadows beneath overhanging tenements, four cloaked figures surround a closed doorway. A head twists precisely, then with a whirring howl, an arm uncoils and punches through the stout wood. The figures rush through the splintered doorway demanding surrender.



Stop. Zoom out.

Moonlight illuminates the city of Elet—surrounded by neatly arrayed crops, a wide and gently flowing river, a neatly direct canal to the upland Callowa Lake—and encroaches on the jungle vines of the Rikaus Forest. Despite the early hour, the streets are empty, except for the precise steps of the Cog enforcing the curfew and guarding the bronze-clad and stoutly-bolted city gates. Except, also, for the furtive shadows moving from roof to roof across the canal-side factories above the gaze of the engineered servants of the Clockwork Queen.

Stop. Rewind.

Twenty years ago. The bright sun glints off the bronze city gates and off the breastplates of the Eletian militia arrayed before the city. It glints off the refracting glass eyes of the opposing clockwork spiders and off the polished steel carapaces of the queen's wheeled beetle-carts. It glints off the steel props that support the delicate gossamer wings and fire-tubes of the mechanical dragonflies. As the sun descends towards the sea, the raking light breathes life into the immense bronze reliefs on the city gates, casts frightfully inhuman shadows on the walls of Elet, and ceases to warm the bodies of the militia.

Stop. Rewind.

Thirty years ago. The bronze gates stand open and welcoming. Elet's central market bustles with trade from the four corners of Wisgo. Bauson merchants peddle the spices of the Cavašin Jungle and the wares of the Sapphire Coast from Crysom and beyond. Traders from Qira and Vistel vie to outdo each other with tales of their exotic imports from Euliom, the Athix Empire, and the far west. The stalls of local farmers creak under the weight of their harvest bounty. Throughout the pressing crowd, Elet's councilors navigate deftly between the shops of the city's woodcarvers as they prepare for their journey to Vistel, selecting delicate animal statuettes, finely crafted from the hardwoods of the Rikaus Forest, destined for the mantle of their counterparts in the Council of Wisdom.

Stop. Rewind.

Four hundred years ago. A different city? Yes and no. The roots and walls remain, but soaring towers tipped with gold and silver spirals betray a foreign style... and a magical attunement: the Taseki Chantry of Eleta, the Thirty-Ninth City, Anchor of the North, She Will Never Fail. The breeze proudly displays the heraldry of the empire on the spear-tip banners of the bronze-barded honor guard streaming through the broad arch of the gates of Mi-Ka towards neighboring Guistal.

Stop. Zoom in. Stop.

An icy mountain wind cuts through the high chamber, rustling the papers on the desk, and eliciting shivers and a clutching of thick woolen cloaks from most of those watching. At the disturbance, the Clockwork Queen looks up impatiently from the smooth glass surface of her scrying disk from which she had been watching her city, now and then, her own mechanical limbs impervious to all but the harshest cold of the Lavaspines. She walks to the window and fixes her gaze south, grasping the copper and steel arm of an unflinching clockwork warrior.

She breathes into the darkening air: "Time for a reversal, Emperor."

THE FALL OF THE REPUBLIC

Only the most learned historians of Wisgo know anything of the relatively brief time when the Taseki Empire ruled in Wisgo, let alone anything before that. Most prominent in the historical memory of Wisgo is the rule of the Grand Elder and the Council of Wisdom, a time known as the People's Republic. For the most part, the People's Republic was an insular state, unconcerned with events beyond the seas, except as it pertained to the contents of its markets and docks. If pressed, most would say that Wisgo had always been governed by the Council and the Grand Elder.

Few in Wisgo know of the Athix Empire, or of its civil war, or of the daring theft of the Athix navy and the establishment of the Pirate Nations. Such far off deeds are the stuff of sailor's tales—the people of Wisgo have little time for sailors. Fewer still know of the Kosari adventurer and pirate captain Etun Rasmstis, almost killed in a boarding action off the Bonecloak Coast but revived from the brink of death in the hidden chambers deep under Qira where the arcane inventor Atumu brought new life and limb to Rasmstis. They know well what she became, however: the Clockwork Queen, general of machines, she who slew the Grand Elder and the Council of Wisdom in a night of whirring knives, grinding cogs, and bloody slaughter. As the Clockwork Queen, Rasmstis swept through the land of Wisgo like a tsunami, crushing all who resisted.

Now the queen styles herself a revolutionary, throwing aside the corruption and stagnation of the old council and ushering in a new age of progress for the people of Wisgo under a new puppet council composed of her creatures, quite literally in some cases.

REIGN OF SPRING AND STEEL

The Clockwork Queen has certainly brought changes to Wisgo beyond the political realm. In the twenty years of her reign, her “new age of progress” has drastically changed the social and economic landscape of this formerly agricultural land. Forced relocation policies have left the countryside in the steel jaws of automated agriculture and flooded the cities with cheap labor for the queen’s factories. The cities of Wisgo’s central agricultural belt (Vistel, Guistal, and Elet) have each become major centers of production for the queen’s clockwork creations. Giant factories belch forth smoke from the production of immense insect-machines for mechanized crop-tending and logging in Wisgo’s rich forests. Wilik-Li has become a mining center unrivaled in the Lavaspine Mountains as huge drilling machines penetrate deep into the earth, seeking the raw materials needed to satisfy the queen’s progress.

Nominally, the Clockwork Queen rules all Wisgo, from the white cliffs and beaches of the Bonecloak Coast to the emerald jungles of the Sapphire Coast. However, the queen’s resources are not limitless. In the sparsely populated east, a variety of opportunistic nobles, merchants, and bandit leaders took advantage of the chaos of the queen’s revolution to seize control of small fiefdoms. As soon as the her victory was assured in the west, they negotiated their loyalty with the queen and now govern with the assistance of small detachments of the Cog and a far more moderate distribution of technological advancements.

Play to find out...

- ◆ If the people of Wisgo can survive the spreading assault of inhuman industry.
- ◆ If the queen’s progress can be turned to the people’s benefit.
- ◆ What dangers greater than clockwork lie deep sleeping beneath the Lavaspines.

GM Moves

- ◆ Repress freedom wherever it arises.
- ◆ Shadow with ambiguity of lip service and collaboration.
- ◆ Contrast the idyllic past with the mechanized present.

FOR WHOM THE COG WINDS

The hard edge of the Clockwork Queen's control is the Cog, part army, part secret police, who maintain order in the crowded cities. In the cramped industrial cities of the central and northwestern plains, the slightest hint of resistance brings a curfew and nightly raids, often striking with supernatural precision at centers of resistance. However, the blunt force of the queen's iron fist only strengthens the anger of the people. Each act of brutality against one steels two more against her regime. But while the pressure swells, the Cog maintains order through daylight patrols and midnight raids, shipping a steady supply of laborers to the mines of Wilik-Li, prisoners to the inescapable Clockwork Prison, and "recruits" to the armies of the southwest. While the Clockwork Queen has not been able to stamp out her opposition, her enforcers have kept resistance divided, localized, and confined to the largest cities and the deep jungles.

Whereas the western resistance comprises mostly urban industrial workers slaving in the queen's factories, in the east an unlikely alliance of dispossessed nobles and urban idealists operate a well-funded but less popular rural resistance, attempting to harass the queen's troops and her local puppets without disrupting the advantages that accrue for many in Bauso and Suduna.

Play to find out...

- ◆ How long the Cog can suppress opposition to the regime.
- ◆ What the queen will do to assert her power when the Cog fails.
- ◆ Which will win the hearts and minds of the east: empathy for the west or the lures of the queen's technology.

GM Moves

- ◆ Show the hidden sparks of resistance and rebellion.
- ◆ Contrast the daily experience of the oppressed west and the seduced east.
- ◆ Burst forth righteous or guilt-ridden anger.

A NEW HEART

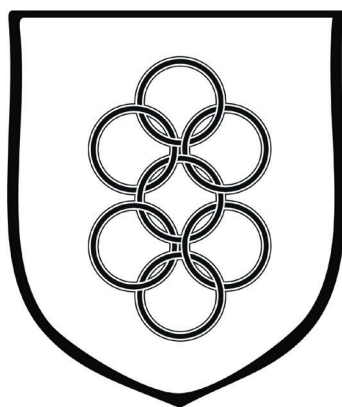
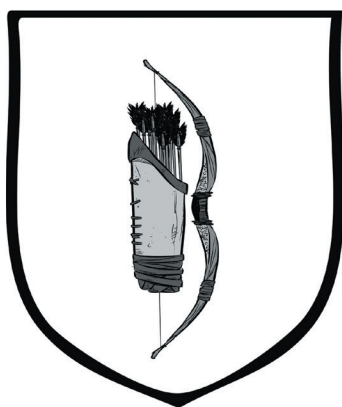
Currently, the Clockwork Queen's attention lies south of the Blacktusk Jungle. Long a culturally distinct part of Wisgo, the plains, swamps, and hill country around Exetus are swept alternately by westerly thunderstorms and southerly heat blasts at the ecological intersection of jungle, coast, and magically afflicted desert. The violence of torrential downpours and whirlwinds strip away more of the topsoil than they water, leaving marginal farmland and mediocre opportunities to trade with the poisoned wasteland to the south. However, the recent erection of mysterious clockwork towers has stabilized the climate somewhat, and enormous spindle-legged spider machines stride the deserts of northern Malo, reclaiming formerly poisoned desert for settlement by loyal royal subjects. The long-abandoned Malan cities of Harnswat and Alliuba have been repopulated as bustling centers by fervent supporters of the realm.

Play to find out...

- ◆ Where these supporters of the queen came from.
- ◆ What the spider machines extract from the desert sands.
- ◆ What part these extracts have in the queen's plans.

GM Moves:

- ◆ Show jarring and implausible support for the Clockwork Queen.
- ◆ Twist a small and quickly-contained area with extreme magical side-effects.
- ◆ Reveal flashes of the oppressed resistance behind the curtains.



AGES OF ROTHAEN

AGES OF ROTHAEEN

The history of Rothaen is not documented well beyond the most recent events. Empires have risen and fallen throughout all the ages and their knowledge has been lost because of it. Each realm-shaking Chaos sent the world into a dark age, further muddying the waters. Below is a brief overview of the Ages and some major events that had an effect on the world. Local histories are part of the individual nations.

FIRST AGE

THE AGE OF SECRETS

This is when the gods created Rothaen and all the life on it. Each religion has its own creation story and can point to real deities who walk the world as their proof. But the reality is that no one knows how long this stretch of time lasted or any details besides what has been passed down through stories. The gods themselves are not revealing their secrets. All humanoid species were created at this time. Ancient empires rose and fell during this age, with the gods being heavily involved. This is one of the reasons why there is an abundance of strange ruins across most countrysides. Could the truth be locked away in a rotting, forgotten dungeon? Maybe...

FIRST CHAOS

THE HEAVENS WAR

No age ends gently—there is always a great upheaval that shakes the entire world and changes the reality of life. Ages and Chaoses overlap. No one can point to one day and say, “That’s when this Age stopped.”

The First Chaos is like the First Age: not a lot is known about it. Religious teaching tells us that there was a great war across the heavens and hells that spilled out onto Rothaen. Evil deities vying for power started huge battles between the pantheons that led to the destruction of the natural order. The gods themselves faded back to the realms they were from, not to return until the Third Age. Replacing them were the dragons, serpent people, and giants. Ancient civilizations fell during the war, and people found themselves hiding from the evils that now ruled the world.

SECOND AGE

THE AGE OF DARKNESS

When the gods left Rothaen to lick their wounds after the First Chaos, all the original ancient civilizations of man, elves, and dwarves had been destroyed. Victims of the Heavens War, people turned inwards and were focused on trying simply to survive, with no time to spare to create art, build cities, or invent new technologies—most knowledge was lost in the struggle to live. In the absence of their governments and their gods, great evil descended upon Rothaen. Malign species that had long been held in check flourished and plunged the world into its first dark age. This period saw the rise of the monster empires. Dragons, snake people, and giants all ruled most of Rothaen at different times during this age.

SECOND CHAOS

THE GREAT DEATH

The great death started with the dragons. Though it is not clear why, they started to die off quickly. Within a hundred years, seventy-five percent of their numbers had perished. At first the giants and snake people looked at it as a blessing, but soon whole populations of monsters started to disappear. This great die off took place over 100,000 years. There are many theories on why this happened, all of which point a finger at the gods. The most commonly held theory is that the gods wanted to bring balance back to the world. This shift in power allowed elves and dwarves to rise to power again. Balance, of a kind, was achieved, and monsters have never regained their Second Age numbers.

THIRD AGE

THE ELVEN & DWARVEN DOMINANCE

The Second Age was an apocalyptic time where many people's former glory was lost. The ancient civilizations that had spread and flourished in the First Age were all gone and, for a while, it seemed that Rothaen had become another hell. Even the elves had lost many of the secrets of magic, the one tool that could have helped fend off the monster empires that almost wiped the good people of Rothaen out.

When the great death befell the monster empires, the different elven tribes were the first to search for the old ways of magic hidden in the lost ruins. Dwarves began to clear monsters out of their caverns and restructure their society. Both peoples reconnected with their gods and began to learn divine magic once again. This would lead to their dominance over the land, elves above and dwarves below.

Asi was the first new human kingdom during this age, and though they had a grasp on magic both scholarly and divine, the knowledge did not spread to the populace as quickly with the elves. Those humans that left Asi found elves with advance civilizations based on magic almost everywhere. Humans were not welcomed as civilized brothers by the elves or dwarves. Instead, those who migrated to Jorginver became slaves to the Asue'Tai Empire, while in other places they kept to the traditions they had developed during the Second Age. Despite these setbacks, new human cultures would emerge with their slow migration across Rothaen, a migration that happened in waves over a long period of time. The timeline of humans in lands outside of Asi during the Second Age is not well known.

The Third Age is seen as a golden age for many elves, especially the Asue'Tai. Humans in many instances were held back from gaining power because of the elven belief that they were dangerous to the natural order. This fear was not without merit, but many actions taken by the elves were outright evil. Dwarves turned a blind eye to the surface folk for several millennia in the Third Age, not caring for anything but their own family and clan. The elves had no desire to interact with them, either. Dwarven apathy towards global politics cost human lives. There are those in the dwarven clans who see that fact, and that is why they are more open to getting involved with surface affairs now.

THIRD CHAOS

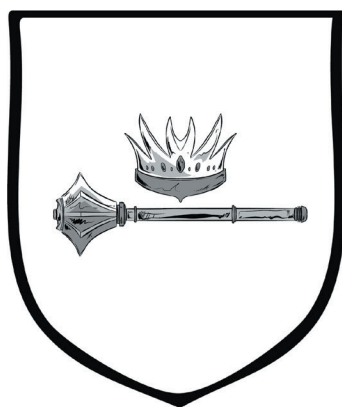
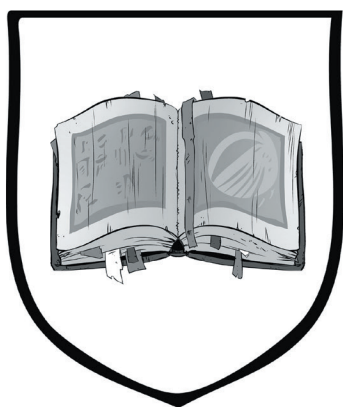
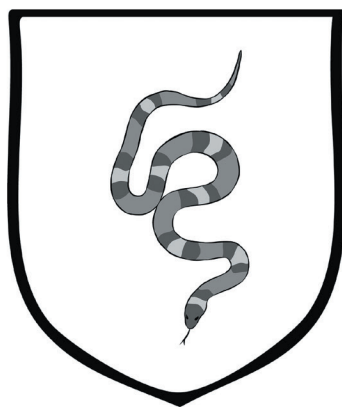
THE DOMINANCE WARS

The human populations throughout Rothaen had been on the rise and their grasp of magic and warfare had become immense. This led to what are called the Dominance Wars. As the different people tried to gain control of an area, massive wars erupted. One of these was the Asue'Tai Empire Civil War, in which the human slaves rebelled and the dwarves became human allies, giving birth to the Athix Empire. As punishment, the humans turned around and enslaved their former masters. This cycle would loop around a thousand years into the Fourth Age. When the dust settled, the humans had taken control of most of Rothaen and the Age of Man had begun.

THE FOURTH AGE

THE AGE OF HUMANS

This is the current age in Rothaen and it began when the Athix Empire rose to power. However, every other kingdom has a different take on when this time began. Asi puts it at 10,000 years ago and calls the Third Chaos the dark ages for the northern people, even though they too broke into several nations during the Third Chaos. Again, Rothaen's past is what one would expect of a place with so many peoples and kingdoms—complicated. Many doomsday cults claim that the next Age, and therefore the next Chaos, is almost here and that it will mean the end of man. Is it true? Play to find out!



RELIGIONS OF ROTHAEN

RELIGIONS OF ROTHAEEN

Rothaen has five major religions: Athecia, Calica, Hurwick, Son-Chy, Wusol, and Zanafrieti. There are also several smaller faiths like the worship of Gi'hina in Ba'Les or the spirit gods that are venerated in Noden. Each of these gods hails from their own Other World, which is tied to the region where the connection between dimensions is strongest.

The creation of Rothaen was complicated and each religion has their own creation story. All of the creations occurred at the same time, happening in different Other Worlds. The result was the creation of Rothaen and the material plane. The release of power was so great that all of Rothaen's different realities merged into a single Rothaen. The gods tried to rule it in the First Age, but civil war pulled them back to their original dimensions. Now only a few of them have returned to Rothaen.

Before detailing the religions of Rothaen, it is important to understand the cosmology surrounding the world. This will explain why there can be so many gods with so many afterlives, heavens, hells, and pocket dimensions.

PLANES OF EXISTENCE

THE MATERIAL PLANE

Rothaen exists on the material plane, along with the other planets, stars, and matter that make up life. Rothaen is just one world in the sea of space.

THE OTHER WORLDS

The Other Worlds are magical dimensions that are intertwined with Rothaen's reality. There are many places where a person can pass between our realm and an Other World briefly and not even know it. Different gods can appear in different regions in Rothaen, all possibly hailing from different Other Worlds. Think of the Other Worlds as alternate magical dimensions that exist just out of phase with Rothaen. Powerful beings, such as gods and demon lords, can travel between their Other World and Rothaen easily, while mortals and less powerful creatures need magic portals to explore these realms. A portal is any place where Rothaen's reality and the Other World realities bleed into each other. There are spells that will unlock a portal, but these are usually in scroll form and can only be used once.

THE VOID

Before the material plane was formed by the gods, before the Other Worlds burst into reality, there was the Void and Beyond the Void. The Void is pitch black with nothing in it save for strange creatures older than time. When the Other Worlds came into being, it pushed the Void out. The Void surrounds all realities and is always trying to push back in, destroying all life everywhere and becoming the only reality again.

BEYOND THE VOID

The most powerful creatures who once lived in the Void, known as the greater gods, the elder gods, or the great old ones, have created their own reality beyond it. No being, not even the gods of the Other Worlds, can travel here, but the great old ones can travel to our world through their own will or by hideous summoning. The gods that live in the Beyond are completely alien, with no care for, or in many cases knowledge of, people's existence. Many worshipers of these elder gods live on Rothaen, such as the deep ones, the serpent people, and many cultists. These gods do not grant powers or answer prayers, instead they drive those who seek them insane.

RELIGIONS OF ROTHAEAN

ATHECIA

Worshiped in the Athix Empire, Ulenvin, Carthic, Chiatex, Helliean, Kosar, and the Victoire Republic

Athelea, the perfect being, encompassed all life within her as she slept in a vast nothingness. She dreamt of the many futures that could be. One of these dreams woke her, and she looked around the Void for the first time and decided that no matter what the future might hold, it was better than nothingness.

Athelea gave birth to all the things she had once held inside her dreams, including all the gods, but this act drained her of her divine force. She fell from the newly formed heavens onto Rothaen as the first human woman. Her divine sons and daughters, not knowing who she was, decided to create a partner named Herkaitia for her. Her last act of creation would be giving birth to humanity. Athelea's human children began to worship her divine children and they spread across the lands, not knowing that their mother had created it all.

The first civilizations created from Athelea's children were advanced in magic and had an extensive understanding of the universe. They had a close relationship with the gods and were on the path to dominating the world. The other races were envious, especially the corrupt elves. They undermined the short-lived humans, causing the collapse of the first civilizations of man. False gods were worshipped, cities fell, and barbarian hordes replaced the educated. This dark age led to the enslavement of humans in the north by the elven Asue'Tai Empire.

It was not until a girl named Athelea, believed to be a reincarnation of the creator, started teaching the ways of the one true faith that humanity learned where they had come from and what their place should be: the rightful rulers of Rothaen. They rose, broke their chains, and began to take control of their lives from the elves. The Athix Empire was started by a former slave who would become Emperor Flavius, guided by Athelea's teaching of creation and who the true gods really were. It is believed that once the reincarnated Athelea freed her human children from slavery, she died on Rothaen and ascended to godhood, taking her rightful place on the throne.

CALICA

Worshiped in Asi, Kahadal, Ba'les, Kalla'De, Malo, Carthic, and the Taseki Empire

Blessed is humankind, for it is humankind that has been gifted the keys of the world by Adul-Isti, creator of all, our Father King. He is the sun and the moon. His divine children are humanity's guides and protectors. The evil of the world was created by Adul-Isti's insane brother Huzray, father of demons and djinn who roam the mortal plane looking to tempt and deceive humans.

Calica teaches that each faith has merit to it. All good deities are considered Adul-Isti's children and their worship is a path to the creator-god's heaven. The only way to join with Adul-Isti is through praying, leading a clean life devoid of alcohol and vice, and treating those around you with respect and dignity. A pure, pious man has nothing to fear from evil; those that are not pure are the ones who suffer.

HURWICK

Worshiped in Scaldival, Luxinvale, Findi, Rusal, Kivca, Kalla'De, and Ulenvin

The creation forge of the mighty Strogjörn burned bright in the center of the universe on an island of ice, iron, and stone. Beyond his realm was the Darkness, filled with strange and dangerous gods known as the Acaria. His forge was the only light in the universe and the Acaria plotted to extinguish it. They began to grow their numbers, trying to overwhelm the forge and its light, until Strogjörn could ignore them no longer.

He crafted ten men, each different, but all with a piece of the same soul-fire from the creation forge. After breathing life and equipping them, the warriors flew out into the darkness and fought the Acaria. The battle took a thousand years and cost the warriors the soul-fire that bound them together. They turned on each other, not being able to see past their perceived differences, and fought in a sea of floating Acaria corpses.

Strogjörn knew he had to do something to stop them, so he created Rothaen and gave them each an area to populate with followers of their own. He then used the Acaria's corpses to shape the stars, the heavens, and the underworld. Finally, he formed all the known gods and divided them into ten groups to be worshiped by the warriors and their tribes.

Once Strogjörn's work was done, he went back to his floating island in the center of the universe and surrounded it with flame, so he could finally work in peace. It was now up to the new gods and the mortal world to work out their differences or burn to ash.

SON-CHY

Worshiped in Acum, Koeis, Yulima, and Kosar

Time is a wheel, a billion years long, that holds all of history. All beings, even those thought of as gods, relive their lives over and over, but each time they can make new choices that lead them to enlightenment. By doing good deeds, meditating, and looking outside oneself to make a difference, a person can break the cycle. Every time you relive your life, you are given a chance to make the world a better place. Beyond the wheel is the greater cosmic universe, where all enlightened beings exist in harmony and peace with all creation. This is a state of being where there is no violence, suffering, or hate, just peace and joy.

Son-Chy has no gods, and followers believe that there is no beginning or end to the universe. The world has always been and always will be until every being within the wheel becomes enlightened. However, this belief does not include animals and insects. Priests of this faith can cast spells, claiming that the ability to cast divine spells is proof of their enlightenment and growth past this world.

WUSOL

Worshiped in Acum, Oleis, and Yulima

Before the world there were only the gods, with the Emerald Dragon on the throne looking down on everyone. Just after the beginning of time, he defeated the creator of all, Su-ling, devouring her after a long drawn-out battle. Wanting to be entertained and worshiped by the other children of Su-ling, the Emerald Dragon demanded the creation of gifts in his honor. Su-ling's daughter, whose name has been lost and is now known as the Hidden Empress, created the world for him with the help of her siblings. But the Emerald Dragon wanted to be involved, too. He wanted to be its creator, but he only knew how to destroy, so his creations were twisted destroyers like himself. Giants, goblins, corrupted dragons, in fact all monster that still plague the good in the world, came from the Emerald Dragon.

The new king was proud of his creations, so proud that he boasted of his greatness to all the other gods as they looked over the world. The Hidden Empress took a chance and said that he should leave the Throne of Heaven and rule his creations on the earth—he would surely never be bored in the mortal realm and could always come back if he liked. To do this, though, he must shrink down to the size of a lesser dragon. The Emerald Dragon agreed, but shrinking caused him to lose the power gained from defeating Su-ling, weakening him considerably.

The Hidden Empress knew she could seize the Throne of Heaven in that moment, but to ensure that the Emerald Dragon never escaped the earth to rule heaven again, she used all her power to bind him on Rothaen forever. Left with only her immortality, she too left heaven to live on Rothaen, leading the pious people of Oleis.

Yewai, her brother and the god of the sun, took over the throne, and the Hidden Empress is looked after by all the righteous gods. The worshipers of Wusol venerate her as their goddess on earth. They also venerate the other gods of the heavens for fighting the evil machinations of the Emerald Dragon and his twisted creations. There is a prophecy that says when the Emerald Dragon is finally defeated the Hidden Empress will become a goddess again and take her rightful place on the Throne of Heaven.

ZANAFRIETI

Worshipped in Tutacami and Cixt

Before the creation of the heavens, the hells, and the mortal world, there were only emotions. Tides of love, hate, jealousy, and happiness undulated in the vastness known as Tirizzina. Out of this ocean of feelings our reality began to take shape. First the lands formed, then the seas crashed in, and finally the sky took shape, creating the world as we know it. But it was empty of sentient life—only rocks, trees, water, and wind. Below the crust of the earth, the hells of envy, jealousy, rage, and hate formed, while above the earth the heavens were created out of love, kindness, patience, and peace. These planes both touched the earth and infused every stone and tree.

Mortals were created by these same forces and the battle between rage and peace, evil and goodness began. In both the upper and lower realms, the gods were created by the strong emotional waves crashing into each other. These gods are the embodiment of one pure emotion, and when a person or creature dies, their dominate emotion joins with the god of that emotion. When one worships their ancestors, they are worshipping a god and the emotion that defined that ancestor while they lived. Every living thing ascends to godhood upon death, joining one prime emotion.

DEITIES OF ROTHAEEN

Many deities are worshipped all over Rothaen. The definition of a god, goddess, or divine being is any entity with powers beyond that of mortals or beasts, who has at least a million worshipers and has the ability to affect an aspect of mortal life. Demigods, legendary heroes, and planer entities all might be more powerful than mortals, but without the power of people's belief pushing them to the next level, they cannot hope to stand up to a god. The most notable example of a powerful being who is not a god is the Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri of Kahadal. He does not yet have enough worshippers to ascend to godhood, but he is working on it.

Gods are not monsters and cannot be killed. The most a mortal could hope to do is banish them for a short time. They do not have hit points or armor class, just awesome cosmic power tied to their sphere of influence. There is not room in this book to go over every deity, so below are detailed the three primary gods for each major religion, save for Son-Chy which does not have deities. GMs and players alike are encouraged to create their own gods for their games. Choose which religion they fall under or make them an independent god. Next, decide their sphere of influence. Finally, GMs can create moves for these new gods and add tags, using the players' input as a guide.

Divine tags help GMs get a quick feel for the deity's personality. They work just like all other tags in the *Dungeon World* book. Divine moves tend to be epic in scale, tied to their sphere of influence, and, in many cases, the focus of a campaign.

Certain gods are more involved with their worshipers than others. Gods that take a great part in the world may move to help or hinder certain worshipers. Any moves made by the gods should always be interesting, compelling, and awesome—having powerful beings popping up doing boring things is a waste of cosmic might. Players should be in awe when a god makes a move.

DIVINE TAGS

- ◆ **Alien:** Completely non-humanoid; uncaring and detached from mortal lives and emotions
- ◆ **Aloof:** Rarely interacts with mortals
- ◆ **Celibate:** Does not partake in mortal sexual activities or romance
- ◆ **Chaotic:** Everchanging in mind and actions; no regard for law and order
- ◆ **Demigod:** Half-mortal, half-divine
- ◆ **Earth-Walker:** Walks the earth and interacts with mortals regularly
- ◆ **Evil:** Acts in a malevolent way towards mortals and the world
- ◆ **Good:** Acts in a benevolent way towards mortals and the world
- ◆ **Jealous:** Resents others for their successes
- ◆ **Patient:** Keeps calm and waits for the right time to act
- ◆ **Prideful:** Has a strong belief in the good of one's personal work and creations
- ◆ **Ravenous:** Requires huge sacrifices to devour
- ◆ **Lawful:** Believes that law and order are the foundation of the universe and must always be followed
- ◆ **Lustful:** Pursues carnal interaction with mortals
- ◆ **Neutral:** Believes in balance and not taking sides unless their aspect's authority is threatened
- ◆ **Wrathful:** Strikes out in anger when provoked

ATHECIA DEITIES

The gods of Athecia tend to be self-absorbed, except for Athelea. The Athecia religion is only a little over a thousand years old and has spread rapidly due to the rise of the Athix Empire. Now, with the empire's power waning, the worship of the Athecia deities is also on the decline.

ATHELEA (GOD OF CREATIONS, FERTILITY, AND CREATIVITY)

good, patient, lawful, aloof

Symbol: Circle with a tree in the middle

Athelea's Moves

- ◆ Protect her human children
- ◆ Turn the tide of a major battle
- ◆ Inspire mortals to achieve exultance

It can be perplexing why the Athelean's feel so superior to all other people when the holy text of Athelea says nothing of being the chosen ones. Some surmise that this superiority complex grew out of their enslavement. Athelea was reincarnated at the time of the Asue'Tai Empire Civil War and was instrumental in freeing their human slaves. At the time few knew who she was, but her teachings spread quickly when Emperor Flavius the First made Athecia the state religion. She has not visited Rothaen in a thousand years, and her followers point to the slow fall of the Athix Empire as a sign that they have upset her in some way. Athelea appears with long, curly, black hair and luminescent skin. Her dress is made of simple linen and is draped over her body. She is sometimes referred to as Mother Nature by the fey. If she appears to mortals, something massive is about to happen. She will send messengers to those she feels are worthy of her blessings to complete an important task.

KURTHOS (GOD OF DEATH, MURDER, AND PLAGUES)

evil, wrathful, earth-walker

Symbol: Jagged red and black blade

Kurthos' Moves

- ◆ Poison a water supply
- ◆ Kill a key nobleperson
- ◆ Spread a new sickness

Kurthos is the grandson of Athelea and the god of death. However, he is not the god of the underworld, which is his father Cromor. Kurthos is one of the few Athecia gods to walk the earth. His job is to bring people to the end of their lives, but his methods to do so are many times sadistic and cruel. He dresses in the outfit of a duke, with bright garish colors and a long purple cape. He will seem almost manic to those who meet him, talking quickly and never about somber things, but under this façade of jubilation is a cold, black heart. He does not appear to all who die, mainly only to those who die in some horrible way, laughing as they are pulled down into his father realm. He has been known to kill villages with sicknesses that cannot be cured by magic just to watch the people hopelessly die slowly. Kurthos is venerated by assassins and necromancers. Worshiping him is seen as an evil act, but many Atheleans will pay him respect to keep him away.

YARTAMAI (GODDESS OF THE HUNT, THE CROPS, AND WEATHER)

neutral, wrathful, chaotic

Symbol: Elk's head

Yartamai's Moves

- ◆ Cause a drought to punish those that displease her
- ◆ Send a sacred animal to relay a message of great importance
- ◆ Provide great bounty to those who pay the proper respect

Yartamai is literally the force of nature. She is worshipped by farmers, hunters, and druids alike. When bad weather occurs or there is a drought, it is said that Yartamai is displeased. The goddess does not walk Rothaen but is linked to the fey spirits and will often talk through them. She does not take sides in any conflict but is usually not happy with what mortal wars do to nature. As the embodiment of nature, she can be chaotic and hard to predict. No settlement goes without a shrine or temple to Yartamai, as her role in people's lives is so great. Yartamai often battles with Kurthos, using fey agents blessed with her divine magic to attack the death god. It is thought that she may be Kurthos' former lover.

CALICA DEITIES

Asi once ruled all the desert lands of Euliom. During the first two thousand years, the old gods were worshipped. This changed when Prophet Marif spread the word of Adul-Isti and the true path a person must take to achieve oneness with heaven. The new religion was about peace and love, rather than the whims of the old gods. It caught on quickly and changed the face of Asi spiritualism. The old gods are still active, though, as there are large groups who believe that Calica is a false faith.

ADUL-ISTI (GOD OF CREATIONS, FATHER KING ABOVE ALL OTHERS)

good, patient, lawful

Symbol: Blue star on a light-yellow field

Adul-Isti Moves

- ◆ Cast out the unholy from heaven
- ◆ Heal the sick and protect the weak
- ◆ Bless those worthy to be sultan

Adul-Isti is the ruler of the Calica deities and is often referred to as the Father King. His teachings are in fable form, teaching morals and ethics to those who follow his teachings as the only path to heaven. One must be kind to others if they expect to live among the gods. Though wonderful in theory, few in the religion are as ethical or moral as they should be according to Adul-Isti. He will visit those who are the most devote in dreams or visions to teach a new lesson or ask them to take up some grand quest. Though there are temples full of devoted clerics, Adul-Isti seems to pick peasants to receive the word of heaven.

HUZRAY (GOD OF EVIL, HELL, DJINN, AND CORRUPTION)

evil, wrathful, lustful, earth-walker

Symbol: Demon head

Huzray's Moves

- ◆ Open a gate to hell
- ◆ Feed humans to a djinn
- ◆ Lead clerics from the path of heaven

Huzray is Adul-Isti's brother and evil incarnate. His main goal is to destroy heaven and flood the world with corrupted djinn and demons from the hells

he has created. His hate for his brother is all he can focus on—victims are nothing more than collateral damage to Huzray. He walks the earth to seduce mortals, sow his seed into the population, and for the pure joy of corrupting Adul-Isti's followers. He is said to stand two and a half meters tall, wears white flowing cloth, and carries a great axe made of flame. Those who have seen him say he is beautiful, with deep brown skin and hair. He uses this comeliness to attract and manipulate mortals into doing his bidding. Huzray is believed to be the one who brought Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri back from his prison to cause the fall of all his brother's followers. Those that follow Huzray are purely evil and insane.

ISTIA-ROL (GODDESS OF MERCHANTS, THIEVES, GREED, AND SUCCESS)

neutral, jealous, aloof

Symbol: Platinum coin

Istia-Rol's Moves

- ◆ Drive up prices in a large market
- ◆ Cause envy between competitors
- ◆ Bless the underhanded merchant with a boon

Istia-Rol is venerated by merchants and thieves alike. She often embodies both the worst traits of greed and the best traits of working hard. She rewards hard work and ingenuity, but never judges how people get ahead. There is at least one shrine to Istia-Rol in every bazaar throughout the desert lands. She is never seen walking the streets of Rothaen. All her blessings and curses are done from afar.

Merchant life in the desert nations is a complicated thing, rich with traditions that date back to the old gods. Haggling is an art form with layers of rules one must observe to get the best deal. Players attempting to haggle while in a region where Istia-Rol is active should make following move:

Haggle

There are rules and traditions to the art of haggling which must be observed while in the desert nations—no one buys anything at the price given on a tag. Instead, this price is a jumping off point. When trying to haggle, roll +CHA. On a 10+, Istia-Rol blesses you! Receive the item at 50% off. On a 7-9, you get 10% off. On a 6-, you pay double the price and have no clue why.

HURWICK DEITIES

The Hurwick religion is one of the oldest, stretching back through the Third Age. Though Luxinvale is trying to replace it with the new state religion Gruuse (see page 230), Hurwick is still followed by most of the people in northern Jorginver. This religion has even reached as far away as Kalla'De, a result of the opening of trade relations. Seeing a temple in a port town dedicated to a grim-faced, ice-covered god is a strange sight indeed. Those who are orthodox say that according to the religion all the world and all the gods were created by Strogjörn, so at some point, they will all return to him as their deity.

STROGJÖRN (GOD OF CREATION, THE FORGE, AND WAR)

neutral, aloof, patient

Symbol: Anvil and hammer

Of all the gods of Rothaen, Strogjörn cares the least for those that worship him. In fact, he is so removed from Rothaen that he has no moves. If he ever does return, it signals the beginning of Ragnarok, the end of the world. Instead, he works at his forge in the middle of Anu, creating great works and living in solitude. His philosophy is simple: work hard and rely on only yourself, because no one else will carry you. This sentiment is the bedrock of the northern people in Jorginver. They have a grim worldview with no expectation of comfort or success.

Why worship a god who never answers? Respect. Strogjörn was not required to create anything. Life may be hard, but it is still a life full of love and family. Getting to experience it, no matter the tragedy that befalls a person, is better than eternal darkness.

JURRVOL (GODDESS OF THE OCEAN AND WEATHER, JARL OF THE GODS)

good, wrathful, chaotic

Symbol: Large wave with a face in it

Jurrvol's Moves

- ◆ Cover the land with snow
- ◆ Protect a ship from predators
- ◆ Cause a hurricane

Jurrvol is the current jarl of the gods for the Hurwick faith. This title changes every few centuries, as the Hurwick gods are always battling one another. War is honor. Though they cannot die, their strength can wane over time, giving others a chance at the throne. They do not use the title king, that honor belongs to Strogjörn. Jurrvol was the first goddess created and often sits on the throne due to her power. Though she is as volatile as the sea, she believes in humanity and will often protect them from the machinations of Luffin, the god of sloth. Jurrvol does not visit Rothaen often, instead she watches her worshipers from Alimon, the Hurwick heaven of battle, beer, and song, where gods and mortals fight side by side. She is venerated by all of the northern people, but especially by sailors.

LUFFIN (GOD OF SLOTH AND GLUTTONY)

evil, aloof

Symbol: Rock with moss

Luffin's Moves

◆ Send forth slimy pieces of itself to drain the world of drive

Luffin is the god that represents everything the people of the north hate: laziness, greed, and unending hunger. It is a genderless blob of slime and goo that lives deep beneath the Blackwall Ruins in the Ramswood Forest. Its cavern is almost impossible to find, but those poor souls that do never return. Luffin's mere essence causes mortal to become slothful. It sends pieces of itself to the surface, where they will spread its lack of drive and a need to consume more and more. These creatures tend to be small and easily missed—they can stand in the corner of a room and no one will notice them. If a PC makes a successful ***Discern Reality*** they will notice the piece.

These creatures look like humans scaled down to about a meter tall. They are horrifying, goopy, hairless things that will not fight. Once struck, they burst, sending bile all over anything within two meters of them. This goo causes 4 points of damage and gives the victim the weak disability (see *Dungeon World* page 26). Luffin wants the world to slip into apathy and then total decay.

WUSOL DEITIES

The Wusol faith was founded on the sacrifice of the Hidden Empress when she gave up the throne and her power in heaven to protect humanity from the Emerald Dragon. Though both entities are worshiped like gods, they do not have any divine power beyond being immortal. Because of this, neither are described here. The deities of heaven below are those that are venerated along with the Hidden Empress. The gods of heaven do not openly involve themselves in the battle between the Hidden Empress and the Emerald Dragon.

YEWAI (GOD OF THE SUN, CROPS, FORTUNE, AND KING OF HEAVEN)

good, aloof, patient

Symbol: Sun with a lotus flower in the center of it

Yewai's Moves

- ◆ Bless a city with good fortune for their devotion
- ◆ Send an avatar to help the poor
- ◆ Shine the sun onto evil

Yewai never wanted the Throne of Heaven. He would have been fine with his sister, the Hidden Empress, ruling. The crown weighs heavy on his head. Yewai is constantly dealing with the bickering of his fellow deities in heaven and hells, so he has little time for the blessing of mortals, something he enjoys immensely. Yewai is seen as weak, and there have been moves to banish him to Beyond the Void, where he would become food for the great old ones. Gusoto, goddess of the afterlife, is his biggest defender, and many believe that she might replace him if Yewai is banished. Hosuto, trickster god of thieves and assassins, is his biggest threat. Hosuto believes that if he can find a way to cut off the underworlds, Gusoto will not be able to save Yewai. A war is coming and Yewai is woefully unprepared.

GUSOTO (GODDESS OF THE AFTERLIFE)

neutral, patient, lawful, earth-walker

Symbol: A face of a woman, one half beautiful while the other twisted and horrifying

Gusoto's Moves

- ◆ Bring souls to their final afterlife

- ◆ Follow the laws of heaven and keep demons in check
- ◆ Cause plague to those, good or evil, who are about to upset the balance

Gusoto is a serious goddess who oversees all afterlives, including all the different hells. She is a key ally to Yewai, who she feels keeps balance, which is vital in order to keeping Rothaen from plunging into darkness. Gusoto is usually the first thing a mortal sees when they die. For those who were not overly evil in life, she dresses in a long, white robe and has her hair pinned up. She gives off the aura of peace and love to make it easier to cross over. When she is dealing with an evil mortal, she appears as a giant green-skinned demon who devours their soul—her mouth becomes a portal to the hell the mortal has been damned to. When doing the **Last Rites** move, a player that fails their roll and dies while worshipping the Wusol deities will see Gusoto in one of these forms depending on their behavior.

HOSUTO (TRICKSTER GOD OF THIEVES AND ASSASSINS)

evil, jealous, patient

Symbol: A hooded face

Hosuto's Moves

- ◆ Weaken foes by sending assassins to eliminate their most influential followers
- ◆ Start a new Heavens War
- ◆ Create fake omens to lead adventurers to their doom

Hosuto was the Emerald Dragon's lackey while he was the throne. After the dragon left the throne to rule earth, Hosuto and the other malevolent gods decided to stay in the shadows and not draw attention to themselves. But over time Hosuto became frustrated and jealous with having to live in darkness. He realized that the gods were weak and he could take the Throne of Heaven for himself. Since this epiphany, Hosuto has been undermining the power structure of heaven for years from the shadows. He no longer sees himself as a loyal subject of the Emerald Dragon, but as the ruler of all creation. Hosuto's final plan is in place. First, cut off the underworlds from heaven so Gusoto and her ghost army can't help Yewai. Then assassinate Yewai and his brother Amil, the god of wisdom, before they realize what is going on. Finally, trick the gods of darkness into starting a holy war to thin out all the gods and make it easier for Hosuto to rule over heaven.

ZANAFRIETI DEITIES

Zanafrieti gods are different from other pantheons. Instead of one god representing a few domains, there are millions of gods representing one emotion. When a family worships a god, they are worshipping an ancestor who ascended as one of the emotions. Because of this, for example, the gods of anger will have many names and faces, but they will all be tied to anger. The Zanafrieti deities act through people, constantly warring with one another and trying to connect more mortals to one emotion over another. They have even been known to walk the earth as messengers or foes.

Temples are dedicated to certain emotion gods' names as well, but it is considered bad form not to give respect to all gods. Fear is very powerful; Keri is the most well-known god of fear, but every family venerates all gods of fear in the hopes of keeping them at bay. Players are encouraged to make their own gods of emotion that they can tie into their families and characters.

SON-CHY BELIEFS

Son-Chy followers worship no deities, and so there are none to put here. However, it is worth mentioning that they often also follow other religions. Some call Son-Chy a philosophy of spiritualism rather than a religion. To followers, all things have a beginning, middle, and end within the wheel of events. Some may be very powerful, but at the end of the turn, all sentient creatures relive their lives trying to obtain enlightenment. Son-Chy is the second largest religion in Rothaen and is spreading.



CULTS OF ROTHAEN



CULTS OF ROTHAEEN

THE BRINGERS OF CHANGE

neutral, honor-bound, unyielding

- ◆ Leader: Rhober Ollefsson (*narcissist, cunning, precise*)
- ◆ Active Location: Worldwide
- ◆ Cult Goal: To spread the word of Kurthos, the god of death

Kurthos, the Athecia god of death, murder, and plagues, has slowly been spreading his influence throughout Rothaen with his cult known as the Bringers of Change. Any person who dies while trying to complete a task, be it a quest for a magic item, saving a person, or an assassination, can call on Kurthos to give them a second chance—but there is a price. If Kurthos answers, you must take jobs given to you by the Bringers of Change. It does not matter what you were before, now you are in the god's debt. Each member receives a small magical tattoo of a broken gravestone somewhere on their body, usually in a place easily hidden. If the person ever refuses or quits a task ordered by Kurthos, the tombstone becomes whole and the cult member dies instantly and can never be revived. Once you cross over, your soul belongs to Kurthos.

People leave messages to Kurthos at his shrines and temples asking for a task to be done: killing a rival, rescuing a friend, or even asking for a good harvest. If the request is accepted by Kurthos, he will appear in the worshipper's dream and tell them what the price will be to complete the task. The sacrifice is left up to the GM to pick. Sometimes it is gold, sometimes it is a blood sacrifice or, if the stakes are truly high, it can be suicide. If the sacrifice is made, a member of the cult awakes with the mission in their head. They must immediately set to completing that task. There can be long stretches of time between jobs, but the cult member is always on call.

There are some targets that are always denied. Monarchs and mob bosses are strictly off limits. Though backed by a death god, the cult knows better than to destabilize a government or to mess with the halfling mobs. Many times, the mobs and the monarchs will use the cult to do jobs they do not want traced back to them. In short, they are Kurthos' best customers. This does not mean that a member of the Bringers of Change cannot kill a king or a kingpin, but if they do it is a personal mission and could end with their brothers and sisters killing them.

Though the cult is now worldwide, its membership is low, with only five or six cultists in a major city and perhaps two servicing the rural areas where shrines are built. This is because of the high price attached to becoming a member. Rhober Ollefsson is the Athecia leader of the cult. He stands tall, with sun yellow, curly hair and black leather armor. His success in the cult has led him to be a bit full of himself, but he backs this up with being a deadly assassin for Kurthos. He spends most of his time traveling Rothaen, spreading the word of Kurthos and the message of the second chance at life. His goal is to serve his master, and he exceeds at that ability.

Player characters can become members of the cult. PCs can learn of the cult through word of mouth, bard's tales, or maybe even by hearing Rhober Ollefsson speak at a secret gathering of the death god. But, if they become part of the cult, they must complete all tasks given to them by Kurthos, even if they are in the middle of another quest. Those who wish to join make the **Plea to Kurthos** move presented below instead of the **Last Breath** move on page 72 of the *Dungeon World* core book. The player should be warned: if they fail, they are forced beyond the Black Gates of Death.

Plea to Kurthos

When you are trying to complete a task, but the flame of life is about to go out for you, you may call upon Kurthos for a second chance. Roll, you get no modifiers—death is a cruel thing. On a +10, your plea is heard and you become a member of the Bringers of Change. You will have a tattoo of a broken gravestone appear and you will have dreams of quests you must complete for Kurthos whenever he needs you. Enjoy your second bite at the apple and your new job. On a 7-9, you can proceed to the Black Gates of Death, make the **Last Breath** move to see your fate. On a 6-, you die instantly, never to see the mortal realm again.

Quests Kurthos might ask of a member of the Bringers of Change:

- ◆ Save a child from an arranged marriage in Asi by kidnapping them and smuggling them to a far-off land.
- ◆ Assassinate a paladin who is causing trouble for the Morticians.
 - ◇ This is a great quest for a good aligned character who is now part of the Bringers of Change.
- ◆ Set a trap for a dragon in the Iron Blade Mountains for the King of Luxinvale.
- ◆ Hunt down the merchant who has been killing her competitors.
- ◆ Find a little girl's missing dog.
- ◆ Rebuild a temple in Malo.
- ◆ Fight with the rebels in Wisgo.
- ◆ Start a war between Oleis and Acum.

THE CULT OF ASMODEUS

evil, lawful, patient

- ◆ Leader: Maxadaus the Undying (*corrupt, evil, insane*)
- ◆ Active Locations: Worldwide
- ◆ Cult Goal: First, to corrupt souls and send them to Asmodeus to feed on. Second, to plunge the world into darkness and despair.

Asmodeus is the lord of the pits of hell, the father and mother of demons and devils. It is evil in all its forms. The Cult of Asmodeus is its mortal agents who try to spread pure evil to every corner of Rothaen. The cult has long, intricate plans that they let play out over time, sometimes over generations. They are a large cult that has chapters all over the world, and their members keep their identities secret. Politicians, princes, merchants, or that guy digging a ditch near the pub could all be part of the Cult of Asmodeus.

The cult started when Emperor Fulvous conquered Jorginver and founded the Athix Empire over 1200 years ago. Humanity was drinking deep of its victory over the elves. The decadence of their lives and the hubris they displayed caught the eye of Asmodeus. It rose from its pit and whispered in a young man's ear, the new prince of the north, Maxadaus. The creator of all devils and demons promised power, wealth, and immortality if Maxadaus supplied souls and sowed evil into the world. He was young and eager for more power, so he signed Asmodeus' contract and sealed his fate.

Maxadaus is still the head of the cult and has lived a life of horrid excess, murder, and mind-bending madness. Although Asmodeus has given Maxadaus all the things he promised, the price has been very high. Maxadaus has had to step out of public life, because though he is immortal, his body shows the marks of all his evil deeds. Maxadaus looks like a lich and his aura is one of murder and greed. Few who meet him can stand to be in the same room for long. He gives all his orders through a web of disciples who dutifully carry out his commands.

To recruit new people, Asmodeus' disciples never say exactly what the cult believes in until after the initiate is so far in that they cannot get out. Often, they tempt people with the promise of power, revenge, or earthly pleasures. There is nothing more satisfying to Asmodeus than the corruption of the holy; these are the souls it craves most. Once a member joins, they must pay for levels in order to climb the ranks of the cult. Each new level reveals more of the truth of the cult, as well providing more sin to take part in. The higher one goes, the more entrenched they get.

PCs may join the cult for a variety of reasons. They may want to expose its evil in a city or they may see it as a good place for contacts. They could use it to gain power for themselves. Whatever the reason, it should never work out the way they want it to. The cult spies on their own members all the time and kills those who might try to interfere with whatever plan is underway at the moment.

The Cult of Asmodeus Moves

- ◆ Work to bring down a reputable noble.
- ◆ Poison a town's well.
- ◆ Kidnap a child with the goal of raising them within the cult.
- ◆ Corrupt the local priesthood with a lustful succubus.
- ◆ Burn down a temple.
- ◆ Spread rumors about a coming plague to cause panic.
- ◆ Start a front cult of peace and love that is really a cult of lust and debauchery.

THE CULT OF CURRE

respected, diligent, neutral

- ◆ Leader: Sister Euphemia Grace (*old, wise, paranoid*)
- ◆ Active Locations: Worldwide
- ◆ Cult Goal: To monitor Curre's gates and learn what activates them.

Curre is the deity of time and space. It is comprised of several freestanding red stone arcs all over Rothaen. Curre is a hivemind and each gate is a piece of its divine body. The Cult of Curre monitors these gates and protects them from vandalism. The gates can be used by anyone, but finding the right key to activate a gate can be tricky and expensive. This is where the cult comes in. They give information on keys to those who ask for it. They never ask questions, but the nature of the gates keeps abuse to a minimum.

Only one creature at a time can pass through a gate and each person must have the gate key. This includes horses. Large armies have no way of using the gates. This, plus the cost of many of the keys, means most people are stuck walking. Getting large amounts of goods through the gates is also not possible. The gates can work well for adventure parties who need to travel a great distance and have the funds for the keys.

This cult is neutral and does not withhold information on gates from those who ask but, if pushed, they tend towards good. It is not unheard of for them to mislead an organization that is a threat to the gates and those who live nearby. The purpose of this cult is to provide a service to those seeking to use the gates. They also are the church of Curre and take pride in protecting its hivemind.

THE CULT OF MORTUS

undead, dangerous, organized

- ◆ Leader: Ji-Xin (*ghost, ancient, unstable, murderous*)
- ◆ Active Location: Abados
- ◆ Cult Goal: To venerate the gods of the dead and spread a new religion across the world.

“Uimith, Kitol, Porcris, and Chun-mia are just a few of the gods of the dead that visit Rothaen. They bring the end to the suffering of life in the form of death. The world will be a better place when every being stops clinging to the farce known as life.”

—Ji-Xin, 3000 year old ghost

The Cult of Mortus has a lofty, yet straight forward goal: become a major religion. They teach that only the gods of death really matter and that life is nothing more than a waiting room for the great beyond, the true reality of existence. Those in Mortus have started gathering all the information they can on all the death gods throughout Rothaen, with the goal of creating an all-death god pantheon and holy book. Their teaching is fractured, as many of the cult's leaders are undead, evil, power hungry, and corrupt. Mortus, as it stands now, tends to ignore neutral or good gods of death, those that simply play a role in guiding the living to the afterlife. They seek out evil gods of the dead and undead, but as one could imagine, different gods from different religions do not always mesh well. This further causes issues with doctrine, which is dealt with by making up scripture to patch the problem areas.

The cult's chaotic nature means that they are not spreading quickly. They have a very small presence in Iros, but the majority of their followers live in the undead city of Abados. Plans are being hatched, though, with three groups of ten cult leaders sailing to Athix, Carthic, and Luxinvale. These cultists' purpose is to lay the groundwork and recruit more into the fold. In Luxinvale, they will come into conflict with the Disciples of the Wyrms (see page 421), who have their own radical views on which gods should be followed.

Ulenvin and Kahadal would seem like natural places for the cult to go to increase its numbers, as both are undead havens, but the Cult of Mortus is unlikely to gain traction there until their numbers are much greater. In Kahadal, the Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri does not allow anyone to be worshipped except for

himself. In Ulenvin, the undead are more interested in being decadent and self-absorbed than in worshipping any gods. As the cult grows, it will need to contend with undead that do not wish to follow their new holy pantheon of death gods. Conversion or final death is the mantra for the Cult of Mortus.

The Cult of Mortus Moves

- ◆ Pay to get prisoners out of jail and then recruit them.
- ◆ Feed the poor to gain their trust.
- ◆ Sacrifice the living to several death gods on an unholy night.

THE CULT OF THE SUN PHARAOH

fanatical, dangerous, organized

- ◆ Leader: Rami Asul (*cunning, focused, ruthless*)
- ◆ Active Location: Asi, Ba'les, Kahadal, and Kalla'De
- ◆ Cult Goals: To bring back the old gods of the Pharaoh and reestablish the ancient Asi Empire.

“Before the spread of the false faith throughout the desert nations of Euliom, the old gods of men, the first gods, were worshipped. They love us, still walk among us, even after we turned away from them. These are the true gods, and the decline of the ancient Asi Empire came about because of the reckless disregard for them. The people of the desert turn their backs on tradition, loyalty, and truth. Because of this we suffer. Our glory is in reunification and the return to the old ways.”

—Rami Asul

Rami Asul was born in the small farming village of Alte where he was raised by a traditionalist family. The traditionalist movement had always been around, even before the newer Calica faith started spreading hundreds of years ago. They believe that after a long amount of time traditions and beliefs change, and not always for the better. Those people who cling to the past, to the old ways, are trying to keep their culture alive for future generations.

Traditionalists are not usually violent. They worship the old gods, follow traditions handed down, but generally stay out of trouble. The Cult of the Sun Pharaoh is a radicalized portion of the traditionalist movement.

Rami Asul grew up hearing the stories of about how things used to be and of how the people of Asi should go back to them. Those seeds of ideology grew into red-hot rage against the sultan and his state religion. Rami believes that the reappearance of Pharaoh Amed-Ri is a result of the people of Asi turning their backs on the old gods. The Pharaoh Lich is really Death, come to destroy the world in response for forgetting the old ways. Rami believes the only way to stop Amed-Ri is to resurrect the Sun Pharaoh by returning to the old gods and restoring their power on Rothaen.

The legend of the Sun Pharaoh tells of Anu, the son of the gods Hiros and Dirí. Hiros was the god of the sun while Dirí was the god of the moon. Anu was born from their loneliness. Though married, Hiros and Dirí were only briefly able to see one another. Their son became the messenger of the gods and the first Pharaoh crowned in Asi. He was called the Sun Pharaoh. When his father Hiros was killed by the god Ist, Anu gave his earthly throne to his son and took his father's place in the sky, bringing light to the world. This began the first dynasty of ancient Asi.

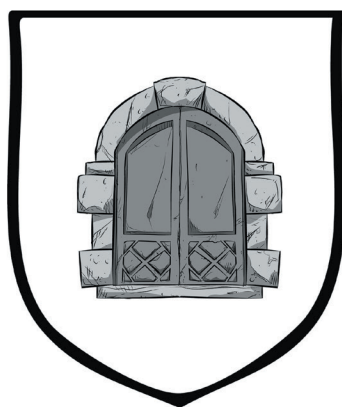
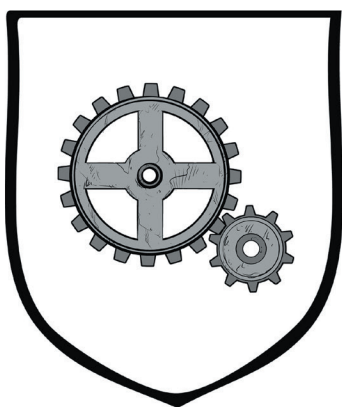
Rami believes that the only way to stop the Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri and make things right with the gods is to somehow get Anu to come down from the sky and destroy him. Then Anu will crown Rami as the new Pharaoh and, by doing so, bring back the old ways. The plan may be far-fetched, but the danger that Rami Asul and his followers represent should not be underestimated. The idea of godhood drives Rami more than anything else. What started as a desire for the old ways has turned into a lust for immortality.

The Cult of the Sun Pharaoh focuses on propaganda and terrorist attacks against temples of the Calica faith. There have also been attempts to reclaim worship centers that have been taken over by the Calica priesthood. In smaller villages, the cult has been able to start recruiting worshipers through promises of a better life under a pharaoh instead of a sultan. When the past is presented through rose-colored glasses and the thought of rising above one station comes into play, it is easy to see why people join this cult.

Also working in the favor of Rami and his fanatical followers is that gods *do* walk the earth, even some of the old ones, and they have shown their displeasure with being forgotten through mighty wrath. Because of this, it is not a stretch to think they may have brought the Pharaoh Lich Amed-Ri back from wherever he was to punish non-believers. It should be remembered that the gods play a long game that mortals can only guess at. Myth is full of mortals involved in the machinations of the gods, and seldom do they come out unscathed. If enough people go back to the old gods, they will gain power—what they do with it afterwards is the real question.

The Cult of the Sun Pharaoh Moves

- ◆ Cause the death of crops, then claim that it is the old gods' wrath.
- ◆ Kidnap a Calica priest and brainwash him to serve their purposes.
- ◆ Spread new versions of old tales to the young.
- ◆ Promise entry into a golden heaven that never existed in the old religion.
- ◆ Pick an old god to venerate.



SECRET
SOCIETIES
OF ROTHAEEN



SECRET SOCIETIES OF ROTHAEEN

THE DISCIPLES OF THE WYRM

single-minded, organized, insane

- ◆ Leader: High Priest Robert Wilkson (*delusional, unstable, fanatical*)
- ◆ Active Locations: Luxinvale and parts of Scaldival
- ◆ Cult Goal: To overthrow the government, replacing it with dragon rulers.

Robert Wilkson has a dream, a twisted psychotic notion that all beings should serve dragons. In his vision of the world, dragons would run kingdoms, even globe-spanning empires. He looks at this ancient race as gods and has spent the past ten years gaining followers who believe his teachings. He tells his people that the reason their lives are hard under their human rulers is that it is an affront to nature. Dragons are, by birthright, the true rulers of the world and the fact that people have forgotten their place has caused more harm than good. It is time for all lower beings to bow to their greatness.

Robert's obsession with dragons started when one attacked his village, Harlkdale, when he was a boy. Its name was Rist and it burned most of the buildings to the ground and ate several cows. After several such attacks and no help from the crown, the village started sacrificing food to the beast. Every year it would appear and take its due. Robert's parents began to venerate Rist, praying to it as one of their gods. This deeply affected Robert, who every year saw an awesome creature descend and was told it was one of the gods.

The whole village eventually began to worship Rist, but the crown was not happy. King Ulmik and a group of warriors rode into town and set a trap for the dragon. The fight was titanic and Ulmik was the only one left, covered in blood but victorious. He had the body carried away, jailed Robert's father for heresy, and passed stricter laws about which gods could be worshiped in Rothaen. This last action led to the current religious unrest he is dealing with now.

For Robert who is now eighteen, it was a traumatic experience that left him both without a father and without one of his gods. This loss turned to rage at the crown and what he saw as human hubris. He began to recruit the other villagers, saying that Rist would rise again, come back, and take his rightful place on the throne of a new dragon empire.

The group has been operating for the past six years. Their headquarters are located underground in Espik, the capital of Luxinvale, and they control the village of Harlkdale. In Harlkdale, visitors are led to believe that it is a generic farming village like any other. Those that snoop around too much, though, are never heard from again. The group holds secret meetings all over Luxinvale and parts of Scaldival, proclaiming dragons as gods and the true rulers of the world. The cult attracts the desperate and unhinged individuals who are looking for answers or just a better life. Promises of a dragon-run utopia are often thrown around in these meetings. Robert's vision of the future has been turned into series of books that are used to help with recruiting. These books are banned in Luxinvale, and Robert is wanted for breaking the religion laws.

This group is dangerous for many reasons. First, they lie to people and play on their hopes and fears to make them servants. Being a servant means giving all your money to the cult; although this happens in many cults, the Disciples of the Wyrms has taken it to a whole new level. This money is then used to buy weapons and armor from the black market in Findi. Robert is raising an army. They attack temples in the middle of the night, pay monsters to attack villages, and then offer the protection of the dragon. Everything they do is to undermine the crown.

There are several reasons for players to meet the Disciples of the Wyrms. Ulmik may be looking for a group to ferret them out, they could stay in Harlkdale for a night, or they could be asked to look into vandalism against a local temple.

Disciples of the Wyrms Moves

- ◆ Hire bugbears to attack settlements and logging camps in the Ramswood Forest.
- ◆ Kidnap a noble to sacrifice to a dragon in the Iron Blade Mountains.
- ◆ Destroy shrines along the King's Road.
- ◆ Brainwash a family member of one of the PCs.
- ◆ Sneak a shipment of weapons into Luxinvale.
- ◆ Steal from the crown: either from a bank or from the vault of the king.

THE FIST OF EDIK

fanatic, dangerous, chaotic

- ◆ Leader: Grob Ironskull (*militant, fanatic, smart*)
- ◆ Active Locations: Scaldival and Findi
- ◆ Cult Goals: Reclaim the lands to the west, those sold and are now Findi.

“Deep in the bowels of the earth, Edik sits on a throne of bone and blood waiting—WAITING—for his people to wake up and take back what he had so generously given them. The lands to the west are Scaldival’s, and they belong to us, not Findi. They cannot be sold to the highest bidder. Our people fought and bled to free ourselves from the chains of the Athix Empire, for what? To sell off our children’s birthright? The queen’s need for gold blinded her to the fact that our land is more important than coin. Lands are worth dying for—money is not. She forgot the sea was our gateway to the rest of the world and having to pay for the right to use our own docks in our coastal cities is the greatest insult of all! My family, it is time to remove those who are weak at the top and take back what is ours! We will not rest, ‘til Scaldival is whole again! We will make Edik proud of his people! Raise your iron and fight for your fatherland!”

—Grob Ironskull, leader of *The Fist of Edik*

The Fist of Edik has one mission: make Scaldival whole again. After the Athix Civil War, Scaldival was destitute and its cities were in ruins. The queen needed a way to pay for reconstruction, and so she sold off a large portion of land to the west for the gold to do so (see Scaldival page 237). Grob Ironskull, a veteran of the civil war and outspoken critic of the crown, was outraged. He had fought hard for Scaldival’s independence, and with the flick of a quill pen, a third of the nation was gone. This sale also resulted in Scaldival becoming landlocked, a fact that Grob throws into his heated, frothing rants anytime he can.

The cult is mostly made up of war veterans who see the government as too bloated with regulations and too weak in maintaining the borders established after the war. Because of the sale, many members lost their homes and had to move east or become citizens of Findi. Some families had owned their lands for generations and feel the queen had no right to sell them. Grob plays on these emotions and leaves out the fact that if the queen not sold the land Scaldival would have fallen, more than likely to Luxinvale in the north or even the Athix Empire in the south.

The Fist of Edik has just over 900 members presently and is divided into two parts. Their public face recruits new members while painting the government's policies in the worst light possible. They hold rallies where they give out free food and beer while talking about the tragedy of the war and the arrogance of the crown in selling off the people's land. In public, they refer to themselves as Edik's Forgotten Warriors to play on the emotions of patriotic Scaldivals. It is public knowledge that the Fist and the Warriors are one in the same, though Grob likes to claim they are not.

The Fist of Edik keeps its full membership secret. The Fist is extremely violent. In Findi, they attack merchants and businesses. Grob believes that if he can cause enough problems in the name of Scaldival against Findi, they must declare war. That is exactly the kind of thing that would help his cause. The raids, however, take a heavy toll on the Fist. Many members are slain during these attacks, leading to high turnover in the ranks. Grob would like to raise a force large enough to take the capital and then use Scaldival's armies to take back the lands to the west.

The message of the Fist of Edik is gaining popularity, and though chaotic in their tactics, they have struck some harsh blows against the crown. The nobles and elites of Scaldival have beefed up security. The queen has offered gold for any information that leads to the arrest of a Fist member. She has considered arresting Grob, but he has not broken any laws that she can prove. Right now, it is a cat-and-mouse game between the crown and the Fist.

The Fist of Edik Moves

- ◆ Attack a merchant in Findi and burn their business.
- ◆ Spread rumors about the corruption of the crown.
- ◆ Give money to the poor, with a message.
- ◆ Hold a rally to gain support.
- ◆ Pressure nobles, including through kidnapping, to go against the crown.

THE PURITY LEAGUE

racist, genocidal, ruthless

- ◆ Leader: Asue'Tai Emperor Feysul (*racist, cunning, fanatical*)
- ◆ Active Locations: Daceana and parts of Athix
- ◆ Cult Goal: To create a new Asue'Tai Empire and enslave all "lesser beings".

With the fall of the Athix Empire, the Asue'Tai regained their freedom as well as winning a homeland. This massive turn of events came about through their own rebellion, helped by the fact that of all of Athix's vessel states also declared independence. The war lasted a hundred years, not long at all for elves that can live thousands of years. This fact is something the short-lived humans did not consider when they themselves rose from slavery and enslaved their former masters. Asue'Tai do not forget.

Once the new government of Daceana was created, the Purity League changed focus from rebellion to building up the Daceana war machine and retaking lands lost to Athix all those years ago. The league is run by the last emperor of the Asue'Tai Empire, Emperor Feysul. Feysul spent a thousand years as a slave thinking about what went wrong and how to get his revenge. He started the Purity League with two goals: free his people and re-enslave the "lower" races.

He keeps his identity secret from the outside world and runs Daceana through the Parliament of Elders. The Silver Knights (see page 213) are unaware of the Purity League and that their orders come from Feysul. His word is law, though, and he has guided the laws restricting non-Asue'Tai elves from the start.

This secret organization is a shadow government with major resources. The plan to reinstate the Asue'Tai Empire has been in place since before the Athix Civil War. The slave rebellion that started the war was orchestrated by the Purity League and went into motions decades before. Why did it take the elves a thousand years to start a rebellion? Mainly, communication. The network to send messages between elf slaves took years to build and broke down often. But the guiding hand of these efforts was always the Purity League.

Currently, the league has many different plans in the works. Their first target for expansion is not Athix, but Scaldival. They feel that Scaldival is still weak from the civil war and, even with the influx of gold from selling Findi, it will be some time before they are whole again. Swelling an army on their border is easy.

It is important to remember that not every Asue'Tai elf wants the empire to rise again. In fact, the population is split and beyond that split are groups who want things to unfold in a certain way. The Purity League is in control of the government and is methodical in their moves. Their plans could take two hundred years to unfold, guaranteeing that all humans alive today would be long dead. Time is on their side.

The Purity League Moves

- ◆ Increase the Asue'Tai birthrate through propaganda.
- ◆ Raid human businesses under purity laws with the Silver Knights.
- ◆ Assassinate opposition leaders.
- ◆ Produce propaganda for newspapers.
- ◆ Swell the army on the Scaldival border.

THE MORTICIANS

professional, cunning, focused

- ◆ Leader: The Guild
- ◆ Active Locations: Worldwide
- ◆ Cult Goals: To make as much gold as possible in the death business.

Every city and town has undertakers. Many are connected to temples, while others are tradespeople who run mortuaries. These death workers also travel to rural areas to help the grieving deal with the loss of a loved one. Undertakers serve a vital service in communities, even if some of the communities they serve shun them for handling the dead, like in Asi or Ulenvin.

It can be a thankless job, indeed.

One does not become rich burying corpses, and this reality prompted the more entrepreneurial and morally shady of the bunch to create a secret society called the Morticians. They started during the Athix Empire's bloody civil war over two hundred years ago. The empire's elven slaves were in full revolt and the barbarians in the north wanted their independence. Corpses started to pile up on all fronts, and more and more people started working as undertakers.

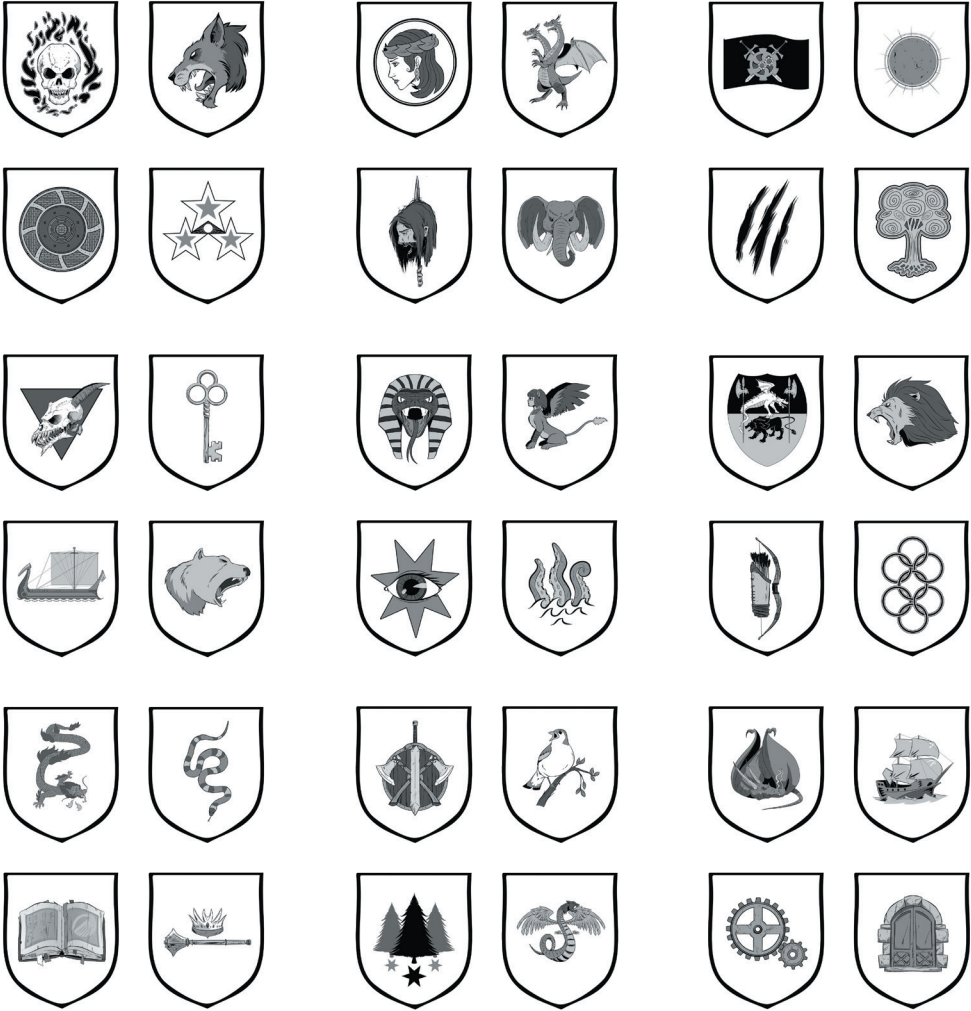
Many of these new workers saw opportunities in the death business. They started to market their skills to people with deep pockets. At first it was just a handful of people in the city of Athelea, the Athix Empire's capital, but as the war dragged on, their numbers swelled. Today, every city or town has at least one Mortician among its undertakers.

The Morticians sell bodies to necromancers, make sure bodies disappear forever for the mobs and nobles alike, and will even help usher a living person into the afterlife. These activities require a network of people who can keep their big traps shut, and that is not cheap. The Morticians take their jobs very seriously and only accept those who have proven themselves as skilled undertakers who have the right temperament. Many times, as with any trade, being a Mortician is a family affair and a great honor—leaving them is never an option.

In game terms, the Morticians can be antagonists or contacts, depending on what side of the law you are on. Discovering them can be a whole campaign, or players may want to join their ranks. The Morticians see corpses as nothing more than raw materials and money in the bank. They have insured people's silence through well-played blackmail schemes over the years or simply with a knife across the throat. The Morticians are not to be trifled with.

Mortician Moves

- ◆ Get hired to make a body disappear.
- ◆ Collect a debt from a mob family.
- ◆ Sell a noble's corpse to a necromancer accidentally.
- ◆ Chase a former Mortician member before they talk to authorities.
- ◆ Take a job to kill one of the PC's or their family members.
- ◆ Blackmail a family who lost a family member in a scandalous way.



**REALMS OF ROTHÆN WAS CREATED WITH THE
SUPPORT OF OUR AWESOME KICKSTARTER BACKERS.**

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BEING A PART OF THIS PROJECT.

Adam Marafioti	Grant Kidwell	Paul Fijma (Akimotos)
Alex Blue	HANATAKA Shinya	Paul R. Smith
Amy Vorpahl,	Jacqui Macgregor-Pahl	Philippe Niederkorn
Andreas Welch	JamesV1971	Randy Smith
Autumn PeLata,	Jamie Wheeler	Red & Black Eagle
Benjamin Stonier	Jason “JiB” Tryon	Baron
Bernard Gravel	Jeff Troutman	Renzo Crispieri Th
Bernd Linke	Jeremy Kear	Rhel ná DecVandé
Billy Jo Ayakatubby	John Hawley	Robert “Tlsfuzzy”
Brian A	Jonas Schiött	Schumacher
Colin “Vindexus” Kierans	Jonathan Ricks	Rod Holdsworth
Darren Pawluk -	Joseph B Prozinski	Ronald Nealy
Cat Wrangler	Judith the Tank Slayer	Russell Ventimeglia
David Silberstein	Kary Realm Master K	Santiago López Rega
David Taylor	Williams	Scott Rubin
Derek M	Keith Mitchum	Shervyn
Dimitri Del Castillo	Kendall Paul Koller	Stephanie Bryant
Dom Zook	Kyle Jackson	Stephen Hardy
Donald A. Turner	Lance Menthe	Steven Monczka
Drunken Knight	Leslie A Wilson	Svend Andersen
Dyrewolff	Lucy Jefferies	Thalji
Eddie Freeman	Mad Tinker Gnome	Thomas Perry
Edgar Flaathen	Marc Patenaude	Tom Lommel
Edward MacGregor	Marcelino Panyvino	Tomer Gurantz
El Duderino	Mirror’s Shadow	Trip Space-Parasite
elandys	Nicholas Hendley	Trisha Huang
Ethan Zimmerman	P Byhmer	Walt Larson
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Glenn Seiler	Paul D Harmelink	Wright Johnson

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

WES OTIS

Wes started gaming a long time ago in a state far, far away. Now he lives in Burbank, California with his wife, Michelle, and two kids, Alan and Veronica. He spent several years working in post-production in Hollywood before founding Plate Mail Games in 2013 and creating audio for RPGs. He has also written fantasy and sci-fi. Wes produces *Twelve-Sided Stories*, an Actual Play podcast. *Realms of Rothaen* represents a great deal of experience playing, world-building, and sometimes crying. When not working on or playing RPGs, Wes enjoys playing music and video games, reading, and watching lots of movies. You can find Wes on Twitter at @platemailgames.

HAMISH CAMERON

Hamish Cameron is a writer, game designer, and historian who recently returned to New Zealand from a lengthy sojourn in the US. He is best known for *The Sprawl* (2016), a PbtA game of mission-based cyberpunk action now translated into several languages. His second published game, *Dinosaur Princesses*, was co-written with Dana Cameron. It was nominated for three ENnies and won a silver for Best Family Game. His next project is *Kratophagia*, a science-fantasy game of cannibalism and protean body transformation. He publishes RPGs as *Ardens Ludere* (<http://ardens.org>) and board games as part of Cheeky Mountain Parrot Games. You can find him tweeting merrily at @peregrinekiwi, @thesprawl_rpg, and @ardensludere.

ABOUT PLATE MAIL GAMES

PMG was created in 2013 as a way for Wes and Michelle Otis to bring professional audio background loops and music to tabletop RPGs. The goal of the company has always been to provide the best RPG supplements and accessories possible. Since starting, Wes and Michelle have created over 1200 tracks for RPGs spanning all genres. PMG has also produced several PDF products that include adventuring locations and hooks. Though PMG has produced PDFs in the past, *Realms of Rothaen* marks the biggest written project so far for the company and is the first step for future PMG books.

<http://platemailgames.com>



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What adventures will you create with your friends in the *Realms of Rothaen*? Will you help the Athix Empire rebuild, fight the Pharaoh Lich of Kahadal, or serve the Hidden Empress on Iros? Maybe you will learn the horrid ***Book of the Dead***'s secrets in Abados, join a halfling mob family in Carthic, or learn the songs of the Taseki Empire.

Rothaen is a vast world with many opportunities for a brave adventurer to explore. It is a world filled with good, evil, and everything in between.

Choose your path and forge the future of your Rothaen.

