

EARTHDAWN THIRD EDITION

NATIONS OF BARSAIVE II SERPENT RIVER



AN EARTHDAWN SOURCEBOOK BY SEAN R. RHOADES





• THIRD EDITION •

NATIONS OF BARSATIVE II: SERPENT RIVER

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• EARTHDAWN THIRD EDITION •

NATIONS OF BARSAIVE II: SERPENT RIVER



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as numerous as the fish swimming in it.*

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INTRODUCTION

*Throal has become the heart of Barsaive,
and the waters of the mighty
Serpent River serve as its lifeblood.*

• SEPHIRIA MONS, TROUBADOUR TO QUEEN ALACHIA OF THE BLOOD WOOD •

The age of **Earthdawn** was an era of magic that existed thousands of years ago in our world's dim past. Magic touched every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Namegiver races: humans, elves, dwarfs, orks, trolls, windlings, t'skrang, and obsidimen. However, as the levels of magic rose, so did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic brought the Horrors to Earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, the people of Barsaive hid underground as the Horrors devastated their lands during the dark time that came to be called the Scourge.

Now, the Scourge is over, and people have emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels. From all across Barsaive, bold heroes step forward to champion their land, arming themselves with powerful spells and magical treasures. Through magic, skill, and daring, Barsaive's heroes strive to heal the world of the scars left by the Scourge, and fight the oppression of the Theran Empire. By doing so, they become Barsaive's living legends.

Nations of Barsaive Volume Two offers gamemasters and players an in-depth look at the Serpent River. This book provides detailed descriptions of the six great t'skrang trading houses, featuring revised and updated content, and new material for adventures in the world of **Earthdawn**.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

N**ations of Barsaive Volume Two** is a sourcebook for the **Earthdawn** game. This book offers readers a cross section of legends, history, customs, and lore of the people who live along the Serpent River, with a particular focus on the masters of the river, the t'skrang. Players can use this information to enhance their characters' backgrounds and increase their knowledge of the world of **Earthdawn**. Gamemasters can use the wealth of opportunities in this book to create new adventures, flesh out the game world, and expand the scope of evolving campaigns.

Aside from the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Guides**, the gamemaster and players need no other material to use this product, though gamemasters may find other published **Earthdawn** products useful; for example, more information on t'skrang culture can be found in the **Namegivers of Barsaive** book.

This sourcebook begins with an overview of **The Serpent River**, offering a brief glimpse of the waterway and surrounding lands, the various t'skrang trading houses that control it, and the manner in which travel and trade are conducted along the river's length. Following this overview is a chapter devoted to **The T'skrang Aropagoi**, each of which controls a region of the river, including notable settle-



ments and communities, famous and infamous characters whom players may encounter, and other items of interest. **A Tour of the Serpent** highlights places of interest to player characters who travel along the Serpent River. The final chapter, **Adventures on the Serpent**, includes several sample adventure outlines.

The second part of this book offers game mechanics and rules for situations that might arise when adventuring along the Serpent River. The **Creatures** chapter provides descriptions and game information for a variety of new creatures and unusual plants. The **Goods and Services** and **Magical Treasures** chapters include descriptions and statistics for various magical and common items that adventurers may encounter on their travels. The **Riverboats** chapter includes new game statistics for several different types of riverboats. Finally, the **Character Index** summarizes the many gamemaster and other characters described in the book.

Like other **Earthdawn** sourcebooks, *Nations of Barsaive Volume Two* provides the gamemaster with detailed background information to read at his leisure. It also offers plenty of solutions for problems that gamemasters are likely to run into in the course of an adventure. The Serpent River and its major tributaries form a network of waterways that extends for more than 10,000 miles throughout Barsaive, so this sourcebook can't possibly describe it all. The purpose of this sourcebook is not to fill in all the gaps, but to open the doors of the gamemaster's and players' imaginations.

To give gamemasters and players a taste of the flavor of **Earthdawn**, first-person fictional accounts from **Earthdawn** characters are interspersed throughout the book. You can use them as a guide to the game's atmosphere, or as jumping-off points for story lines in which the player characters get involved.

Though the material offered in this book is presented as fact and should be treated as accurate in terms of **Earthdawn** continuity, remember that you are the ultimate author of your campaign. If a fact in this sourcebook contradicts something you have already established in your game, or if you find it inconvenient, go ahead and change it. Any player who claims that the gamemaster is wrong about some detail of Barsaive deserves to have as many changes thrown at him as you can dream up. In some instances, this book presents contradictory accounts of a setting or character as options from which the gamemaster can choose. These **options** allow you to decide which version of the truth is real in your campaign.

AT THE BRINK OF WAR

In addition to providing gamemasters with basic information on the recovering civilizations in Barsaive, this book details several conflicts developing in the province. Whether groups of adventurers explore the length of the Serpent or settle down to explore its mysteries, terrible dangers are brewing in the background.

Barsaive has staged a remarkable recovery from the devastating effects of the Scourge, largely because of Throal's efforts.

Thanks to the dwarf kingdom and a few legendary heroes, Barsaivians can live in relative safety in the province's larger cities and towns. However, this surface stability is currently facing a crisis.

When the threat of the Horrors receded, the major powers of Barsaive felt secure enough to focus on their political and military rivalries. When the Therans established the fortress of Triumph near Lake Ban, a new, bloodstained chapter in Barsaive's history began.



THE SERPENT RIVER

Ah, how the river sparkles! Liquid divinity, like the Passions come to rest in Barsaive.

• S'RELLA JRISTOL, T'SKRANG TROUBADOUR •

Of all the Namegiver races, none is more closely associated with the Serpent River than the t'skrang. To the t'skrang, the river is life itself—a source of food, shelter, livelihood, even divine inspiration. The traditional t'skrang tale of the Four Gifts of Upandal explains the origins of the t'skrang mastery of the Serpent. This tale is told in t'skrang villages to this day, each word unchanged since the first telling.

In the days before the Theran Empire, before t'skrang riverboats and village towers had spread across the river, the t'skrang foundations lived on the banks of the Serpent and plied its waters in oar-driven galleys. In those days the elves were a great nation, and they vied with the t'skrang to be masters of the river waters. It so happened that the Passion Jaspree favored one of the Elven Queen's attendants, a questor Named Elidar, with powers over elemental wood. Armed with these powers, Elidar crafted a new kind of ship, a vessel propelled by the wind and the energy of elemental wood. So swift were these new ships that they outpaced even the swiftest t'skrang ship. The elves armed their ships with archers and swordsmen, and expanded the realm of the Elven Court all along the river from Lake Vors to Lake Ban. Now in those days, one shivalahala ruled all the t'skrang—the Prophetess of Syrtis. The Prophetess had great wisdom, and the t'skrang of the Serpent River looked to her as the elves did their queen. When the elven fleet besieged the Halls of Syrtis, countless brave t'skrang came to their honored leader's defense; but the elven fleet was strong and well supplied, and all too soon the defenders of Syrtis came near to surrendering from sheer exhaustion. The shivalahala, seeing their distress, drew upon the vast knowledge and power of generations of t'skrang, and beseeched the Passions to aid her people.

In answer to her call, Upandal the Builder appeared to the shivalahala as a huge four-armed t'skrang, clad in the apron of a blacksmith, carrying a hammer and a steel triangle in his right hands and bearing a cup and a flame in his left hands. "Welcome, O Passion, to the Halls of Syrtis, the Nightwatcher," said the shivalahala. "From Lake Vors to Lake Ban, the elves in their sailing ships chase my people away from the river. Our ships lie sunk and abandoned on the riverbed. Our villages are empty and the people have lost hope. Jaspree has delivered a great boon to the elves, but a great curse upon t'skrang. We seek counsel and salvation, Upandal, you who laid the foundations of the world."

Upandal looked out over the face of the land and saw that things were as the shivalahala said. And the Passion said, "The balance of life on the river has come undone. I cannot undo the work of Jaspree, for hers is the power over life, and thus over the wood and cloth that makes the elves strong. But in my hand lies command over the other four elements. What will you have of me, Mother of the Riverfolk?"

The shivalahala thought long, then answered thus: "The Halls of Syrtis are a great fortress against the enemy, but my people are many and these halls cannot hold them. If it can be, I would ask that you provide refuge for my people in citadels all along the river, that they may defend themselves against the elves."

At this Upandal let fly his hammer, and the hammer ran the length of the river. And where it touched the surface of the waters, great towers of stone erupted from the riverbed. And the shivalahala thought again and said, "My people will rest safe under the great towers you have raised, Upandal. We shall make our homes on the riverbed of the Great Mother Shivoam. But our gills are not such that we can live under the River's water.

We must have air to breathe." And so Upandal reached out with his steel triangle and cut half of the towers to the surface of the river. The force of the river's current broke against these towers, and air flowed through the towers. Once more the shivalahala thought, and said, "The ships of the elves can still come against us, bringing war to our towers and blood to our homes. We must have fortifications to turn back their ships."

And so Upandal overturned the cup in his left hand and elemental water poured forth into the river. The water took solid form as reefs of spikes around the towers, sure to pierce the hull of any ship that passed too close. These were the refselenika. Finally, the shivalahala said, "All this that you have made is wise, Lord Upandal. But what good shall come of all you have wrought if the t'skrang are prisoners in the fortresses you have built for us? We must have a boat that can stand against the ships of Elidar, so that we can come and go along the river as we please."

In reply, Upandal placed his remaining hand on the forehead of his questor, T'chaidos. The flame in the Passion's hand passed into the questor's mind. Filled to the limit of madness by the Builder's gift, T'chaidos constructed the first fire engine and the first riverboat. Armed with these new tools, the t'skrang soon raised a fleet and sailed against the ships of Elidar. And when the K'choss na Erawyrm, the War Between the Elves and the T'skrang, ended, the t'skrang became the undisputed masters of the Serpent River.

—From The Four Gifts of Upandal:
A T'skrang Tale

The t'skrang know her as Shivoam, the River Dragon. To the dwarfs of Throal, she is Zhirazkhul the Encircler. The elves of the Blood Wood call her Shilarai, the Watersong. And the trolls of Barsaive know her as the Shining Path, for she becomes a glittering ribbon of light when seen from an airship. From the rushing waters of the Grand Cataracts to the impenetrable

fog of the Mist Swamps, the great Serpent River runs the length of Barsaive, connecting the far-flung settlements of the province. Since the dawn of history, Namegivers have plied her waters in fishing boats, merchant vessels, and mighty warships. And today, the Serpent River still flows through the hearts and histories of Barsaive's peoples. To know the Serpent River is to know Barsaive.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SERPENT RIVER

The following overview of the Serpent River briefly describes the river's geography, the *aropagoi* that dominate the various regions, present-day politics surrounding the river trade, and the workings of trade and travel along the river.

ON THE SERPENT'S GEOGRAPHY

The long, winding Serpent River runs the entire breadth of Barsaive, from beyond the Scol Mountains in the North to the Mist Swamps in the South. Countless tributaries feed the Serpent along its course, forming a network of watery highways that travelers and traders have used for thousands of years. The Serpent also provides fresh water to thousands of Barsaivians, and its banks contain some of the richest farmland in the province.

The source of the river lies in the uncharted mountain ranges to the northwest of Barsaive beyond the Grand Cataracts, a series of waterfalls that tower more than one hundred feet in the air. The river becomes un-navigable beyond the Cataracts, and so the exact source of the Serpent remains unknown.

A few hundred miles south of the Grand Cataracts, the **North Reach** of the river runs south past Iopos, home of the Denairastas clan, then winds eastward in the shadow of the Scol Mountains, the domain of isolated troll moots. From there, the river continues east to Lake Vors, site of the Citadel of House Ishkarat, the fierce t'skrang *aropagoi* that dominates the Serpent's North Reach. The harsh, untamed lands along the North Reach contain little more than isolated settlements of Namegivers.

East of Lake Vors the Serpent is joined by the River Mothingale, which marks the beginning of the Serpent's **Mid Reach**. The Mid Reach flows east through the foothills of the Scythia and Caucavic Mountains, then turns south before it reaches the Lalai Gorge, site of the Cliff City of House Syrtis. As the river flows south, the rugged foothills give way to lush vineyards and increasing numbers of farming settlements. The Mid Reach passes through the dwarf settlement of Tansiarda and the renowned boatyards of Denlikyan before reaching the northern shores of Lake Ban.

Lake Ban marks the confluence of the Serpent and the Coil River, which flows from the Throal Mountains down to Urupa, the powerful trading city on the shores of the Aras Sea. The lake is best known as the site of the Floating City of House V'strimon, a powerful t'skrang *aropagoi*.

From Lake Ban, the **South Reach** of the river flows west to Lake Pyros, located along the edge of the Servos Jungle. Pyros is the smallest of the Serpent Lakes, but its fertile shores continue to attract numerous Namegivers in spite of the nearby jungle's hazards. West of Lake Pyros, the Serpent is joined by the Byrose River, which runs south to the wealthy trading city of Travar. The Serpent then continues west and is joined by the Servos and Tylon rivers before it empties into the Mist Swamps.

For more information on the Serpent River's geography, including notable settlements and personalities, refer to **A Tour of the Serpent** on p. 50.



OF TRADE AND POLITICS

Throughout the history of the Serpent River, trade and politics have been intimately intertwined. The t'skrang communities of the Serpent have dominated both since time immemorial, and this dominance—personified by the *aropagoi*, the t'skrang great trading houses—largely determines the conditions traders and travelers on the Serpent must face.

The fundamental social, economic, and political unit of Serpent River t'skrang society is the *niall*, or foundation. Each *niall* is an extended family that may include up to 200 individuals. Some *nialls* maintain their own settlements along the river, but most often two or more join together to form a village. Each village forms its own crew and trading covenants to operate riverboats. While many t'skrang villages operate as independent economic and political entities, most belong to one of the *aropagoi*, which represent the pinnacle of t'skrang economic and political power on the Serpent River.

The exact translation of *aropagoi* is “honored center,” which reflects the key function of an *aropagoi*: to serve as a central foundation based not on family relationships, but on loyalty and respect gained within the *aropagoi* organization. Individuals may join an *aropagoi* by being elected or chosen by the *aropagoi*'s members, who are known as *aropagoinya*. Upon joining an *aropagoi*, a new member adopts a *g'doinya*, a Name for use within the central foundation. During the *g'doinya* ritual, the initiate also receives a token of identification unique to the *aropagoi*. As a member of the *aropagoi*, the individual receives several privileges, including the opportunity to serve as an officer on one of the *aropagoi*'s warships. Because t'skrang consider *aropagoi* membership so important, most regard possession of an *aropagoi* token under false pretenses as a criminal act, and punish offenders by cutting their tails off. Amputation of an arm or leg is the typical punishment for a non-t'skrang offender.

Every *aropagoi* is led by a *shivalahala*, who serves as political, social, and spiritual leader. *Shivalahalas* preserve the ancestral memories of their predecessors and many are said to possess supernatural powers. Because of their importance to their *aropagoi*, *shivalahalas* seldom venture forth from their home cities. Most *shivalahalas* maintain councils whose members aid them in setting and implementing trade and political policies, as well as governing the *aropagoi*. Generally, council members are selected from the various villages and foundations that belong to each *aropagoi*.

Before the Theran War, riverboats from more than a dozen *aropagoi* plied the waters of the Serpent River. These *aropagoi* grew over the course of centuries, as the river t'skrangs' never-ending quest for supremacy over trading rivals led them to form ever larger groups. Despite their high level of political and economic development, the t'skrang of the Serpent have never exhibited a sense of national identity like that displayed by Barsaive's dwarfs and elves, largely because of the wide dispersion of t'skrang settlements along the Serpent and the intense, ongoing economic competition between the *aropagoi*.

Currently, six t'skrang *aropagoi* dominate trade on the Serpent: **House K'tenshin**, **House V'strimon**, **House Syrtis**, **House Ishkarat**, **House Henghyoke**, and **House T'kambras**. Each *aropagoi*, with the exception of House Henghyoke, controls a section of the river system, but riverboats from all the *aropagoi* travel the length of the Serpent. Although many t'skrang villages and settlements along the river are not officially affiliated with any *aropagoi*, all settlements operate under the system of trade the *aropagoi* make possible.

House Ishkarat

House Ishkarat, the House of the Wheel, dominates the North Reach of the Serpent River. The *aropagoi* has adopted a crimson wheel set on a field of white as its symbol. A ritual dagger of black obsidian serves as the *aropagoi's* *g'doinya*. The *aropagoi's* base, an island fortress located in the western end of Lake Vors, is known as the Citadel of Ishkarat. The *aropagoi's* thirst for conquest has left it with few allies, other than the Denarastas clan of Iopos. Little is known of the *aropagoi's* *shivalahala*.

For more information on House Ishkarat, see **House Ishkarat**, p. 16 of **The T'skrang Aropagoi**.



House Syrtis

House Syrtis, the House of the Dragon Moon, has ruled the Serpent's Mid Reach for centuries. The *aropagoi's* symbol is a silver dragon on a blue field, and a silver ring with a dragon cameo set in blue crystal serves as its *g'doinya*. The heart of the *aropagoi* is the Cliff City, which lies in the Lalai Gorge. The Syrtis *aropagoi's* only true ally is House V'strimon, but in recent years House Syrtis has joined forces with the elves of the Blood Wood to check the expansion of House Ishkarat. The House of the Dragon Moon is led by the *Shivalahala* Syrtis, a Wizard also known as "the Prophetess" for her extraordinary prophetic gifts.

For more information on House Syrtis, see **House Syrtis**, p. 19 of **The T'skrang Aropagoi**.



House V'strimon

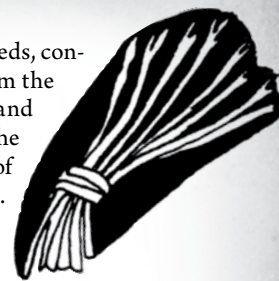
House V'strimon, the House of Reeds, controls the Coil River, which runs from the Throal Mountains to the Aras Sea and intersects the Serpent at Lake Ban. The *aropagoi* also controls a small portion of the Serpent on either side of the lake.

A sheaf of green reeds on a blue field serves as the symbol of the house.

As their *g'doinya*, the *aropagoinya* of House V'strimon wear bracelets woven with reeds native to Lake Ban. The reeds remain forever green and supple around the bearer's right wrist.

The Floating City, located in the center of Lake Ban, serves as the *aropagoi's* central settlement. House V'strimon is closely allied with Throal, the city of Urupa, and House Syrtis. The *Shivalahala* V'strimon, an Elementalist of monumental talent and a questor of Jaspree, leads the *aropagoi*. Recent events have led to open warfare with House K'tenshin.

For more information on House V'strimon, see **House V'strimon**, p. 30 of **The T'skrang Aropagoi**.



House K'tenshin

House K'tenshin, the House of Nine Diamonds, controls the South Reach of the river. The *aropagoi's* symbol is nine red diamonds set on a gold field. The *g'doinya* of the *aropagoi* is an earring of ruby and gold, which K'tenshin *aropagoinya* wear in the skin folds under their left ear slits.

The *aropagoi's* base is a magnificent river village located on the Serpent between the Byrose and the Servos rivers. The village features 16 towers, arranged to form a pattern of nine diamonds.

House K'tenshin is an ally of the Theran Empire. Since the arrival of the Theran behemoth, the K'tenshin seized control of the river from the Mist Swamps to Lake Ban. The *aropagoi* is best known for its war college, which is headed by the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin, a respected Warrior adept.

For more information on House K'tenshin, see **House K'tenshin**, p. 40 of **The T'skrang Aropagoi**.



House T'kambras

The recently revived House T'kambras, the House of Swift Waters, vies with House K'tenshin for control of trade on the Tylon River. The *aropagoi's* symbol is a white salmon leaping over blue-green river rapids. The *g'doinya* of the *aropagoi* is unknown.

This *aropagoi's* influence is strongest along the northern Tylon, but the precise location of House T'kambras' central settlement remains unknown. The house is allied with House V'strimon and has no known *shivalahala*, but its most prominent member is the riverboat captain known as Jedaiyen Westhrall.

For more information on House T'kambras, see **House T'kambras**, p. 45 of **The T'skrang Aropagoi**.



House Henghyoke

House Henghyoke, the House of the Otter, is actually a pirate confederation whose riverboats raid the entire length of the Serpent. A brown river otter carrying a silver egg in its mouth serves as the *aropagoi*'s symbol. As a *g'doinya*, each Henghyokian *aropagoinya* wears a platinum torc around his neck. The location of House Henghyoke's base remains unknown, and the *aropagoi* has no known allies. The *Shivalahala* Henghyoke is reputedly a powerful Illusionist, but little else is known of her.

For more information on House Henghyoke, see **House Henghyoke**, p. 48 of **The T'skrang Aropagoi**.



OF THE SERPENT'S MANY GOODS

The Serpent River and its tributaries are lifelines of trade throughout Barsaive. Most riverboats travel the Serpent loaded to the limit with trade goods: preserved fish and fine baskets from t'skrang trade covenants; spices, toys, and ceramics from riverside villages; beer and metal from the dwarf kingdom of Throal; firewood and furniture, wine, and vinlo from the towns of the Mid Reach; silk from the far east across the Aras Sea; and much more. All the best that the lands near the Serpent have to offer journeys from market to market on the river. In the days just after the end of the Scourge, few save the t'skrang lived near the river's edge because most of Barsaive's people had built their kaers further inland. The promise of trade, however, has drawn people of every race back to the river to build new towns and settlements.

The *V'strimon Protocols*, drawn up by House V'strimon at the start of the post-Scourge trading boom, define the standard unit of cargo freight as the *duari*. The original *duari* was a wooden cask, four feet tall and three feet in diameter, that could contain approximately 300 pounds of rice. The *Protocols* specify the exact size, shape, and composition of the cask, and prescribe fines and penalties for traders who deceive their buyers with fake *duari*. Over time, however, the definition of the *duari* has expanded to include earthenware urns, baskets, and even bundles and racks of cargo. Just as the legal code of Throal has become the foundation for much of Barsaive's evolving civic structure, so the *Protocols* have rapidly taken over Barsaive's market places. The *duari* has become a standard unit of cargo throughout the province, and at every market along the river one can see riverboat crews rolling *duari* up and down the gangplanks of their ships.

Certain kinds of freight are too valuable to be sold in measures as large as *duari*: pure elemental substances, spices, dyes, silk, inks, and paper. These items are typically sold by the ounce, or by a unit of weight known as the *shimsa duari*. The *V'strimon Protocols* precisely define the weight of a standard *shimsa*, and copies of both the *duari* and *shimsa duari* standards can be found in every major marketplace in Barsaive.

ON THE BALANCE OF POWER

Shortly after the Theran War ended, the dwarfs of Throal brought the three houses of the lower river—Houses K'tenshin, V'strimon, and Syrtis—together for trade negotiations. Apparently, Throal's trade shipments along the Serpent were being severely delayed, rerouted, and even lost as a result of the t'skrang practice of *bakshevas*, the ancient tradition of collecting tolls and booty. *Bakshevas* allowed the captain of a t'skrang riverboat to extort any "toll" he could get from any vessel encountered on the river.

The historical meeting produced the Free Trade Compact, an agreement that led directly to the present-day balance of power on

the river and set the spheres of influence that the *aropagoi* continue to command. In the compact, the K'tenshin, V'strimon, and Syrtis *aropagoi* agreed to suspend the practice of *bakshevas* and provide all vessels toll-free access to ports within their territories, regardless of a vessel's affiliation. In exchange, each *aropagoi* retained the right to limit access to any tributaries entering the Serpent River within its territory.

House K'tenshin, which had allied itself with Thera during the war, had to pay token reparations to Throal and the other *aropagoi* under the terms of the compact. (To this day, K'tenshin *aropagoinya* still refer to the settlement as "payment for the lease of access to northern and southern ports.") The K'tenshin *aropagoi* also agreed to relinquish control of the Byrose River, thus opening the city of Travar to free trade. In return, the compact ended the isolation of House K'tenshin and freed its crew covenants to trade in the ports of Throal and its allies. House V'strimon retained control of the Coil River and the lucrative trade with Urupa, and gained access to the elemental fire trade from the Death's Sea. And by largely eliminating the practice of *bakshevas* on the lower river, the compact enabled House Syrtis to devote most of its war vessels to checking the rapid expansion of House Ishkarat.

In broader terms, the compact made travel on the lower and middle Serpent River relatively safe for the first time in history and opened up trade on the river. The development of open trade forced the *aropagoi* to compete for trade and transport contracts with one another, as well as with countless newly independent river villages that had formerly labored under the excessive tributes exacted by the powerful *aropagoi*. Soon the riverboats of the *aropagoi* and independent villages began to compete for business by lowering their transport and ferry rates. These dropping rates, along with the opening of riverbank roads the *aropagoi* had once actively sabotaged, led to the founding of new trading towns along much of the Serpent.

Although many have benefited from the resulting peace and prosperity, no organized power has benefited as much from the Free Trade Compact as the Kingdom of Throal. By the end of the Theran War, Throal's merchants had become almost entirely dependent on House V'strimon, which controlled all the river ports near the dwarf kingdom. By opening trade on the river, Throal effectively broke the virtual V'strimonian monopoly of Throalic river trade. By forcing the *aropagoi* to compete in relatively free markets, the dwarfs lessened each *aropagoi*'s influence along the river. At the same time, Throal won the gratitude of all river residents who had chafed under the yoke of *aropagoian bakshevas*, gained countless new trading partners, and provided itself with an unprecedented opportunity to expand its own economic and political power along the Serpent.

So far, Throal's leaders have made the most of that opportunity. By carefully balancing Throal's trade and transport contracts between the three main *aropagoi* and the unaligned villages, the dwarf leaders have effectively blocked the *aropagoi* from monopolizing the transport market and dictating rates to Throal. Ideally, the dwarfs would like to further their economic fortunes by creating their own fleet of riverboats and transporting their own goods. To do that, however, they need elemental fire engines—and protecting the secret of the fire engine from outsiders is one of the few goals on which all t'skrang, regardless of their political affiliations, have traditionally agreed. Despite this obstacle, the dwarfs of Throal are still attempting to learn the secret of these engines. According to one rumor, an organization of dwarf engineers persuaded a small t'skrang foundation on the Coil River to provide them with a complete fire engine, which the dwarfs apparently intended to disassemble in the hope of learning its secrets. And almost every year some group of dwarfs attempts to raise a sunken t'skrang riverboat or salvage a derelict vessel with the intention of repairing and refitting it. At present, however, the dwarfs have not succeeded in their attempts to obtain their own fire engines.

On the Return of the Therans

House K'tenshin's alliance with the Therans returned the House of the Nine Diamonds to its former position of power among the t'skrang *aropagoi* when the Therans arrived. Almost immediately after the behemoth arrived, Theran troops took up residence in the K'tenshin stronghold's Carinci Tower (see p. 35) and began aiding the *aropagoi* in actions against its enemies.

First, House K'tenshin seized control of the South Reach of the Serpent River with the aid of its Theran allies. The K'tenshin then declared that all vessels passing through the South Reach out of Lake Ban must pay a toll to the House of the Nine Diamonds. Contingents of Theran troops were posted aboard several K'tenshin riverboats to help House K'tenshin collect the new toll—and to ensure that the Therans received their cut. Legitimate taxes and additional bribes began to produce a tidy profit for both House K'tenshin and the Therans.

Shortly after the capture of the South Serpent, House K'tenshin also moved to recapture the “rebel towns” along the shores of Lake Pyros. The Theran presence prevented House V'strimon from blocking this offensive, and House K'tenshin warriors easily seized control of the lake settlements. Some of the townspeople fought back, but most surrendered. Others fled into the Servos Jungle, where they began a resistance movement aimed at ousting the K'tenshin occupiers. Many of those who fled were adepts, who helped their fellow refugees survive the jungle's harsh conditions.

Theran and K'tenshin troops also began to conduct joint slaving raids into the Servos Jungle, using the captured slaves to clear additional plantations along the jungle's many rivers or shipping them upriver to Triumph for eventual delivery to Vivane or elsewhere in the empire. The human and t'skrang jungle tribes attempted to fight back, but the Therans successfully continued the K'tenshin practice of turning the jungle tribes against one another by offering protection to any who cooperated in the capture of other tribes. According to rumors, some tribes took refuge in the jungle's ancient subterranean caves and tunnels, where they joined anti-Theran rebels and refugees from the towns along Lake Pyros.

Emboldened by the power of its Theran allies and the lack of response from Throal, House K'tenshin sent ships down the Coil River to the city of Urupa in

defiance of the Free Trade Compact. Initially, House V'strimon's warships sent the K'tenshin vessels fleeing back to the safe waters of the South Serpent River. The K'tenshin vessels returned soon afterward, escorted by a pair of Theran vedettes and occasionally one of the kilas stationed at the fortress city of Triumph. The Theran escorts dissuaded the V'strimon ships from confronting House K'tenshin's traders and persuaded the Urupan trading companies to reluctantly trade with the K'tenshin ships. These excursions down the Coil River continue, but are few and far between, as most of House K'tenshin's ships are needed to consolidate the *aropagoi*'s control of the South Serpent and Lake Pyros.

With its position in the South Reach secured by the presence of the behemoth, House K'tenshin turned its attention to other matters, such as dealing with House Henghyoke's raiders and the re-emergent House T'kambras. The raiders and pirates of House Henghyoke had long been a scourge to K'tenshin trade in the South Serpent, and General Nikar responded to *Shivalahala* K'tenshin's request for Theran aid by posting soldiers from the Eighth Legion aboard K'tenshin ships carrying shipments of particular importance to the Therans. The presence of these troops discouraged raids somewhat, but Henghyoke harassment continues to this day. *Shivalahala* K'tenshin pins her hopes on the Henghyoke eventually angering the Therans enough to provoke a concerted Theran effort to destroy them.

The Theran presence had a much greater impact on House K'tenshin's efforts to destroy House T'kambras, however. Theran-K'tenshin control of the outlets to the South Reach made smuggling supplies and weapons to the rebel t'skrang *aropagoi* increasingly difficult for House V'strimon. Efforts to supply House T'kambras via overland routes proved extremely difficult, but House V'strimon—aided by the obsidian Omasu and the so-called Liferock Rebellion—recruited adepts for such missions.

Despite these efforts, the Theran-K'tenshin blockade forced House T'kambras to rely heavily on Kratas and other western settlements for aid and supplies.

Kratas' mayor, Garlthik One-Eye, proved willing to aid the rebel house because he didn't want to see the K'tenshin establish a stranglehold on the South Serpent and so be in a position to dictate terms to him through complete control of access to the Tylon River. The Scavians also aided the anti-K'tenshin cause by supplying elemental fire to the T'kambras riverboats, prompting House K'tenshin to target Scavian settlements for slaving raids in an effort to intimidate them. This effort, however, failed completely.

Theran airship patrols also intercept and inspect all foreign airships passing within sight of the Triumph fortress—including merchant ships. In fact, Theran air crews



commonly appropriate any cargo they desire from passing vessels, under a Theran law that authorizes military personnel to requisition any civilian property “deemed necessary for the defense of the Theran Empire.” This practice wreaks havoc with Travar’s burgeoning air-shipping industry and enables House K’tenshin to profit handsomely from its trade monopoly along the Byrose River.

Like Throal, the other *aropagoi* of the Serpent River respond with extreme caution; the riverboats of the t’skrang are simply no match for the Therans’ airships. Whenever possible, the *aropagoi* attempt to conduct trade in their normal fashion. However, the imposition of the K’tenshin-Theran toll on the South Reach has shifted the balance of trade, prompting House V’strimon and House Syrtis to redirect their mercantile efforts to other regions of the river. Trading vessels belonging to all the *aropagoi* nonetheless continue to ply the waters of the southern Serpent because some goods are not available anywhere else. The Therans’ presence also makes smuggling goods and supplies to House T’kambras more difficult, though V’strimon ships still make occasional runs to the renegade t’skrang when possible.

For unknown reasons, sightings of Henghyoke raiders beyond the South Serpent dropped after the arrival of the Therans. The mysterious pirate t’skrang seem content to limit their raids to K’tenshin targets, though they have mounted a few scattered assaults on T’kambrian and Scavian vessels as well. Though this phenomenon seems to suggest that House Henghyoke may be taking an anti-Theran stance, the true loyalties of the pirates remain unknown.

TRAVEL ALONG THE SERPENT RIVER

From Lake Vors to the Mist Swamps, the Serpent River stretches approximately 2,000 miles. A man can walk that distance in 80 days, but a riverboat can traverse it in 20—and do so much more safely as well. The walker must labor under the weight of his own provisions, all the while avoiding bandits, wild animals, foul weather, suspicious villagers, and the occasional Horror to reach his destination. The riverboat sailor, on the other hand, need only keep the fire engines hot, his cargo holds supplied, and his riverboat running true down the center of the river to reach his goal.

For these reasons, river travel is the preferred method for traveling long distances in Barsaive. By traveling for 16 hours per day at an average speed of six to seven miles per hour, a riverboat can cover nearly 100 miles in a day. Airships may be faster, but airships are hard to find outside the largest Barsaivian cities. Furthermore, airships operate under strict weight and space constraints, so an air traveler can expect to pay 30 silver pieces or more per day for passage. By comparison, riverboats can be found throughout Barsaive, readily accept passengers, and a traveler can book passage on one for as few as 5 silver pieces per day. And that rate usually includes a bed and two daily meals. For the same rate, a traveler can transport his mount and feed it from the ship’s stores. Moreover, riverboat crews are always looking for an extra pair of hands, so an enterprising traveler who is not afraid of a little hard labor can usually work off part or even all of his passage fees.

See the **Adventuring** chapter, starting on p. 108 of the *Gamemaster’s Guide*, for more information on river travel and the different costs involved.

TYPES OF PASSAGE

Generally, a traveler can choose from four types of riverboat service along the Serpent and her tributaries: freighter passage, passenger service, warship passage, and ferry service. Although prices and rate

arrangements may vary in different parts of the river, the following descriptions list common fares and the amenities they buy.

Freighter Passage

The trading vessels that run the river usually set aside ten to fifteen berths for passengers, with the understanding that passengers are the best kind of cargo. After all, one never needs to worry about how to sell them to achieve a profit. The so-called standard daily rate of 5 silver pieces is anything but standard, however, and every riverboat captain conducts fare negotiations in his own way. Some even renegotiate rates each day.

Whatever the price they pay, travelers booking passage on a freighter can expect to bunk four to a cabin and take their meals alongside the crew in the ship’s galley. Freighters also provide budget-minded travelers with frequent opportunities to work in exchange for passage, because freighter crews invariably are short-handed when it comes time to load and unload cargo.

Passenger Lines

Each *aropagoi* maintains one or two riverboats devoted exclusively to transporting passengers. These riverboats make scheduled stops along the river and offer a variety of comforts to their customers. Accommodations depend on the rate a passenger is willing to pay. Five silver pieces per day buys a room with three other people and two square meals. For 25 silver pieces per day, the traveler can expect all the amenities of a luxury inn, including a private bath and gourmet meals.

The scheduled passenger routes run between large cities or densely settled areas. For example, House K’tenshin operates a route between Travar and Lake Ban. House V’strimon operates two passenger vessels that ply the length of the Coil River between the Kingdom of Throal and Urupe, and another two that take passengers from the Floating City to the Cliff City in the Lalai Gorge.

Although passenger vessels provide greater comfort and convenience than freighters, passengers are rarely allowed to work for their passage on these boats.

Warship Passage

Occasionally, *aropagoi* warships take on passengers—but only adepts who can make a difference in a fight. All warship passengers are expected to be experienced warriors, and to keep their weapons ready at all times. Under the most typical rate arrangement, a passenger must pay a daily fee of 5 silver pieces for passage, but all of his money is refunded if the ship sees battle.

Adepts must have a Journeyman Legendary Status or higher (see p. 244 of the *Player’s Guide*), or have extensive riverboat experience before a warship captain will consider taking them on as passengers.

Ferry Service

Ferry boats specialize in crossing the Serpent River rather than traveling its length. Most of the Serpent’s ferries are operated by independent crew covenants, which offer exclusive service to and from specific locations. For whatever reason, the *aropagoi* tend to regard ferry services as unattractive enterprises, although House V’strimon operates an extensive ferry system on Lake Ban.

In addition to the regular ferry providers, almost any riverboat crew can be persuaded to transport a passenger across the river if the price is right. Typically, fares to cross the river range from 10 to 20 copper pieces, depending on the weather, the time, and the demand for service.

Special Rates

Merchant caravans often receive special discount rates on riverboat travel, regardless of the type of service. Normally, merchants with one or two mules are charged as passengers with mounts,



JANET AULISIO 1996.

but may receive hourly or half-day rates if they have only a short distance to travel. Larger caravans usually receive cargo rates for both their freight and the people in the caravan (3 silver pieces per day).

Dwarf barges often hire riverboats to tow them upstream for 20 to 30 silver pieces per day, depending on whether they are carrying a full or partial load.

SHOWBOATS

Among the most welcome sights along the Serpent River are the showboats, the floating shows and carnivals that many t'skrang count the most profitable of the river trades. The first showboats appeared shortly after the Theran annexation of Barsaive, in response to the Theran colonists' craving for culture and entertainment in a province that many of them regarded as a barbarian backwater. The t'skrang, never ones to ignore a chance to make a copper, took immediate advantage of this unique opportunity.

As the t'skrang tell it, the crew of a Syrtis riverboat happened to dock one evening at a Theran outpost. To pass the hours between the evening meal and sleep, the crew began playing and singing their favorite old songs. Within an hour, half the town had gathered by the dock to listen. The captain, seeing his impromptu audience as ready silver and gold, set up a booth near the boat the next night and charged admission. The t'skrang say this captain never sold another *duari* of anything in his life, yet retired a rich man.

About 40 showboats ply the river between Lake Vors and the Mist Swamps, some of them Troubadour covenants and some traveling carnivals. The Troubadour covenants are the most common, each specializing in varied entertainments. Some offer music, some perform plays and tell stories, and still others offer jugglers, magicians, dancers, and comedians performing together in a single show. Some troupes leave their boats to set up chairs and tents on the shore. Others have made their riverboats into huge, covered halls suitable for plays or concerts. Many of the troupes employ Illusionists to create dazzling displays of light and sound. Though not all crewmen aboard such a ship are Troubadours, every one of them contributes something to the show. Most Troubadour covenants are racially diverse, with elves, humans, and dwarfs working side by side with t'skrang for a fair share of the ship's profits.

The most famous Troubadour showboat belongs not to a t'skrang covenant, but to the company

of dwarf actors known as the Royal Theater of Throal. Founded by King Varulus I during the Scourge, the Royal Theater performs the brilliant verse dramas of the Elven Court and the intricate, sophisticated plays penned by the Theran Empire's greatest dramatists, as well as the occasional morality play and tale of revenge that are the staples of dwarf drama. King Varulus wished to keep his people from cultural stagnation and preserve vital artistic traditions should the rest of the world fail to survive the Scourge; since the end of that dark time, the Royal Theater has widened its audience considerably beyond Throal's underground cities. Shortly after the end of the Theran War, troupe director Elbonius Tartakull struck a deal with the t'skrang of Myrenal village, an independent crew covenant in the Mid Reach of the Serpent River. The dwarfs helped to rebuild the covenant's riverboat, the *Quirinalia*, as an enclosed 700-seat theater. In exchange for that labor and a share of the profits, the Myrenal covenant gave the Royal Theater of Throal exclusive use of the riverboat for a three-month tour each year, with stops all along the Coil and Serpent Rivers. Rumors claim that the Eye of Throal, the dwarf kingdom's intelligence service, has placed several members in the Royal Theater company.

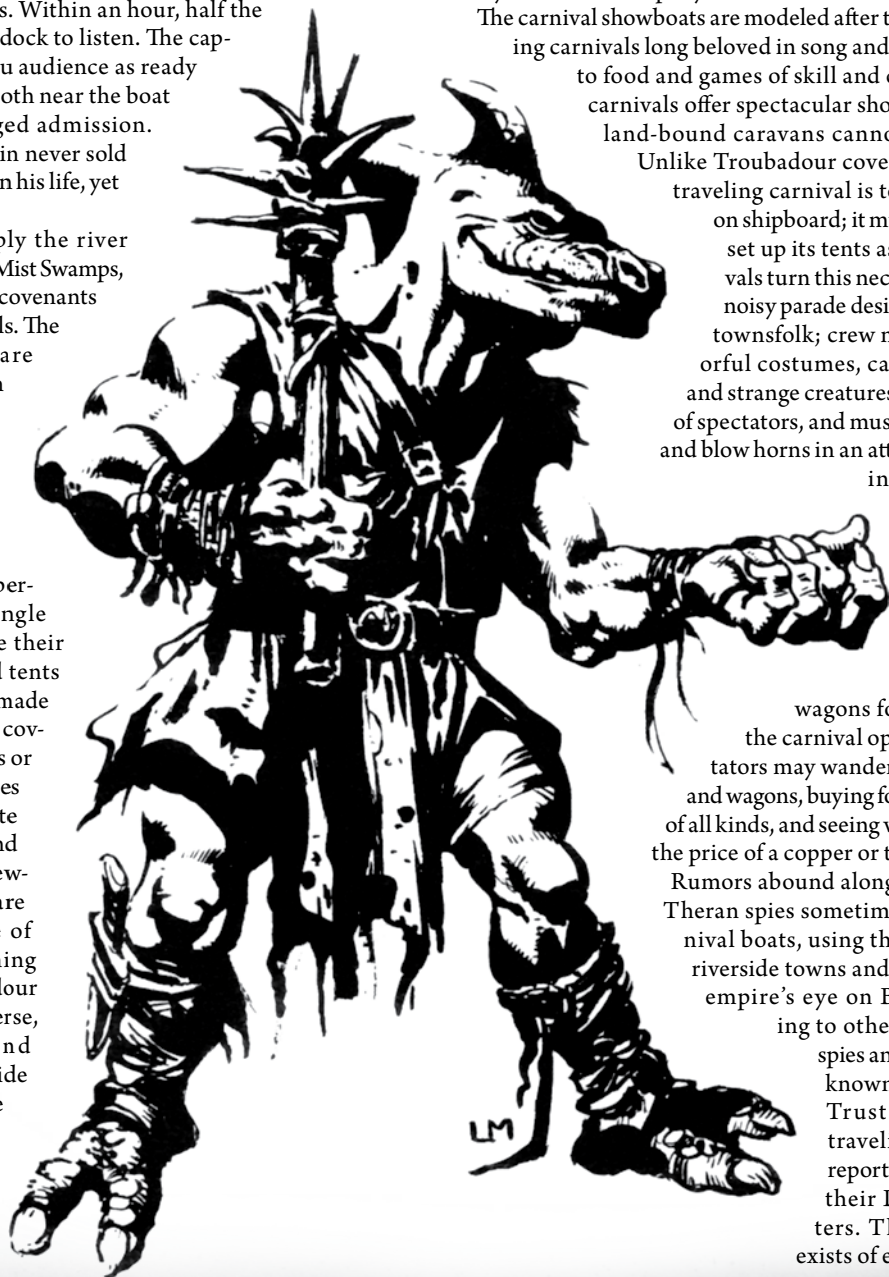
The carnival showboats are modeled after the overland traveling carnivals long beloved in song and story. In addition to food and games of skill and chance, showboat carnivals offer spectacular shows on a scale that land-bound caravans cannot hope to match.

Unlike Troubadour covenants, the typical traveling carnival is too big to perform on shipboard; it must disembark and set up its tents ashore. Most carnivals turn this necessity into a gaudy, noisy parade designed to attract the townsfolk; crew members wear colorful costumes, caged wild animals and strange creatures ride in open view of spectators, and musicians beat drums and blow horns in an attempt to pique the interest of anyone

who might be within earshot.

Upon arriving at the chosen site, the carnival unfolds its tents and opens its wagons for business. Once the carnival opens its gates, spectators may wander around the tents and wagons, buying food, playing games of all kinds, and seeing various marvels for the price of a copper or two.

Rumors abound along the Serpent that Theran spies sometimes travel with carnival boats, using their many stops at riverside towns and cities to keep the empire's eye on Barsaive. According to other rumors, alleged spies and soldiers of Iopos known as the Holders of Trust lurk within the traveling carnivals and report all that they see to their Denairastan masters. Thus far, no proof exists of either claim.



BAKSHEVAS

River travelers and merchants may also incur additional expenses in the form of *bakshevas*. Although the Free Trade Compact effectively ended the practice on much of the Serpent River, a traveler may still pay *bakshevas* if he encounters a rogue t'skrang crew or enters a section of the river controlled by an *aropagoi* or village that does not honor the compact.

The literal translation of the t'skrang word *bakshevas* is "taking the tenth part." The word is as old as the Serpent is long, and it refers to the toll system still enforced on many isolated stretches of the river, particularly along the tributaries. In the old days, when a riverboat submitted to a pirate vessel, the pirate captain would board and demand a tenth of the ship's cargo in return for the lives of the ship's crew. On receiving his payment, the pirate would then pledge free passage along the river to his victim for a year and a day.

As time went on and pirates gave way to crew covenants and foundations, the ritual of *bakshevas* changed. Trying to ride the Serpent from Lalai Gorge to Lake Ban, handing a tenth part of one's cargo to every pirate that happened along, simply didn't make for good business. And as the volume of trade picked up, the number of possible targets from whom a pirate could extract a toll made it impractical to take a tenth part of everyone's cargo. No riverboat could carry that much loot! Furthermore, killing an entire riverboat crew became no small task as riverboat designs improved, fire cannons became more affordable, and boatmen became increasingly formidable foes.

As a result, privateers began taking only the most compact and valuable portions of the cargoes they seized. Gifts of gold, silver, and gems replaced jars and barrels full of goods. Rather than threatening an opposing crew with death, the t'skrang borrowed a page from the trollmoots and forced defeated crews into indentured servitude, typically for a year and a day. With the advent of the *aropagoi*, these captured ships would often be outfitted and supplied with *aropagoi* cargo. When the crew had performed the services required to lift the burden of *bakshevas*, the *aropagoi* would give the crew a tenth part of the profits they had earned for the *aropagoi* and send them back home to their foundations. Soon *bakshevas* became a ritual of honor, and participants came to rely on little more than blood magic and the captain's good word to seal their deals.

With the establishment of the Free Trade Compact, the practice of *bakshevas* has largely subsided along the Serpent. Typically, the major *aropagoi* only invoke *bakshevas* along the major tributaries that fall within their spheres of influence. On isolated sections of the river, however—particularly in the Servos Jungle, the Caucavic Mountains, and the rivers that feed into the Aras Sea—many unaligned crew covenants protect profits in their waters using the old ways. Usually, these privateers draw up to passing vessels in friendly fashion and

ask for a toll using the traditional phrase, *Shivoam v'nokamai daureis*, which translates as "the spirit of the river requests a gift." A round of haggling over the toll ensues, with a typical toll ranging between 50 and 200 silver pieces. If a toll cannot be agreed on or the target simply refuses to pay, the privateer draws back a respectable distance and both vessels prepare for battle.

Typically, both captains employ tactics designed to preserve their riverboats and crews. The gunners aim the fire cannons to frighten, rather than kill their opponents.

Crew members who are wounded in the melee lay down their weapons and refrain from combat, and in return their opponents pass over them during boarding actions. Whenever one side begins to gain the upper hand, it offers its opponent numerous opportunities to surrender, long before either side takes considerable damage. And almost all t'skrang crews consider harming passengers, or using them as shields or obstacles, as the greatest dishonor.

Once one side or the other raises the white flag, the victor sets a price for his opponent's freedom. Traditionally, the price is double the original toll, regardless of the actual damage inflicted by the battle. If the defeated boat cannot or will not produce this fee, its captor may either take the loser's cargo or demand a service from the losing vessel and its crew. The service demanded may be returning whence the ship came, transporting goods from one port to another, attacking another ship on the river, or even raiding an abandoned kaer or ruin. Such services may be sealed with blood magic by the two captains or simply with the defeated captain's word of honor.

PIRACY

Although the riverboat crews of rival *aropagoi* may fight quite fiercely during contests of *bakshevas*, the long-held traditions of that practice virtually guarantee that such contests produce serious casualties or damage to the participants and their passengers only in extremely rare circumstances. However, travelers new to the river often confuse the practice of *bakshevas* with simple piracy. Although both practices exhibit a few superficial similarities, pirate crews show none of the restraint of a *bakshevas* contestant.

The tactics of pirate crews typically depend on the element of surprise, and pirate crews rarely grant their targets any quarter. As a result, pirate attacks often result in the deaths of crewmen and passengers and the destruction of riverboats. Indeed, piracy now ranks as the worst hazard on the rivers of Barsaive. Pirates such as Acharuss of Scol and the raiders of the Henghyoke *aropagoi* are considered outlaws by almost all the major *aropagoi*, which devote significant numbers of riverboats to pirate patrols on the Serpent and her major tributaries.

THE T'SKRANG AROPAGOI

It has been said a house divided will surely fall, though after examination of the political system of the t'skrang, I begin to doubt the veracity of that statement.

• KARON FOLL, HISTORIAN OF THROAL •

Six t'skrang *aropagoi* dominate trade on the Serpent: **House Ishkarat**, **House Syrtis**, **House V'strimon**, **House K'tenshin**, **House T'kambras**, and **House Henghyoke**. Each *aropagoi*, with the exception of House Henghyoke, controls a section of the river system, but riverboats from all the *aropagoi* travel the length of the Serpent. Although many t'skrang villages and settlements along the river are not officially affiliated with any *aropagoi*, all settlements operate under the system of trade the *aropagoi* make possible.

HOUSE ISHKARAT

The origins of House Ishkarat, the House of the Wheel, are shrouded in mystery. Most scholars believe the *aropagoi* was founded by Serpent River villages in the far northwest corner of Barsaive, but even today the river villages of that area are spread so thin that any political union among them is difficult to maintain. Some scholars at the Library of Throal, however, believe the origins of the Ishkaratan *aropagoi* are related to an ancient North Reach river village called Elekso, whose crew covenants carried obsidian daggers that resembled those wielded by modern Ishkaratan crews. The exact location of Elekso remains unknown, and the evidence of an Elekso/Ishkaratan connection remains far from conclusive.



The first recorded sightings of Ishkaratan vessels date back to the years shortly after the end of the Scourge, when the first riverboats to explore the North Reach encountered Ishkaratan warships near the intersection of the Scol and Serpent Rivers. Those Ishkaratan crews fired on the explorers and shunned all contact with outsiders. Less than 20 years later, another wave of explorers encountered Ishkaratan vessels at the eastern end of Glenwood Deep and received a similar reception.

In the following years, Ishkaratan trading vessels began venturing into the Mid Reach of the Serpent to trade with river villages there. Despite these activities, the Ishkaratans still refused to reveal the location of their central village to outsiders and prohibited all non-Ishkaratan vessels from passing east of Glenwood Deep. At the same time, House Ishkarat continued to expand its influence by subjugating river villages west of Lake Vors.

Soon, Ishkaratan vessels began to appear on the lake itself. In defiance of House Syrtis' Maratha *niall*, which had traditionally controlled all trade on Lake Vors, the Ishkaratans traded openly

with the lake villages and refused to pay *bakshevas* to the Marathans. The number of Ishkaratan vessels on the lake—and Ishkaratan hostility toward the Marathans—grew steadily, and within months the Ishkaratans began wresting control of villages from the Maratha *niall*. At the same time, small squads of Iopan agents—primarily members of the Holders of Trust and spies and soldiers employed by the Denairastas clan—began to infiltrate the villages around Lake Vors. Apparently acting in league with House Ishkarat, the Iopans sabotaged Marathan supply lines and undermined Throalic influence in these settlements.

Despite the Maratha *niall*'s repeated pleas for help, House Syrtis' High Chamber took no action to check House Ishkarat's growing power, even when the Ishkaratans began annexing Marathan villages east of Lake Vors. Apparently, the Syrtisian leaders hoped to reason with the Ishkaratans during the negotiations sponsored by King Varulus III after the Theran War. Those hopes were dashed, however, when the Ishkaratan delegation—which consisted of two Ishkaratan *aropagoinya* and two Holders of Trust—took such contradictory positions and engaged in such outrageous intrigue that Varulus himself ordered them ejected from the negotiations. In retrospect, it seems that the Ishkaratans had no desire to enter into the Free Trade Compact or any other agreement that would limit their ability to annex river villages or exact *bakshevas* from any passing riverboat. (To this day, the t'skrang of House Ishkarat ignore the principles of the Free Trade Compact. Ishkaratan captains insist that their right to unfettered “free trade” entitles them to trade freely with any settlement on the Serpent River system and to exact *bakshevas* wherever, whenever, and from whomever they please.)

Despite the Ishkaratan rejection of the Free Trade Compact, Marathan leaders believed that House Ishkarat was ready to negotiate a peaceful trade treaty in 1488 TH when the Ishkaratans agreed to attend talks to determine the future of trade on Lake Vors. The Marathan leaders agreed to host the summit at the *niall*'s Fortress Isle, located in the middle of Lake Vors. Feeling secure in the confines of their stronghold, the Marathans were rudely surprised when the Ishkaratan delegation's “honor guard”—actually a full crew of Swordmasters—seized the *niall*'s leaders as captives and held the fortress against a larger force of Marathan troops until a fleet of Ishkaratan warships arrived. In the end, only two riverboats of Marathans escaped.

Ironically, the Ishkaratan capture of the Maratha *niall*'s fortress led to a decline in House Ishkarat's military fortunes. Although the capture is considered one of the most impressive military achievements in post-Scourge times, it jolted both the Elven Court and the Syrtisian High Chamber into action. Previously, both groups believed House Ishkarat to be no more than a minor power and

certainly no threat to the Blood Wood or the settlements of the Mid Reach. After the capture of Fortress Isle, however, both groups took notice of House Ishkarat and immediately began making plans to check the growing power of the *aropagoi*.

Fortunately for both the elves and the Syrtisians, the Ishkaratan leaders uncharacteristically squandered an important opportunity when they failed to consolidate their control over villages east of Lake Vors. Instead, the Ishkaratans wasted several months gloating over their newfound prestige; consolidating their hold over river villages west of Lake Vors; and installing themselves at Fortress Isle, which they re-christened the Citadel of House Ishkarat. That decision provided the elves and Syrtisians with enough time to construct a fort at Kaer Eidolon at the meeting of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers and muster a small fleet of riverboats to oppose the Ishkaratans. When the Ishkaratans finally reached the confluence in 1502 TH, the joint Syrtisian/elfen force soundly defeated them at the Battle of Sejanus. (For more information on the Battle of Sejanus, see **Recorded History of House Syrtis**, p.21).

That defeat effectively denied the Ishkaratans access to the River Mothingale, and thus easy passage to the Blood Wood. Furthermore, the defeat seemed to check Ishkaratan aspirations to expand their influence east of the Mothingale, as no Ishkaratan warships have been spotted east of Kaer Eidolon since the battle.

House Ishkarat's defeat at Eidolon has not affected the *aropagoi*'s strength west of the Mothingale, however. The *aropagoi* has firmly entrenched itself at Lake Vors by refurbishing the fortifications on

the island fortress, reinforcing the fortress with numerous troops, and—according to rumor—installing its *shivalahala* at the Citadel. House Ishkarat has also built a new town on the north bluffs across from the island. More than a thousand immigrants from upriver villages have settled in the town, which the Ishkaratans have Named Axalekso, or “New Elekso.”

Although the Ishkaratans control numerous villages between Kaer Eidolon and Lake Vors, they generally permit outside trading vessels to trade in the area. However, House Ishkarat exacts enormous *bakshevas* from vessels in the area and absolutely prohibits foreign vessels from freely entering Lake Vors. Although the Ishkaratans have permitted the original settlers of Lake Vors to remain in their villages, reports indicate that the Ishkaratans exact extremely high tribute from these settlements and regularly execute any who oppose their rule. The Ishkaratans' tight control of traffic into and out of the lake prevents anyone from verifying such reports, but few doubt them, considering the ominous lack of refugees from other river settlements that have fallen under Ishkaratan control since the end of the Scourge.

Despite the Ishkaratan defeat at Kaer Eidolon, House Ishkarat remains a dangerous and powerful force on the Serpent. Ishkaratan riverboats, disguised as the vessels of independent villages, regularly travel the southern reaches of the Serpent. Even when discovered, the Ishkaratans rarely suffer reprisals simply because their ships and crews are so dangerous. Only *aropagoi* flagships are truly equipped to board and storm them. The majority of Ishkaratan crewmen—even on the *aropagoi*'s trading vessels—are Swordmasters rather than Boatmen, which makes Ishkarat vessels more than a match for most opposition. Furthermore, the Ishkaratans remain allied with the treacherous Denairastas clan of Iopos, and they display none of the worshipful fanaticism native Iopans show toward the clan. The Ishkaratans consider themselves equals of the Denairastas, and their actions bear this out. Throughout their brief history, the Ishkaratans have proved they are second to none when it comes to cunning and cruelty.

▲ ▲ ▲

Unbelievable! A band of river rats think they match the prowess and trading might of the Denairastas. I'm surprised Uhl tolerates it really. T'skrang are all the same—long mouths full of hot air.

—Grimmas, Merchant of Iopos

▲ ▲ ▲

ACHARUSS, CAPTAIN OF THE GORRUUS

A Swordmaster and notorious pirate, Acharuss is a green-scaled t'skrang nearly six feet tall, with silver-gray flecks along his spine. Known as the bane of the North Reach, Acharuss is a merciless raider who strikes fear into the hearts of townsfolk and sailors alike. He attacks without warning and seldom leaves survivors. As he plies the Serpent River north of the Kingdom of Throal in his riverboat, the sight of the *Gorruus*' green and purple prow cutting through the waves strikes fear into the heart of many a villager living along the riverbanks. Though his raids are infrequent, they are always successful. Infamous for his cruelty to prisoners, Acharuss prefers to kill enemies rather than accept surrender. He takes what he wants and leaves the rest floating in the water alongside the corpses. The pirate plays no favorites; the dwarfs of Throal, the elves of the Blood Wood, and the t'skrang of Syrtis and Ishkarat have all suffered at the hands of this raider and his men.

Acharuss commands a crew of devoted cutthroats who would gladly lay down their lives for him. He ensures the loyalty of his crewmen by sharing all booty with them, treating them with evenhanded—if somewhat ruthless—discipline, and looking after the



ADVENTURE HOOK

During a journey along the northern Serpent, close to Lake Vors, the player characters witness Ishkaran forces raiding the river village of Kleshor, killing most of the inhabitants. After the Ishkarat warship leaves, the group finds only two survivors in the almost completely destroyed village: an old couple who claim that the t'skrang kidnapped her own daughter.

They beg the group to follow the warship and free her daughter if she's still alive. The warship destroyed the village because it continually refused to pay tribute to House Ishkarat, so the *aropagoi* finally made their threats a ruthless reality. The couple knows of another river town called Ish'klamaz where the Ishkarat usually re-supply and (in this case) sell their loot. If the characters hurry, they have a good chance to reach Ish'klamaz while the warship is still there. With most of its crew spending

silver in the local taverns, the group would have a chance to sneak onboard and search for the girl.

On their way to Ish'klamaz, the characters meet a group of headhunters looking for a fugitive adept Named Ferad—a dangerous Warrior and Illusionist agent of the Denairastas. Of course, the characters haven't heard of Ferad before, so the headhunters are on their way.

Two weeks prior the raid, Ferad appeared at Kleshor, searching for a place to hide the headhunters. He murdered the girl, used illusion magic to take her place, and decided to lay low in Kleshor for some time. When the Ishkaratan warship arrived, he revealed himself to the captain and convinced him take him aboard.

The player characters are in for a big surprise when they find the warship, search for the daughter and stumble over Ferad, who is likely to reveal his plan before trying to kill the group.

families of crewmen who die in his service. The location of Acharuss' headquarters remains unknown, but most believe the pirate and his men hole up in a river village on a minor tributary of the Serpent somewhere between Kaer Eidolon and Lake Vors.

Acharuss' long and lucrative career has spawned numerous rumors about the source of his success. According to one rumor, Acharuss is a tool of the Denairastas clan of Iopos and has received some kind of tainted magic from Uhl Denairastas that infuses his crew with fanatical devotion. In return, Acharuss harasses the enemies of the Denairastas, pays the clan tribute, and preys upon their Ishkaratan allies, to keep Ishkarat's leaders from challenging Denairastan power.

▲ ▲ ▲

*I don't believe for a second Acharuss is one of them;
his timely raiding has saved us from punishment and
excessive levies many a time, even returned our taxes once.
He might be a pirate, but he's as good as they come.*

—Dokaros, Elder of Mikanos on Lake Vors

▲ ▲ ▲

Acharuss is a Ninth Circle t'skrang Swordmaster. Acharuss' ship, the *Gorruus*, is the same size as an *aropagoian* warship. A crew of 125 fanatical, battle-hardened sailors mans the ship. About a year ago, Acharuss also managed to win movable gun platforms and a corvus (see *Ishkarat Warship*, p.117) from an Ishkarat warship and install them on board the *Gorruus*. Unfortunately, the crew can seldom supply ample elemental fire for the *Gorruus*' fire cannon and typically cannot afford to fire more than three volleys before exhausting its ammunition.

Having recently witnessed the effectiveness of the ramming heads on V'strimon *shimorams*, Acharuss intends to add one to the *Gorruus*.

ACHARUSS

Attributes

DEX (19): 8 STR (18): 7 TOU (18): 7
PER (14): 6 WIL (17): 7 CHA (15): 6

Characteristics

Initiative: 8 Physical Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 7 Spell Defense: 10
Mystic Armor: 6 Social Defense: 11
Death: 110* Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 92* Knockdown: 7**
Wound Threshold: 12 Movement: 6

Karma Points: 36/36

* Adjusted by Blood Magic

** Acharuss knows the Wound Balance talent

Swordmaster Talents (Knacks)

Disarm ^D (9): 17
Durability [7/6] (10): 10
Haggle (9): 15
Heartening Laugh ^D (9): 15
Impressive Strike ^D (9): 17
Karma Ritual ^D (9): 9
Maneuver ^D (9): 17
Melee Weapons ^D (10): 18 (Deflect Blow)
Parry ^D (10): 18
Pin (9): 17
Resist Taunt ^D (9): 16
Riposte ^D (9): 17 (Claw Riposte)
Second Attack ^D (9): 17
Second Weapon ^D (10): 18
Speak Language (6): 12—(Human, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Theran Troll, Windling)
Steel Thought* (1): 8
Surprise Strike (9): 16
Taunt ^D (9): 15
Thread Weaving (Weapon Weaving) ^D (9): 15
Throwing Weapons (9): 17
Tiger Spring (9): 9
Unarmed Combat (9): 16
Wound Balance (9): 16

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

* Italized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

* Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Ring

Skills

Anticipate Blow (5): 11
Conceal Object (3): 11
Craftsman (Woodworker) ^A (5): 13
Engaging Banter (5): 11
Fishing (5): 11



Mapmaking^A (5): 11
 Missile Weapons (3): 11
 Navigation (5): 11
 Pilot Boat (7): 13
 Read River (7): 13
 Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic)
 Riverboat Trade Routes^K (5): 11
 Serpent River^K (5): 11
 Speak Language (2): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic, T'skrang)
 Streetwise (5): 11
 Swimming (5): 12

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Thread Padded Leather (Rank 4; Phys 6; Myst 3); **Buckler** (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17)

Weapons

Broadsword (Forged +3; Damage 15; Weapon Bond; 2 Blood Magic Damage), **Short Sword** (Forged +2; Damage 13), 2 × **Daggers** (Forged +1; Damage 10; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), 2 × **Spears** (Forged +3; Damage 14; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

Thread Items

Protective Ring (Rank 4; SocDef +1; SpellDef +2; Steel Thought +1 Rank Bonus)

Equipment

Chest Key, Craftsman Tools, Fishing Kit, Forge Tools, Mapmaking Tools, Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case, Wealthy Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

600 silver pieces in a locked and trapped wooden chest with iron reinforcing in his quarters. (Lock Picking Difficulty 14; Dart Trap with Black Brine poison coating on the darts—see the Adventuring chapter on p.111 and p.124 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*).

Legend Award

Ninth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Notes

As a t'skrang, Acharuss possesses the Tail Combat racial ability.

Swordmaster Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Social Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity—only Tests

Fifth Circle: Flourish

Sixth Circle: Karma on Charisma—only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on melee weapon Damage Tests

Eighth Circle: +1 Social Defense

Ninth Circle: Karma on Recovery Tests; Weapon Bond

The Gorruus

Speed: 7 **Base Price:** NA
Maneuverability: 7 **Firepower:** 15/20

Hull:

Armor: 16 **Ramming:** 25
Cargo: 115

Damage:

Derelict: 69 **Critical:** 22
Destroyed: 76

Crew:

Captain: 7 (14)

Crew Size: 125

Morale: 70

Crew Rating: 18

Special

The ship's engineer, Griskoll, is a Seventh Circle t'skrang Boatman and knows the Pilot Boat talent at Step 14. The corvus adds +3 to an opponent's Difficulty Number when he attempts to break off from a boarding action, and also adds +3 to the *Gorruus'* Crew Rating on the first turn of any boarding action.

HOUSE SYRTIS

The Syrtisian *aropagoi* ranks just behind the Elven Court of the Blood Wood among Barsaive's most ancient institutions. Most scholars believe that the *aropagoi* was born when a number of the t'skrang villages in the vicinity of the Lalai Gorge banded together against their common enemies. However, the only existing account of the origins of House Syrtis and its Cliff City at Lalai is the legend of the Courtship of Synopae:



Long, long ago, Syrtis, the Dragon of the Moon, was flying across the night sky when he spied a young maiden Named Synopae of Kralipur collecting the white blooms of the night lotus in a mountain pool. Filled with the longing of a man for a woman, Syrtis watched Synopae as she sat on the pool's bank, letting the cool air dry her as she strung her flowers into a glowing necklace. As Synopae sat, she beheld the reflection of the moon in the still waters of the pond.

After a moment she went back to her work and then returned her gaze to the pool. Where the image of the moon had glimmered, she now saw a man swimming toward her across the water. As the man rose from the water, Synopae saw that he was more beautiful than any man living; surely he was a Passion. But Synopae had wisdom to match her beauty, and though she felt the sting of *Astendar's Dart* she did not fly headlong into the arms of this handsome young stranger. Instead, she resolved to test her suitor.

When Syrtis approached his beloved, whispering words of love, she replied, "Gladly would I be your love and your life, but I am pledged to tend my dear, sick father. He lingers with fever, well nigh on the shores of the river of death, and the only balm that can save him is a prick from a thorn of the roses that grow in the garden of the Elven Queen."

Hearing her words, Syrtis bowed his head and said, "I will bring you the thorn, that your father may live to see his daughter wed." That very night he took himself away to the court of the Elven Queen. Taking the form of a silver beam of moonlight, he passed through the wall of flame and ice that protects the queen's rose garden and plucked a single thorn from a rose vine. But a warden from the queen's court chose that very night to enter the rose garden to meditate on eternal truth, and Syrtis was forced to delay his escape. By the time he returned to Synopae waiting by the mountain pool, the rosy-fingered dawn had touched the horizon. The maiden told her suitor, "You must come with me to be my husband and enter the foundation of my ancestors."

But Syrtis knew that with the dawn would come the jealous gaze of his consort, T'schlome the Sun. Shuddering with fear, he replied, "I must go, but I shall return for you on the night of the next full moon."

And so Synopae the Wise watched as he disappeared under the lake, and perhaps she understood a little more about her lover.

When the moon had turned its cycle, and the lamp of night once again burned in full glory, she walked to the pool in the mountains

where the night lotus grew. Soon enough, she spied her beautiful stranger, returning to her from the water. Again he approached her, whispering the honeyed seeds Astendar had sown in his heart, but Synopae drew away from him, saying, "Gladly I would give myself wholly to you, but my heart bears the burden of a cold, cruel curse. A witch has come from the Elven Court and surrounded my heart with an ever-burning flame that will destroy anyone foolish enough to love me. The only salve that will quench her wicked spell is a wedding garland made from the Glitterfrost Orchid that grows in the garden of Icewing the Dragon."

Hearing her words, Syrtis was moved. "I shall go at once to my old friend Icewing. Surely he can spare one bloom." That night, he took a dragon's form and entered the lair of Icewing, who made a great welcome for his brother. They walked through Icewing's garden and talked of the Glitterfrost Orchid and many other things besides, which is the way of dragons. The night wore on, and by the time Syrtis returned to his beloved waiting by the mountain pool, the rosy-fingered dawn had touched the horizon. The maiden told her suitor, "Now you shall become my husband and enter the foundation of my ancestors."

And so the Dragon of the Moon took the maiden in his arms and delivered a kiss, but with the dawn came the jealous gaze of his consort, T'schlome. Trembling with haste, Syrtis left Synopae with the words, "I must go, but I shall return for you on the night of the next full moon."

Another month went by before Synopae returned a third time to the pool. This time she was careful to keep Syrtis waiting, and did not arrive until the last hours before dawn. Again Syrtis spoke of his love for her, but again she would not surrender to his desire, instead saying, "Gladly I would have you as my love and my life, but how can you enter the foundation of my ancestors if you can only stay for one night of the month? If you will not make your home in my village, then you must prepare a home for us someplace else, a place so beautiful that I shall not want for my family."

The Dragon of the Moon sighed, for the cunning Synopae had bested him a third time. He said, "I will show you a place where I will build you a home a hundred times more splendid than any village on the river." And taking her hand, Syrtis flew both of them to the Gorge of Lalai. There, he entered the Liferock at Zirabul, and the elders of that place bent respectfully to their lord. He said to the obsidimen of Zirabul, "You must prepare this place to become a home for my wife and my family, and they shall abide with you through the ages."

Then Syrtis returned them both to the pool, where they spent what remained of that night together. When the shadow of the sun appeared on the horizon, the young man looked to the East, where T'schlome arose and he told Synopae, "When next I come, we shall go to the Halls of Zirabul." Synopae, a maiden no longer, tried hard to cling to him, but he vanished into the air without a trace.

And so Synopae understood a little more about her lover, but perhaps not enough. On the day before the moon had turned its cycle, the orb of the sun dipped low to the village of Kralipur, and T'schlome appeared to her husband's lover. "It would be better for you if you stayed close at home this night," T'schlome said to Synopae. "Should you ever again see my husband, I shall destroy you and all you hold dear."

When Synopae felt the furious heat of the jealous sun, she became afraid and said, "I shall do as you ask, Mother of Day. Will you not accept this garland as a token of my devotion and a balm to soothe your wrath?" With these words, she lay the garland she had made from the blooms of night lotus and the Glitterfrost Orchid about the neck of the Dragon of the Sun.

T'schlome was so pleased with the young girl's gift that she did not notice when the touch of the Glitterfrost Orchid loosened one of the scales on her breast. Synopae, however, was looking for

just that, and without a moment's thought she used the thorn of the elven rose to pry that scale from the Dragon of the Sun. When Synopae had the dragon scale in her hands, she wove a thread to it and said to T'schlome, "My time with your husband will be but a short time in the life of the immortals, but for that time, this thread shall protect both me and my family."

That said, she used the power of her magic to send the jealous sun back to the skies. That night, Lord Syrtis arrived at Kralipur village in the boat that carries the lamplight of the night, and he carried Synopae and her foundation to their new home in the Gorge of Lalai. In time Synopae gave Syrtis four sons and four daughters, who each fed at the breast of the Moon himself, so that ever afterward the descendants of Synopae called themselves House Syrtis, the House of the Dragon Moon.

When T'schlome learned of Synopae's trickery, the Dragon of the Sun became enraged and vowed to exact revenge on Synopae and her children. And so after pondering her predicament, T'schlome took the Glitterfrost Orchid that Synopae had given to her to Upandal the Builder. Using guileful words to prick his pride, she challenged the Passion to match in beauty and desirability what Icewing and Jaspree had fashioned so well.

Accepting the Sun Dragon's challenge, Upandal returned to his workroom, determined to show T'schlome that he was every bit the match of Jaspree the Lifegiver. After many years of work, during which time the children of Synopae grew to adulthood, Upandal appeared with his masterpiece, a duplicate of the Orchid wrought in gossamer, gold, and glass. Then to prove to T'schlome how trivial he thought the challenge, he gave it to her freely as if it were a trinket.

T'schlome took Upandal's gift and placed it in a box on which she inscribed these words: "For the most beautiful." Then she flew at once to the heart of the Wyrn Wood, where the Passions had been invited to bless the wedding vows of Princess Aenea and Prince Gamelan of Sereatha. When the wedding feast was begun, T'schlome persuaded Vestrial the Trickster to deliver the box to the banquet table. Sure as night follows day, the Passions found the box and opened it. All who beheld the Golden Orchid that Upandal had wrought were beside themselves with desire to hold it in their hands.

Soon Aenea, Astendar, Erendis, and Jaspree fell to arguing over whom the prize was intended for. Aenea argued that the Golden Orchid must be a wedding gift from her prince. Jaspree argued that the gift was surely a token of appreciation from Icewing, for it was clearly modeled after the Glitterfrost Orchid. Astendar and Erendis, of course, simply believed that they were each the fairest, and therefore the gift's intended recipient. Garlen had a foreboding of trouble and wisely chose to keep silent. Upandal, who along with Chorrolis had drunk much wine at the feast, found the whole business so amusing that he kept the truth secret: that he, himself, had originally given the Golden Orchid to the Dragon of the Sun!

Now, in the court of the Elven Queen at that time was a councilor Named Elidar, whom many considered the wisest of the queen's courtiers. And so Prince Gamelan suggested to the rivals that they lay their contest at the feet of Elidar the Wise. After considerable bickering, the rivals concurred. After some contemplation, Elidar said to Aenea, "Against all mortal beauty, thine own is unmatched. But you cannot think to compare your beauty with that of the immortal Passions." To Astendar and Erendis, he said, "Although each of you has beauty far and above the mortal sphere, in truth your beauty is derivative, for the truest beauty resides in the ever-changing renewal of life itself." And turning to Jaspree, he said, "Life in all its forms finds both rest and inspiration in your bosom, O Gardener of the World, and so you are unarguably the most beautiful."

At Elidar's judgment, generosity filled Jaspree's heart, and the Passion favored the elves with the magical fern-weave and wood that made their ships invincible. When these gifts threatened the

livelihood of Synopae's children, Upandal felt remorse for the way T'schlome had tricked him and so sought to redress the imbalance by granting the t'skrang the vision of the fire engine. The t'skrang, in turn, used the fire engine to great effect against the elves, prompting the other Passions to take sides in the growing conflict.

Chorrolis and Upandal sided with the children of Synopae, and Jaspre and most of the other Passions supported Aenea and her eleven children. After ten years, ten months, and ten days of war, Upandal sought to end the feud that had cost Synopae's children so dearly. As evidence of his desire for peace, Upandal pledged to prevent all other Namegivers from learning the secret of the fire engine, a pledge he has kept to the present day.

RECORDED HISTORY OF HOUSE SYRTIS

Despite the central role House Syrtis plays in the mythic memory of the t'skrang, its role in recorded history is far less illustrious. Even before the Scourge, when the Therans first claimed Barsaive as part of their empire, House Syrtis was weak and divided. Many of the Syrtisian t'skrang willingly collaborated with the Therans on issues of trade, and most of the *aropagoi's* *nialls* arranged separate deals with their Theran conquerors in attempts to gain advantage over their fellow *aropagoi*. Two of the *aropagoi's* eight *nialls*, Fenestral and Brabant, even joined in punitive Theran slaving operations on the fringes of the Wurm Wood and pirate raids against the mining settlements of the Scol Mountains.

Though House Syrtis' collaboration with the Therans still mars the *aropagoi's* reputation among many Barsaivians, most Serpent River t'skrang communities remain grateful for the leading role the *Shivalahala* Syrtis took in helping t'skrang communities prepare for the Scourge. The *Shivalahala* Syrtis assembled the council of *lahalas* that devised the t'skrang protections in the years preceding the Scourge. Drawing on their ancestral memories, the *lahalas* presented Barsaive's dragons with twelve riddles, each designed to trick the t'skrang's Firebrothers into sharing valuable information about surviving the Scourge. Using the dragons' answers, along with their ancestral memories, the *lahala* council published a special addendum to the *Rites of Protection and Passage* that taught the t'skrang how to safely induce hibernation. This sleeping state eased the claustrophobic strain of long imprisonment under the river, enabling the freewheeling lizard-folk to survive the Scourge without going mad.

When the Scourge arrived, most of the Cliff City's population abandoned the citadel in favor of their home villages. At one point, the chamberlain of House Syrtis, a member of the Brabant *niall*, attempted to abduct the *shivalahala* away from the Cliff City and back to his own village, apparently intending to establish some kind of permanent influence over the *shivalahala*. The t'skrang remaining in the Cliff City discovered the chamberlain's plan, however, and apprehended him before he could board his ship and escape. The mob escorted the chamberlain and his entourage to Nithagi's Door and forced them all to walk off the edge of the cliff to their deaths.

Unfortunately, the Horrors took a special interest in the Cliff City. Despite the vigilance of the city's residents, Horrors breached the city's defenses on six separate occasions during the Scourge. The *Shivalahala* Syrtis personally fought each invading Horror that slipped through during each breach. The *shivalahala's* dedication inevitably killed her, forcing her to pass her ancestral memories to a new *shivalahala* and creating lasting psychological scars that continue to afflict the *Shivalahala* Syrtis.

The legendary airship Earthdawn arrived at the Cliff City in the year 1418 TH to herald the end of the Scourge, and within weeks the leaders of House Syrtis' *nialls* convened the post-Scourge meeting of the Syrtisian High Chamber. More than a third of the villages aligned with the Syrtisian *aropagoi* had fallen to Horrors, which

had nearly destroyed three of the *aropagoi's* eight *nialls* as well, and the once-fertile lands of the Mid Reach lay ravaged.

Understandably, House Syrtis was slow to recover from the depredations of the Scourge. The arrival of a copy of the *Council Compact* from Throal prompted months of acrimonious, unproductive debate in the High Chamber. After a particularly garrulous session, the *niall* leaders decided to allow every Syrtisian t'skrang to fend for himself. Within days, the tensions between the *nialls* erupted into petty squabbles and vendettas.

Unfortunately, the *Shivalahala* Syrtis proved unable to offer her people much help during this dark time. For months she had been showing signs of the psychological scars left by her struggle against the Horrors, exhibiting decidedly odd behavior. Her attendants, who feared for her status in the eyes of her subjects, began to isolate her from all other members of the *aropagoi*. That decision nearly destroyed House Syrtis, for the *shivalahala* was probably the only individual capable of checking the growing divisions among the members of the High Chamber.

Fortunately, the centuries of history shared by the Syrtisian *nialls* provided enough of a bond to keep the factions from severing their ties altogether. Still, the High Chamber met only seven times during the first 70 years after the Scourge. The Syrtisian council met three times during the Theran War to consider and ultimately reject Varulus III's requests for aid in the war against the Therans. House Syrtis' neutrality created significant friction between Throal and the *aropagoi*, and at one point Throal accused the Syrtisian *nialls* of Fenestral and Brabant of secretly conspiring with Theran agents to find a river passage to the Kingdom of Throal somewhere along the Serpent.

Although the High Chamber ratified the Free Trade Compact, the body did not resume regular meetings until House Ishkarat seized the Maratha *niall's* fortified island of Filen on Lake Vors in 1488 TH. The Scourge had reduced the Maratha *niall's* holding to the island fortress, and only two riverboats of refugees escaped the Ishkarat seizure of the island. In an unprecedented resolution, the High Chamber voted to dissolve the Maratha *niall*, ban its descendants from entering House Syrtis' central foundation, and eliminate its seats in the chamber on the grounds that its disgraceful defeat had stained the sacred honor of the *aropagoi*.

However, the High Chamber members soon realized that House Ishkarat's growing power threatened all of their *nialls*, and they began to exhibit a sense of their common destiny. During the next few years, the chamber members restored the power of the chamberlain of Syrtis to exact levies from their *nialls* to fund defensive measures. The chamber commissioned new warships and created the office of the Admiralty to provide the Syrtisian fleet with a single commander. The chamber's diplomatic initiatives resulted in the construction of the Syrtisian/elfen fortress of Kaer Eidolon in 1497 TH and the leasing of five *shimoram* from House V'strimon.

The chamber's efforts paid off in the spring of 1502 TH, when five warships under Admiral Shaído of the Wavram *niall* clashed with three Ishkarat riverboats just west of Kaer Eidolon in the Battle of Sejanus. The Syrtisian force sank one of the Ishkaratan vessels, captured another, and forced the third to retreat. House Ishkarat later claimed that the riverboats were merchant vessels protected by the provisions of the Free Trade Compact—and therefore victims of Syrtisian piracy—but since the battle House Ishkarat has apparently restricted its expansionist designs to Lake Vors and the Serpent River west of the lake.

THE CLIFF CITY OF HOUSE SYRTIS

A few miles south of the confluence of the Caucavic and Serpent Rivers, the Throal Mountains collide with the Caucavic Mountains to form the Lalai Gorge, one of Barsaive's unique natural wonders. Each of the two mountain spurs comes to an abrupt halt at the gorge,

terminating in sheer cliff faces that rise nearly 3,000 feet on each side of the river. The gorge runs for about 20 miles, narrowing to about a half mile at a spot called the Dragon's Gullet, where the river makes a sharp turn south. Here the river flows with such force that during the rainy months a riverboat is hard pressed to make the journey upstream through the canyon in the hours between sunrise and sunset.

The Cliff City of Lalai Gorge is set in the cliffs on the south side of the Serpent River, about 500 yards upstream from the Dragon's Gullet. The *aropagoinya* of House Syrtis have made their homes in the Cliff City since before the Scourge, when the site was pressed into service as a citadel against the Horrors. Throughout its long history the city's residents have employed various building methods and architectural styles to expand their metropolis, giving the ancient city the appearance of a haphazard patchwork of parapets, carvings, towers, windows, and balconies when viewed from the river. Sections of the city alternate between the natural caverns typical of obsidimen, huge halls like dragon lairs, ornate dwarf-style decorative work, and the simple rough-cut stonework associated with t'skrang villages. In some places the various architectural styles produce astounding effects; in others they simply jar the senses.

The Cliff City is arranged in several vertical levels along the cliff face, an arrangement that often disconcerts first-time visitors. The inhabited parts of the city seem to be perched precariously on the cliff face, and nearly every road and path seems to slope up or down at an extreme incline. The city's t'skrang residents employ a wide variety of mechanisms to move from one level of the city to the next. To drag heavy loads up the inclines, the residents use winches and levitating platforms powered by elemental magic, similar to the Theran elemental elevators at Sky Point. Swing ropes are used to cross gaps and skip quickly up and down levels. Narrow staircases take the place of the alleys that one might find in a more conventional city, and strangers find it difficult to adjust to the idea that one must look not only left or right at an intersection, but also above and below.

Many first-time visitors also remark on the city's oppressive, haunted atmosphere. The Cliff City could probably hold 60,000 Namegivers, but barely 6,000 reside within its boundaries. As one walks up through the city's byways, one cannot help but notice the emptiness. Some towers carved in the cliff side are inhabited only by flocks of birds, while hermits claim other places. The eerie atmosphere created by the vacant spaces is strengthened by the sound-conducting properties of the stone, which often transmits

faraway conversations. Passersby can often hear the murmur of voices even in sections of the city that have not been inhabited since pre-Scourge times.

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That place gives me the creeps, and I've lived in caverns! I swear those Horrors the Shivalahala supposedly drove off just went into hiding in the vast empty spaces of the place. Don't go out walking without a spare light quartz and a good sword, that's my advice.

—Thom Hammerblade, Dwarf Weaponsmith

▲ ▲ ▲

The Great Cavern

The main entrances to the city, known as the Doors of Shivos, are located at the base of the cliff at the water's edge. Each opening is more than 30 yards high and 130 yards wide. Both can be sealed by a combination of *refselenika* below the water and huge stone disks above. Neither door has been closed since the end of the Scourge, however. Behind the Doors of Shivos lies the largest known open cavern outside of Throal. The entire cave is flooded to a depth of 25 yards and lit by light quartzes embedded in the cavern ceiling and the riverbed. Towering stalagmites of pink- and blue-tinged crystalline granite support the roof of the cavern, and wooden piers that can accommodate up to 40 riverboats at a time extend from the edges of the cavern across its waters. Next to the piers stand several wooden buildings used by trading companies and trade covenants. Many of these buildings have fallen into disrepair in the past few years; the High Chamber has considered removing them, as they create an undignified first impression for visitors arriving by river to the Cliff City.

Because of the city's proximity to the Dragon's Gullet, the rapid river current and submerged rocks near the Doors of Shivos make the approach to the Cliff City quite treacherous. (Maneuvering a riverboat through the Doors of Shivos and docking it in the cavern requires a successful Pilot Boat (7) Test.) The aquatic entrance to the Cliff City is further protected by the fire cannon of the massive Syrtisian *Dreadnought*, which is permanently anchored just outside the Doors of Shivos (see *The Dreadnought*, p.28, for details).

Below the surface of the river, the Great Cavern opens into a system of submerged caves that are many times larger than the portion of the cavern above the water line. These submerged caves extend deep under the cliff into a bizarre subterranean world.

ADVENTURE HOOK

During a stay in the Cliff City of House Syrtis, the player characters notice two obsidimen watching them—seemingly crossing their path at random times. Later, while at a tavern, they overhear the latest news: a member of the Piscean Planters has gone missing from his duties in the subterranean caves. On their next sighting of either of the obsidimen, he motions to them, pointing down and then up before vanishing again. Puzzled, the characters can investigate and hear in the Hives, a number of Golds, unemployed t'skrang and refugees have disappeared recently.

At this point the two obsidimen approach them, and introduce themselves as member of the Zirabul Brotherhood. They ask the group to cleanse the taint on the

city by determining the cause of the vanishing people, and hand them a silver ribbon.

If the characters take up the investigation, they will find out that a coven of Silvers has gotten involved in slave trade to gain the attention of the Therans; secretly passing their slaves off to disguised K'tenshin trading ships. The Silvers' operation is based out of the fourth level of Lalai Gorge, near an otherwise unused lift down to the docks. If the characters play their cards right they might be able to stake out the next shipment, which likely results in a wild chase through the Dragon's Gullet and on down the Serpent. If they fail and lose the silvers, House Syrtis will ask them to rescue the captured citizens—a quest leading them to the slave markets of the Serpent River's South Reach...

Light quartzes mounted in the cliff walls of these aquatic back areas provide nourishment to a host of crops cultivated along the cave floors. Additionally, several chambers in this underwater cave system contain pockets of fresh air, which enable a t'skrang to remain in the submerged caves for several hours without the need to return to the surface. Some say the submerged cave system reaches all the way to the Kingdom of Throal, where it joins the waterways of Shuss Halima, the domain of the t'skrang Pale Ones. However, no one has yet blazed an aquatic trail from the Cliff City to Throal.

The Hives

The second level of the Cliff City, located directly above the Great Cavern, consists primarily of residential apartments. The city's inhabitants call these structures "The Hives," because the constant buzz of their residents and the intricate pathways that connect the apartments make the level resemble a huge honeycomb.

In keeping with the city's traditional segregation patterns, servants and workers exclusively inhabit the Hives. Throughout its history, Syrtisian society has remained highly stratified, and strict laws dictate where an *aropagoi* may live. The city's lower classes are restricted to residences in the lower levels of the Cliff City, while residences in the city's higher levels are reserved for the *aropagoi*'s upper classes. Each of the second level's apartment complexes, or "hives," is inhabited by a specific group of servants or workers. For example, members of the Piscean Planters, the group that tends the underwater crops in the Great Cavern, live in one complex. Members of the August Order of Ropes and Pulleys, who maintain the swing lines and winches throughout the city, live in another complex. Members of the group called the Couriers, who run messages up and down the city's levels, live in another. Other complexes contain groups Named after work that no longer exists. For example, one complex belongs to the Guild of the Diligent Oarsmen, whose members would take a nobleman's place at the galleys of ships in ancient times. The t'skrang have not run oar-driven galleys anywhere on the Serpent since the creation of the fire engine millennia ago, yet the Name persists. Present-day members of the Oarsmen's guild are sailors and dock workers.

The Hollow

The Cliff City's main marketplace, known as the Hollow, is located on the city's third level. The market sits on a ledge under an overhang about 160 yards above the river. The ledge is about 100 yards wide and contains three tiers of narrow buildings. The buildings are crudely constructed of stone blocks cut from the back wall of the Hollow, and each building is divided into stalls. The seven current *nialls* of House Syrtis own most of the stalls and rent them out to visiting traders who wish to sell their goods.

Trade Covenant Quarters

House Syrtis' few remaining trade covenants occupy buildings on the city's fourth level, directly above the Hollow. The only Syrtisian trade covenant that retains any fame outside of the city is the Right Honorable Commission of Toymakers. The covenant preserves the secrets of manufacturing some of the best-loved toys on the river, including extraordinary spinning tops that create kaleidoscopic patterns as they spin and animated, elemental-water toy soldiers that engage one another in sword fights if brought close together. At one point, the *aropagoi*'s High Chamber attempted to relocate the toy-makers to a village under its sway, as it had done with many other lucrative covenants. However, when a seven-year-old child was chosen as the next *Shivalahala* Syrtis, the High Chamber decided it would be in the *aropagoi*'s best interests to keep the toymakers within the city.

Crew Covenant Quarters

The fifth level of the Cliff City is devoted to residences for House Syrtis' navy and crew covenants. Today, much of the level remains vacant, as the competing factions of the *aropagoi*'s High Chamber have seized control of nearly all of House Syrtis' warships. However, about 100 sailors from the *Dreadnought*'s skeleton crew reside permanently in barracks on the fifth level. Because the *Dreadnought* never leaves port, the crew is employed as the city's police force under the nominal command of the High Chamberlain of Syrtis.

Upper Levels

The upper levels of the Cliff City contain lavish quarters for House Syrtis' *shivalahala*, High Chamber representatives, and members of the *shivalahala*'s court. Each of the *aropagoi*'s seven *nialls* maintains a resplendent residence for its representatives. Many such residences are as large as typical *niall* domes, with dozens of rooms furnished with priceless tapestries and finely crafted furniture.

The chamber members, most of whom descend from the *aropagoi*'s noble families, also maintain a spacious theater, a splendid solarium, a library, and many meeting rooms. The solarium, known as the Eye of Syrtis, features a massive window of metal-rimmed crystal and glass that looks out across the canyon. The library contains a large collection of ancient manuscripts and monographs written by past members of the High Chamber. Because these texts are written almost entirely in the ambiguous, pictographic language of the t'skrang, scholars have never regarded the library's collection as particularly useful or noteworthy.

These features, along with ranks of bathing attendants, tailors, scribes, footmen, and assorted servants employed by the residents of the upper levels, produce an atmosphere of opulence that contrasts sharply with the poverty spreading throughout the lower levels of the Cliff City.

Upper Entrance

At the top of the Cliff City lies Nithagi's Door, a magnificent stone arch created by the ancient sculptor Nithagi as a memorial to the ancient victory of the t'skrang over the elves. The 24-yard high arch is decorated with 40 separate carvings that depict scenes from the legendary war between the two races. Although the arch is more than 2,000 years old, the passage of time has caused little wear to the carvings, which are protected by elemental magic. Despite the arch's Name, it leads nowhere, as it is built on the brink of the cliff.

The actual upper entrance to House Syrtis is located 200 yards away from Nithagi's Door, in a squat, architecturally unremarkable edifice called the Pinnacle Gate. The Pinnacle Gate contains the only entrance to Syrtis from the highlands above the Cliff City. A squad of ten to fifteen soldiers stationed at the gate watch for bandits from the Throal highlands, who occasionally loiter around the approach to the Pinnacle Gate and harass arriving pilgrims.

Near the Pinnacle Gate, several mountain streams feed a small mountain lake called Synopae's Pool. The lake empties into a stone aqueduct that carries water down to a series of beautiful artificial falls and fountains that cascade through the Cliff City like pearl beads on a necklace. During the Scourge, the city's residents rerouted the aqueduct through Nithagi's Door, creating a vast waterfall that obscured the city from the river.

The Obsidimen of Zirabul

The Cliff City is also home to the mysterious obsidimen of Zirabul. No one knows just how many live in the city, because no one has ever spotted more than two at a time. Most often, pairs of the obsidimen clad in their blue and silver *horklas* can be seen shaping or repairing the city's rocks, sitting quietly in abandoned sections of the city, or walking along the docks of the submerged Great Cavern.

Some residents of the city claim that all the sightings can be attributed to only two obsidimen—the elders who tend to the Liferock of Zirabul, which lies deep within the cliffs behind the city. Although this explanation sounds plausible enough, no obsidiman has ever claimed descent from the Liferock, and the rock men of the Cliff City are notably laconic even for obsidimen. As a result, the local obsidimen remain a constant subject of speculation. Adding to the mystery, adventurers who stop at the Cliff City often find that their obsidiman companions disappear for a day or two and reappear without explaining their absences.

SHIVALAHALA SYRTIS

The *Shivalahala* Syrtis, also known as the Prophetess, is revered by every race in Barsaive for her exceptionally long memory and her incredible insight into the future. Her legendary status, like that of the now-deceased King Varulus III of Throal and Queen Alachia of the Blood Wood, is a critical thread in the True pattern of Barsaive. Much like Alachia, this small part of the pattern is beginning to unravel—the *shivalahala* of the Dragon Moon is slowly losing her mind. The *shivalahala* has always been more concerned with astral matters than with politics and trade, which comes as no surprise to those familiar with House Syrtis. Tradition holds that a tenuous link to the physical world is the price the *shivalahala* must pay for the prophetic vision that lets her walk the corridors of time, visiting with spirits long dead and those yet to come and fixing her gaze on the darkest part of the Barsaive's pattern.

The beginning of the *shivalahala*'s descent into madness, however, can be traced back to the Scourge, when six Horrors slipped through the Syrtisian citadel's magical defenses. The *shivalahala* confronted each Horror, each time surviving the confrontation just long enough to pass her ancestral memories to a new *shivalahala*. During the last of the six battles to save House Syrtis, a Horror corrupted the *shivalahala*'s Warp Astral Space spell (see p.151 of the *Player's Companion*) so that its effect remained permanent. Since that time, the results of any magic except her own have become unpredictable within 50 yards of the *Shivalahala* Syrtis. That corruption also affected the *shivalahala*'s traditional resistance to the aging process, usually bestowed during a *shivalahala*'s initiation into ancestral memories. Since that time, this resistance has been gradually eroding. The last *Shivalahala* Syrtis lived only ten years after receiving the gift of the Prophetess.

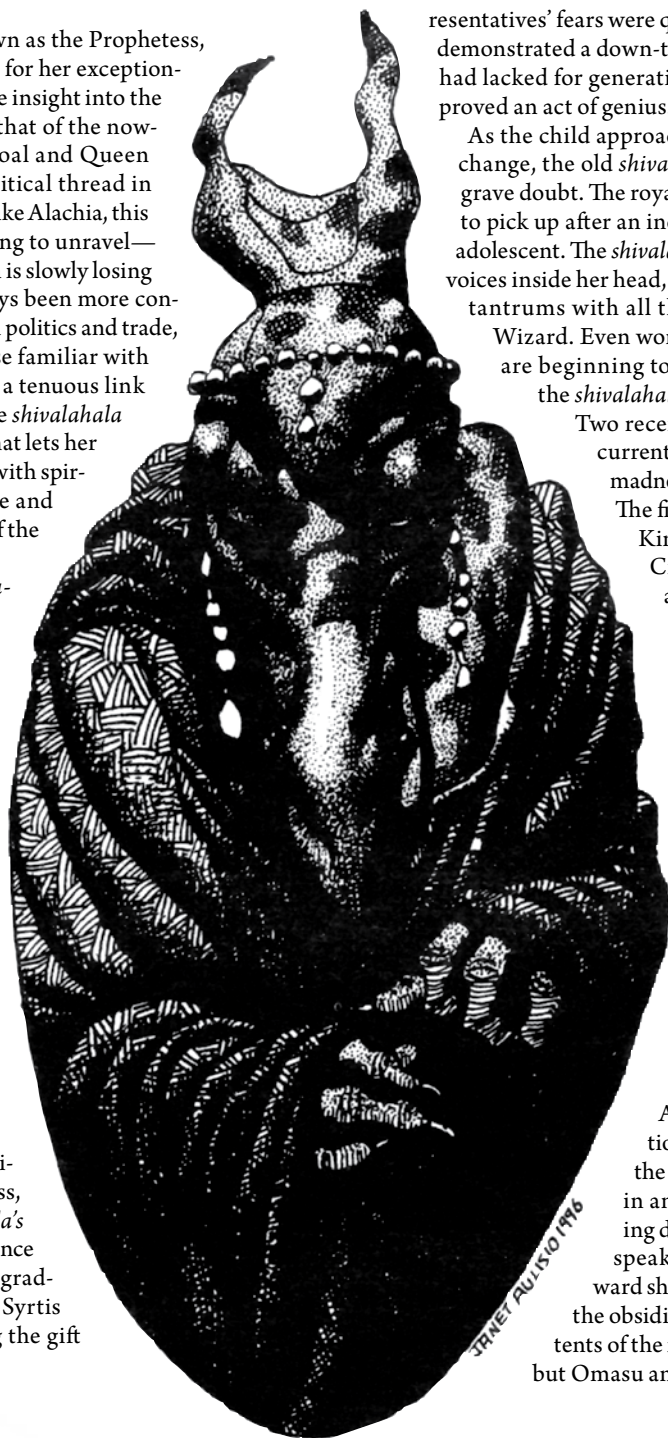
The transmission of memories from one *shivalahala* to the next has become less reliable, resulting in the increasingly bizarre behavior exhibited by the *aropagoi*'s *shivalahalas*. The first *shivalahala* after the Scourge displayed an obsession with music and spent most of her waking hours singing or playing musical instruments. Her successor often slept for days on end. The *shivalahala* after that exhibited an inexplicable terror of insects.

Just eight years ago, the most recent incarnation of the *shivalahala* passed on her memories to a seven-year-old successor. The *shivalahala*'s selection mortified the High Chamber. "The House of the Moon presided over by a sexless child? Preposterous!" exclaimed then-Chamberlain Gammalon Toolika. However, the representatives' fears were quickly dispelled when the child demonstrated a down-to-earth wisdom the *shivalahala* had lacked for generations. What at first seemed folly proved an act of genius.

As the child approaches *kaissa*, a t'skrang's time of change, the old *shivalahala*'s choice is once again in grave doubt. The royal servants are up in arms trying to pick up after an increasingly moody and contrary adolescent. The *shivalahala* is sleepwalking, talking to voices inside her head, and throwing rages and temper tantrums with all the strength of an experienced Wizard. Even worse, the leaders of House Syrtis are beginning to wonder what might happen if the *shivalahala* turns out to be male.

Two recent events may indicate that the current *shivalahala* has not escaped the madness that plagued her predecessors. The first occurred in 1507 TH, when King Varulus III traveled to the Cliff City to question the Prophetess about the future of his kingdom. The two conducted their audience in the strictest confidentiality, so no one but the Prophetess and Varulus himself knew the king's question or the *shivalahala*'s reply. However, those close to the king and the *shivalahala* say that upon receiving the Prophetess' answer, Varulus flew into an uncharacteristic rage and left in great haste.

The second, more recent event occurred shortly after the Prophetess granted an audience to a group of travelers from the Pilgrimage Route. As the Prophetess sat in meditation after meeting with the last of the travelers, she suddenly cried out in anguish, shouting about impending doom. The *shivalahala* refused to speak clearly of the matter, but afterward she immediately sent a message to the obsidiman merchant Omasu. The contents of the message remain unknown to all but Omasu and the *shivalahala*.



SHIVALAHALA SYRTIS

No game statistics are provided for the *Shivalahala* Syrtis because her immaturity, nascent madness, innate clairvoyant abilities, and incomplete development make her virtually impossible to describe in game terms. However, if any character attempts to cast a spell in her immediate vicinity, the character suffers a -8 penalty to his Spellcasting Test. The *shivalahala* has a Spell Defense of 18.

HIERARCHY

House Syrtis is nominally ruled by its Triumvirate, which consists of the *Shivalahala* Syrtis, the chamberlain, and the admiral. The latter two individuals are elected by the *aropagoi*'s High Chamber, a legislative body composed of representatives from the house's seven noble *nialls*. The chamberlain holds the real power in the *aropagoi*, however, because he retains the power to levy taxes on each of the *aropagoi*'s affiliated villages and *nialls*. He also prepares the budget for House Syrtis' communal concerns, which enables him to embezzle a portion of the annual taxes into his private coffers. The chamberlain also has the sole power to call for resolution votes in the High Chamber, which effectively means the chamber cannot act without his approval.

The admiral is charged with the difficult task of commanding the *aropagoi*'s patchwork fleet of warships and maintaining peace among the ships' captains. The admiral cannot vote in the High Chamber, but the chamber cannot censure the admiral's conduct short of dismissing him and appointing a new one.

The *shivalahala* remains the spiritual leader of the *aropagoi*, but her governing powers are limited. She can advise the chamber and the other members of the Triumvirate and may cast votes in the chamber, but otherwise she has no special governing powers. Traditionally, the *Shivalahala* Syrtis does not bother to exercise her right to vote, preferring to exert her power through her influence among the common *aropagoinya* of House Syrtis. In any case, the High Chamber has made it clear that it judges the current *shivalahala* too young to exercise her voting rights. In truth, this judgment seems solely based on political considerations, as a *Shivalahala* Syrtis of any age possesses ancestral memories that make her far better qualified to guide the *aropagoi* than any chamber member.

The High Chamber consists of three representatives from each *niall* of the *aropagoi*. Unlike the *nialls* of most other *aropagoi*, the Syrtisian *nialls* are noble dynasties that trace their lineage back to the sons and daughters of Synopae and Syrtis. For most of its history, House Syrtis contained eight *nialls*: Wavram, Fenestral, Brabant, Dharm, Satya, Maratha, Sanessa, and Toolika. A few years ago, however, the High Chamber stripped the Maratha *niall* of its status as a noble house and eliminated its chamber seats.

The leader of each noble Syrtisian *niall* bears the title of scion and retains the power to appoint his *niall*'s chamber representatives from among the noble-born of his family. Although scions may appoint themselves to the High Chamber, most prefer to use their power of appointment as a way to curry favor and build power within their own communities. Indeed, in some noble *nialls* a seat on the High Chamber is considered a sentence of exile, because local concerns are often more important to the Syrtis nobility than the issues confronting the *aropagoi* as a whole.

The Syrtisian Nobility

Because noble birth is a prerequisite for all government and military leadership positions in House Syrtis, a Syrtisian t'skrang's genealogy is a matter of grave importance. The t'skrang of House Syrtis recognize five ranks of nobility. The lowest, or fifth rank, consists of individuals of common birth who have married into

the noble class. The fourth rank consists of the offspring of parents who have married into the noble class. The third rank consists of individuals who can trace their noble ancestry back two, three, four, or five generations. The second rank of nobility can trace their noble ancestry back six to fifteen generations, and the first rank can trace their noble ancestry back 16 to 50 generations. A noble who marries a t'skrang of common blood immediately reduces his children's social standing to the fourth rank.

Traditionally, social rank is the sole qualification for leadership positions in House Syrtis. *Niall* scions are selected from *niall* members of the first noble rank. High Chamber representatives are selected from individuals possessing the second rank. Riverboat captains must be of at least the third rank, and riverboat officers must be of fifth rank or higher.

The importance of noble rank has led to several unique customs among House Syrtis' aristocracy. For example, Syrtisian noblewomen commonly maintain private hatcheries, because the use of common hatcheries prohibits one from confirming the lineage of one's offspring. Additionally, noble Syrtisian couples still arrange marriages for their offspring. (This custom once prevailed among t'skrang communities all over the Serpent River, until the corruption of the Scourge severely reduced the field of desirable mates.) In House Syrtis the practice continues, however, for one low-born mate can ruin a thousand years of careful breeding. The stakes are so high, in fact, that high-ranking Syrtisian nobles commonly seek out prospective mates for their children before the eggs have even been laid. Despite such precautions, the fickle nature of t'skrang fertility has left many a noble family devoid of heirs, leading to a burgeoning black market for t'skrang eggs of good pedigree—and a new class of “scholars” who specialize in confirming the genealogies of suspect eggs. (For the right price, one can purchase a genealogical chart for any occasion, whether it be to allay the suspicions of one's in-laws or effect the ruin of one's rival.)



Inbreeding has become all too common among the nobility in the city-states of Barsaive. It has affected the birth rates of the Syrtisian nobles, causing a longer lifespan than normal, but decreasing fertility in the kings of Throal. Only the reclusive Denairastas know what toll it has taken on their offspring. It is a custom that may spell the end of the ruling houses of many Barsaivian city-states.

—Kallarian of Jerris, Scholar



Although the Syrtisian preoccupation with lineage has greatly enhanced the profits of the *aropagoi*'s genealogists, many observers identify this preoccupation as the main cause of the *aropagoi*'s declining fortunes. These t'skrang warn that centuries of inbreeding often produce feeble-minded individuals, and point to numerous examples among the upper levels of Syrtisian society to support their claims. For example, these observers often claim that the Maratha *niall*'s disastrous defeat at Filen resulted directly from the leadership of the Maratha scion, a fine-looking 30-year-old t'skrang with the mind and habits of a two-year-old hatchling.

The warnings of these t'skrang are not far from the truth. While several outstanding Syrtisian captains serve at Kaer Eidolon, in truth the glory of the captaincy is often reserved for braggarts and fools. Despite the lack of fertility that haunts every level of Syrtisian society, there always seems to be more than enough bluebloods around to wreck even the most promising situation.

Apparently, the *shivalahala* of House Syrtis recognized such dangers long ago. In response, she instituted a custom designed to strengthen the *aropagoi*'s pool of leaders by providing opportuni-

ties for common *aropagoinya* to “jump” the normal social order. She established the Order of the Dragon, a central foundation for House Syrtis. To gain membership in the order, an individual must earn the recommendations of three sponsors of the third noble rank or higher. Noble-born t’skrang can usually gain membership by soliciting recommendations from three near relatives. Common t’skrang can win recommendations by saving the lives or reputations of potential sponsors. New members immediately receive fourth-rank status and become eligible for all appropriate leadership positions. Additionally, they pass their noble status on to their offspring.

Once in the Order of the Dragon, common-born t’skrang can earn third-rank nobility for themselves and their descendants by winning an appointment to the Honor Guard of House Syrtis. Chamberlain T’kradio Dharm established the Honor Guard when he realized that the Ishkaratans could easily destroy the Syrtisian fleet unless he expanded House Syrtis’ pool of talented captains. To this day, the chamberlain hand picks every member of the Honor Guard.

Although these measures have noticeably improved the quality of Syrtisian leadership, the rise of common-born *aropagoinya* has fostered resentment among House Syrtis’ noble *nialls* in recent years. As a result, fewer and fewer nobles are willing to sponsor candidates for membership in the Order of the Dragon.

House Syrtis’ fortunes have also been crippled by the fierce rivalries within and between the *aropagoi*’s seven *nialls*. Typically, each *niall* controls a central village and several vassal villages. The *niall* exerts control over its vassal villages via councilors, who are appointed by the scion of the *niall*. Depending on the inclinations of the *niall*, its councilors may perform the duties of ambassadors, advisors, or spies. The *nialls* of Fenestral and Brabant are infamous for their ruthless councilors, who often engage openly in bribery and blackmail. The Sanessa *niall*, by contrast, appoints no councilors at all. Instead, it invites its vassal villages to send representatives to advise its scion. Meanwhile, each vassal village may contain several nobles seeking to propel themselves into positions of power—usually at the expense of their *niall* brothers and sisters.

Rivalries between the *nialls* may go back generations. The *niall* scions constantly scheme to expand their spheres of influence by wresting control of a rival *niall*’s villages. And every time a village changes hands, it must pay taxes to its new rulers. Of course, if a vassal village finds itself back under the control of a former ruler, it can expect to pay punitive penalties in cash and kind. *Niall* riverboats also exact *bakshevas* from riverboats of rival *nialls*, even though they honor the Free Trade Compact when dealing with other vessels. This practice often enables a *niall* to pay its annual tribute to the *aropagoi*’s central foundation with money and goods exacted from its rivals.

GOALS

Since the end of the Scourge, House Ishkarat, the *aropagoi* that rules the North Reach of the Serpent River, has steadily expanded its sphere of control east along the river toward the Blood Wood. The Ishkaratans apparently aim to seize control of the junction of the Mothingale River and the Serpent and with it, control of the lucrative Blood Wood trade. In the process of conquest, the Ishkaratans have taken control of numerous river settlements previously beholden to House Syrtis. Therefore, it is not surprising that in recent years the primary goal of House Syrtis has been to check House Ishkarat’s expanding power.

The best means of achieving that end, however, has been the subject of fierce debate among the contentious political factions of House Syrtis. So far, the *aropagoi* has adopted the strategies of the so-called Blue faction, Named for the blue ribbons worn by its supporters. The Blues long argued for Syrtisian unity in the face of the Ishkaratan threat and counseled alliances with the Elven

Court and House V’strimon to bolster House Syrtis’ weak war fleet. Those alliances resulted in the construction of a joint Syrtisian/elven fortress at Kaer Eidolon at the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers and the loan of a squadron of V’strimon riverboats—both of which proved instrumental in the Syrtisian victory over the Ishkaratans at the Battle of Sejanus in 1502 TH.

At present, the Syrtisian forces at Eidolon are augmented by a full regiment of the Queen’s Guard—approximately 150 elven soldiers, who are replaced with fresh troops every three months. The fortress also serves as a base for joint Syrtisian/elven river patrols. Typical patrols consist of two riverboats, each manned by a crew of 20. Although tensions run a bit high between the elven and t’skrang troops involved in the joint defensive arrangement, no serious incidents have occurred so far. Additionally, elven and Syrtisian leaders have taken a number of steps to promote cooperation between their troops, and Syrtisian leaders are currently contemplating the Elven Queen’s suggestion that command of the fortress alternate every six months between a representative of House Syrtis and a warder from the Elven Court.

While Eidolon is by no means impregnable and has not stopped disguised Ishkarat riverboats from slipping downriver, the joint Syrtisian/elven enterprise has effectively prevented the Ishkaratans and their allies, the Denairastas of Iopos, from expanding their spheres of influence east of the Mothingale. Perhaps equally important, the success of the forces at Eidolon and the Syrtisian victory at the Battle of Sejanus have greatly strengthened the Blues’ status in internal Syrtisian politics. Shaido of the Wavram *niall*, the Blues’ supporter who led the victorious forces in the battle, later was selected chamberlain of House Syrtis largely on popularity gained from his victory. Additionally, the Blues have garnered support for their policies from the *aropagoi*’s Green faction, which advocates closer ties with House V’strimon and Throal and seeks to reform House Syrtis’ rigid caste system.

The nascent Blue/Green alliance, however, has triggered opposition from the so-called Silver faction. The Silvers, led by members of the Fenestral and Brabant *nialls*, advocate alignment with the Theran Empire as a means of regaining the *aropagoi*’s lost influence. Although most Syrtisian *aropagoinya* do not dispute the success of the Blue faction’s policies, some are attracted to the Silvers’ proposals simply as a means of showing contempt for Throal, which has remained aloof to the plight of House Syrtis. In view of House Syrtis’ neutrality during the Theran War, King Varulus III’s successor, King Neden, apparently sees little reason to aid House Syrtis during its hour of need.

Although House Syrtis currently seems to enjoy a fruitful alliance with the Elven Court and has received help from House V’strimon in its battle against the Ishkaratans, most foreign powers remain understandably cautious about allying themselves with House Syrtis. The contentious *nialls* of the *aropagoi* have been known to produce abrupt shifts in House Syrtis’ policies in the past, and few foreign leaders are eager to stake the security of their people or their own political futures on alliances with the Syrtisians.

Furthermore, fears of Syrtisian instability have been generously fueled in recent months by the appearance of a fourth faction in the Cliff City, the so-called Golds. Traditionally, the representatives of House Syrtis’ High Chamber have employed hundreds of servants from the *aropagoi*’s lower classes. As Syrtisian politics have grown increasingly adversarial, however, many chamber representatives have begun to replace their native servants with t’skrang from their own villages. As a result, the number of unemployed residents in the Cliff City’s lower levels has grown rapidly. Coincidentally, the city’s lower levels are also home to the disenfranchised refugees from the former Maratha *niall*. The Marathans recognized the similarities between their plight and that of the newly unemployed very quickly, and formed the Gold faction as

a means of exploiting the growing discontent of these citizens and regaining some of their own power. Currently, the leaders of the Golds are demanding seats in the High Chamber so that they might "represent the interests of the city's disenfranchised and unaffiliated residents." According to rumors, some faction members have even begun attempts to arm their constituents, leading to talk of rebellion and revolution.

AEMILIUS VELLUNIUM, CAPTAIN OF THE BREETON II

With scales of silver and a heart of gold, Aemilius of the independent village of Vellunium has a reputation all along the Serpent as the friend of the needy and the bane of injustice. Son of the renowned Captain Patrochian, Aemilius carries on his mother's tradition of accepting missions on the behalf of those whom fate and fortune have abandoned. He is both a Boatman and a Swordmaster, which makes him a dangerous enemy on land or water. Wherever he goes, people know him by Name and reputation as a fair and honest man. His crew consists of the sailors who served with his mother, along with their now-grown offspring.

Aemilius is the epitome of the classic t'skrang adventurer hero; he can bring home a profit through trade, fight off a pirate attack, mop the floor with a Horror construct, and cut a dashing figure at the same time. He is an approachable hero to whom ordinary people bring their problems, and his fierce brand of t'skrang bravado revels in glory. He has achieved Eighth Circle as a Boatman and Sixth Circle as a Swordmaster.

The original *Breeton* was lost in an unusual crew mutiny shortly before the start of the Theran War. Captain Patrochian was famous for her support of free trade, opposition to slavery, and sympathy for the Throalic cause. At the time, the village of Vellunium was a vassal to the powerful pro-Theran Brabant *niall*, however, and the *niall* leaders conspired to fill the *Breeton's* crew with pro-Theran agents. On the way to a rendezvous with Throalic emissaries, the crew mutinied. Rather than allow the crew to use the *Breeton's* guns to sink the ship containing the dwarf ambassadors, Patrochian blew a hole in the *Breeton's* hull and sent it to the bottom of the Serpent River.

When Patrochian returned to Vellunium, she persuaded her village to declare its independence from the Brabant *niall* and the Syrtisian *aropagoi*. When King Varulus III heard the story of the *Breeton*, he immediately compensated Vellunium for its loss. The villagers went back to the site of the sinking, but could only salvage the *Breeton's* fire engine. With King Varulus' money, however, the villagers built the *Breeton II*. Patrochian herself did not survive to captain the new ship; a Brabantian assassin killed her.

The *Breeton II* is a standard t'skrang merchantman armed with 17/17 firepower, which reduces its cargo allowance to 220. The crew consists of 40 or so seasoned sailors and ten adepts from various Disciplines, ranging in Circle from Third to Sixth.

AEMILIUS VELLUNIUM

Attributes

DEX (18): 7 STR (14): 6 TOU (15): 6
PER (14): 6 WIL (14): 6 CHA (18): 7

Characteristics

Initiative: 7 Physical Defense: 12
Physical Armor: 6 Spell Defense: 10
Mystic Armor: 5 Social Defense: 12
Death: 86 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 70 Knockdown: 6*
Wound Threshold: 10 Movement: 6
Karma Points: 32/32

* Aemilius knows the Wound Balance talent



Boatman Talents (Knacks)

Cast Net ^D (9): 16 (Dragging Parry)
Climbing ^D (8): 15
Disarm ^D (8): 15
Durability [6/5] (8): 8
Engaging Banter (8): 15
Evaluate (8): 14
Great Leap (8): 15
Haggle (8): 15
Karma Ritual ^D (8): 8
Lion Heart ^D (8): 14
Melee Weapons ^D (9): 16
Missile Weapons (8): 15
Pilot Boat ^D (8): 14
Read River ^D (8): 14
Second Weapon ^D (8): 15
Speak Language (6): 12—(Human/Scavian, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Troll, Windling)
Steel Thought* (1): 7
Swimming ^D (8): 14
Swing Attack ^D (8): 15
Thread Weaving (River Weaving) ^D (8): 14
Wound Balance (8): 14

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)
* Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Bandanna

Swordmaster Talents

Acrobatic Strike (6): 13
First Impression (6): 13
Heartening Laugh ^D (6): 13
Maneuver ^D (6): 13
Parry ^D (6): 13
Riposte ^D (6): 13
Taunt ^D (6): 13
Thread Weaving (Weapon Weaving) ^D (6): 12
Throwing Weapons (6): 13
Unarmed Combat (6): 13
Winning Smile (6): 13

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Skills

Craftsman (Woodworker) ^A (4): 11
Fishing (4): 10
Horror Lore ^K (4): 10
Mapmaking ^A (4): 10
Navigation (4): 10
Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic, T'skrang)
T'skrang Politics ^K (4): 10

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Thread Padded Leather Armor (Rank 4; Phys 6; Myst 3)

Weapons

Barbed Net (Damage 8; Entangle 14), **Broadsword** (Forged +3; Damage 14), **Casting Net** (Entangle 10), **Short Sword** (Forged +2; Damage 12), 2 × **Barbed Throwing Nets** (Range 8–16 yards/4–8 hexes; Entangle 11), 2 × **Daggers** (Forged +1; Damage 9; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), 2 × **Spears** (Forged +3; Damage 13; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), **Thread Longbow** (Rank 4; Damage 16; Range 60–120 yards/30–60 hexes), **Quiver** (20 longbow arrows)

Thread Items

Protective Bandanna (Rank 4; SocDef +1; SpellDef +2; Steel Thought +1 Rank Bonus)

Equipment

Craftsman Tools, Fishing Kit, Forge Tools, Mapmaking Tools, Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case, Wealthy Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

550 silver pieces

Legend Award

Eighth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Notes

As a t'skrang, Aemilius possesses the Tail Combat racial ability.

Boatman Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests

Fifth Circle: Flow of Kiatsu

Sixth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on Action Tests on riverboats

Eighth Circle: +1 Physical Defense

Swordmaster Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Social Defense

Fifth Circle: Flourish

Commentary

Aemilius Vellunium is a t'skrang Eighth Circle Boatman and Sixth Circle Swordmaster.

The Breeton II

Speed: 7 **Base Price:** NA
Maneuverability: 7 **Firepower:** 17/17

Hull:

Armor: 15 **Ramming:** 25
Cargo: 220

Damage:

Derelict: 67 **Critical:** 21
Destroyed: 74

Crew:

Captain: 8 (14) **Crew Size:** 40
Morale: 60 **Crew Rating:** 17

The Dreadnought

The origins of the *Dreadnought* can be traced back to House Syrtis' Prince Kalieston, the questor of Upandal who first dreamed of building the largest riverboat ever constructed, one the size of a kila. Most Namegivers recognized the folly of the proposal immediately but expressed little surprise, as many questors of Upandal seem to be "a few bricks shy of a load" (as the saying goes). Few people, however, expected the Syrtisian High Chamber to seriously consider the prince's idea, let alone commission the vessel's construction. Apparently, several influential chamber members

decided that a giant riverboat would be just the thing to restore House Syrtis' waning prestige among Barsaive's political powers, and so they persuaded their colleagues to provide money to build the ship.

In later years, the project seemed to take on a life of its own. Several chamber members tried to stop it at different times, but in each instance a majority of the chamber members overruled them. Apparently, many prominent *aropagoinya* had grown wealthy after being awarded contracts to work on the project. Many chamber members also feared that stopping the project meant implicitly admitting that they had been wasting the *aropagoi's* money all along. And so work continued.

Finally, after 20 years and several cost overruns, Prince Kalieston unveiled the finished *Dreadnought*. The massive vessel proved an immediate success. 200 yards long and 80 yards wide, with eight decks, three paddle wheels, and four separate fire engines, the ship's size alone left most onlookers awestruck. When the *Dreadnought* reached unprecedented speeds of more than 35 miles an hour during its maiden voyage, the experts declared Prince Kalieston a genius. The prince, however, was entirely dissatisfied with the *Dreadnought's* performance. Vowing that the vessel could move even faster, he set to work retuning the fire engines. The next day, one of the fire engines exploded as Kalieston worked on it, and the prince died.

The engineers of Syrtis replaced the engine and repaired the damage, but they have never been able to duplicate Prince Kalieston's precise tuning of the *Dreadnought's* three paddlewheels. Some say that only a questor of Upandal in the rapturous throes of the Passion could perform this task, but even other questors have failed to duplicate Kalieston's feat. As a result, the *Dreadnought* is no faster than a war galley and even less maneuverable. Furthermore, the rebuilt *Dreadnought* consumes an enormous quantity of elemental fire. The vessel's elemental fire consumption is so high, in fact, that it prevents the Syrtisians from moving the vessel more than a few miles, much less the hundreds of miles to Kaer Eidolon and the Ishkarat enemy. The *Dreadnought* remains an impressive gun platform, thanks to its powerful fire cannon, but the massive riverboat seems destined to languish at anchor just outside the Doors of Shivos until Syrtisian engineers can solve its fire engine problems.

The Dreadnought

Speed: 6 **Base Price:** NA
Maneuverability: 5 **Firepower:** 20/25

Hull:

Armor: 25 **Ramming:** 30
Cargo: 1,130

Damage:

Derelict: 108 **Critical:** 29
Destroyed: 114

Crew:

Captain: 6 **Crew Size:** 400
Morale: 82 **Crew Rating:** 18

BELIT SHUSTAL SYRTIS, CAPTAIN OF THE MISTRAL

Belit Shustal Syrtis is one of the wizened old river rats of the Serpent, a veteran of the Theran War with the scars to prove it. A controversial supporter of House Syrtis' Green faction, Belit Shustal held the office of admiral and had been preparing to assume command of Kaer Eidolon when members of the Blue faction took control of the High Chamber. The Blues ousted Belit Shustal from her official position, effectively canceling her plans to

take command at Eidolon. As her last official act, however, Belit Shustal assigned herself command of one the *aropagoi*'s sleek new V'strimonian *shimorams* and hand-picked a crew. Belit Shustal met her successor, Admiral T'kraidos, on the docks at Kaer Eidolon only long enough to relinquish her command, then immediately boarded the *Mistral* and set about doing what she does best—making derelicts out of enemy ships.

The last time Belit Shustal brought the *Mistral* in for repairs, the new admiral surprised her by replacing half of her carefully chosen crew with a squadron of elves from Queen Alachia's army, "to promote better relations between the races." In recent months, however, T'kraidos' thinly veiled attempt to hamstring his rival's ability to destroy enemy vessels and win further glory has proved a failure. Initially Belit Shustal believed that the traditional animosity between the Syrtisian t'skrang and the elves, combined with the close quarters in which a *shimoram* crew must live, would result in disaster. But after seeing a phalanx of elven archers with warbows launch a volley of arrows across a hundred yards for the first time, she realized that her mixed crew could present a deadly threat to any opponent.

She immediately began running the *Mistral*'s crew through training drills aimed at promoting unity among them, and within weeks the elves and t'skrang were working as one. Subsequent military successes further helped cement unity among the crew, which is quickly earning a reputation as one of the Mid Reach's finest.

▲ ▲ ▲

While we remain grateful to House Syrtis, they must keep in mind the decisive role we played in the Battle of Sejanus. Without our aid, I doubt their ability to have driven off the ferocious Ishkarat.

—Takaris Talshara, Blood Warder

▲ ▲ ▲

The *Mistral* is a V'strimon *shimoram* (see the **Riverboats** chapter, p.117) and Belit has improved its speed and armor attributes. The t'skrang crewmen are crack troops, as are the elves from the queen's army. The *Mistral*'s second Firepower rating is based on the ship's elven archers and damages only the crews of opposing ships.

Belit Shustal is a Seventh Circle t'skrang Boatman.

BELIT SHUSTAL

Attributes

DEX (15): 6 STR (14): 6 TOU (18): 7
PER (17): 7 WIL (14): 6 CHA (18): 7

Characteristics

Initiative: 6 Physical Defense: 11
Physical Armor: 6 Spell Defense: 10
Mystic Armor: 5 Social Defense: 10
Death: 84 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 69 Knockdown: 6*
Wound Threshold: 12 Movement: 6

Karma Points: 28/28

* Belit knows the Wound Balance talent

Boatman Talents (Knacks)

Avoid Blow* (8): 14
Cast Net^D (7): 13
Climbing^D (7): 13
Durability [7/6] (7): 7
Karma Ritual^D (7): 7
Heartening Laugh (7): 14
Lion Heart^D (7): 13
Melee Weapons^D (8): 14



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Pilot Boat^D (8): 15 (Broadside)
Read River^D (8): 15
Second Weapon^D (7): 13
Speak Language (7): 14—(Human/Scavian, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Theran, Troll, Windling)
Swimming^D (7): 13
Swing Attack^D (7): 13
Thread Weaving (River Weaving)^D (7): 14
Throwing Weapons (7): 13
Unarmed Combat (7): 13
Wound Balance (7): 13

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

^{*} Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

^{*} Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Boots

Skills

Acrobatic Strike (4): 10
Craftsman (Tailor)^A (4): 10
Fishing (4): 11
Mapmaking^A (4): 11
Military Procedures^K (4): 11
Read/Write Language (1): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic)
Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, T'skrang)
Tactics (4): 11
Theran Military Organization^K (4): 11
T'skrang Politics^K (4): 11
^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Thread Padded Leather Armor (Rank 4; Phys 6; Myst 3)

Weapons

Barbed Net (Damage 8; Entangle 14), **Broadsword** (Forged +3; Damage 14), **Casting Net** (Entangle 10), **Short Sword** (Forged +2; Damage 12), 2 × **Barbed Throwing Nets** (Range 8–16 yards/4–8 hexes; Entangle 11), 2 × **Daggers** (Forged +1; Damage 9; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), 2 × **Spears** (Forged +3; Damage 13; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), **Elven Warbow** (Forged +3; Damage 14; Range 48–96 yards/24–48 hexes), Quiver (20 warbow arrows)

Thread Items

Protective Boots (Rank 4; PhysDef +2; SpellDef +1; Avoid Blow +1 Rank Bonus)

Equipment

Craftsman Tools, Elfweave Robe (tailored to fit t'skrang), Embroidery Tools, Fishing Kit, Mapmaking Tools, Wealthy Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

210 silver pieces

Legend Award

Seventh Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Notes

As a t'skrang, Belit possesses the Tail Combat racial ability.

Boatman Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests

Fifth Circle: Flow of Kiatsu

Sixth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on Action Tests on riverboats

The Mistral

Speed: 8

Base Price: NA

Maneuverability: 8

Firepower: 17/17 (12/12)

Hull:

Armor: 16

Ramming: 28

Cargo: 125

Damage:

Derelict: 68

Critical: 21

Destroyed: 75

Crew:

Captain: 10 (16)

Crew Size: 75

Morale: 67

Crew Rating: 17

Special

The elven archers' separate 12/12 Firepower attack affects only enemy crews.

HOUSE V'STRIMON

House V'strimon, the House of Reeds, is one of the Serpent's oldest t'skrang *aropagoi*. The members of the *aropagoi* describe the origins of their house and its magnificent Floating City with the following tale of the Old Man of the Nets:

Now it was after the Parliament of Mermaids, after he had caught the Great Sea Bass wearing the Sign of the Wheel and set it as Bailiff over the prison he built to hold the Deep Ones, when the Old Man of the Nets sailed home to his house by Lake Ban. And when he pulled up his boat on the shore he saw his wife, V'ranna of the Many Baskets, sitting there weaving the reeds with a look on her face that could curdle an egg in its shell.

"I am home, good wife," called the Old Man of the Nets.

"It is well," said V'ranna, who did not rise to greet him.

"What ails thee, my V'ranna?" asked the Old Man with a sigh.

"For six turns of the moon, you have been journeying," said his wife, ever weaving. "The larder is empty, there is no wood for the fire, the garden needs weeding, and my bed has grown cold. And now here you come without fish, without firewood, and ask 'what ails thee, wife of mine?'"



Quickly, the Old Man produced from his pocket the seed he had been given by the Parliament of Mermaids. "All this is true, my dearest V'ranna, but here I have a gift from the folk under the river, and they tell me it shall grow a reed that will make you a basket greater than any you have made before."

At this V'ranna stopped weaving and took the seed from his hand. Then she fixed an icy glare on him, saying, "A reed tomorrow or a basket the day after shall neither feed me nor warm me by sundown today. Any gift from a mermaid is a foul gift indeed, and better it go to the depths of the lake before we let a weed like this into our garden." And she threw the seed out across the waters, where it sank straight to the deepest part of the lake.

And so the Old Man of the Nets resumed his old life, gathering fish for the larder, cutting wood for the fire, and pulling weeds from the garden. On the days of the half moon, he rowed up the river to market to sell V'ranna's baskets and tell his story of the Great Sea Bass.

Thus, life went on as always until one day the Old Man of the Nets returned from a long journey down the river with the bottom of his boat full of wire eels he had caught near the jungle's edge. But when he came to the place where the river meets Lake Ban, he found his way blocked by a thicket of reeds. The reeds grew all across the river and deep into the lake, and they so muddled the old man's sense of direction that he was forced to leave his boat by the shore and reach home on foot.

When he came to the place where his house once stood, all he could see was covered with reeds. And there was V'ranna, lashing away at the green growth with a sickle, her looks and her words ragged and sharp enough to cut those same reeds with a withering glance.

"Our garden is ruined and our house is gone," V'ranna told her husband. "As fast as I cut them, these weeds grow back. They'll not stop growing till they cover the shore and the whole world. It is unnatural, and you must do something about it this instant!"

And so the Old Man shrugged and pulled out his bone flute, which he had fashioned from the toe bone of Shivoam. He sat on the shore and played, and the Spirit of the River gave heed to his call. V'ranna, who had never before seen the Great Serpent, for once in her life, had nothing to say. She sat down next to the Old Man and held tight to his arm.

Said the Old Man to Shivoam, "We are afflicted, Great Mother. Attend to our need."

And the Great Mother replied with a riddle:

*"Throwing the seed without heed
Makes seed into weed.
Weave weed into reed
and fulfill your need."*

The Old Man and his wife made a meal out of the wire eels and talked deep into the night about the meaning of Shivoam's words. When they awoke the next morning, V'ranna stepped to the shore and began to weave the reeds all around her. She started that morning and wove all through the day, then wove all through the night. She wove all that week and then three weeks more, until the moon had run its cycle and she could weave no more. Every last rush and reed that had choked the surface of the lake had gone to make a basket larger than V'ranna of the Many Baskets had ever made before, a basket of living reeds that floated upside down on the surface of Lake Ban, right in the center over the deepest waters.

The Old Man of the Nets saw what she had done and realized that they no longer needed shelter. He packed his weary wife and all their belongings into his boat, and made their new home in the basket V'ranna had woven. And in time the ever-growing reeds formed the Floating City of House V'strimon.

Because t'skrang love stories more than history, the truth of such legends can never be verified. However, most scholars agree that House V'strimon likely evolved from a confederation of t'skrang river villages that existed long before the arrival of the Therans in Barsaive. If anyone knows the true extent of V'strimon's age, surely the *shivalahala* does, but she has never offered any answer on the subject (other than a haughty "Harrumph").

During the Days of Preparation, when Thera cast its shadow over all of Barsaive, V'strimon stood firmly opposed to Theran subjugation. Even today the *aropagoinya* of House V'strimon loathe slavery above all things, and the *V'strimon Protocols* prescribe death for enslaving a fellow Namegiver. Before the Scourge, House V'strimon controlled trade on the Coil River, and the city of Urupa grew from a V'strimonian trade covenant that settled there when the Scourge ended.

Some time before the Orichalcum Wars, the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin approached the *Shivalahala* V'strimon with a proposition. House K'tenshin wished to extend its control of the Serpent River northward across Lake Ban, at the probable expense of House Syrtis. In return for permission to cross Lake Ban unmolested, House K'tenshin offered to pay House V'strimon a generous yearly fee. After some discussion, the *Shivalahala* V'strimon refused the offer on the grounds that House K'tenshin was deeply involved in the Theran slave trade. That refusal triggered a conflict between the two *aropagoi* that lasted until the sealing of the kaers.

Each year, *bakshevas* collected by K'tenshinian riverboats drained much of House V'strimon's wealth. According to legends, House K'tenshin, aided by the Theran navy, staged at least three full-scale sieges of House V'strimon's island citadel during this time. In retaliation, House V'strimon supported rebels of all kinds who sought to free the lands along the Serpent River from Theran control.

These years also saw the birth of the alliance between House V'strimon and Throal, which continues to this day. Throal often used its position as the Therans' administrators in Barsaive to intervene on behalf of its t'skrang allies along the Coil River, and House V'strimon would surely have faced larger Theran forces if not for Throal's intervention. In return, House V'strimon's riverboats provided Throal with a way to circumvent Thera's impossibly complicated tax levies and House K'tenshin's outrageous transportation rates.

When the king of Throal presented the *Shivalahala* V'strimon with a copy of the *Book of Tomorrow* in the years before the Scourge, she reportedly became intrigued with the way the dwarfs had captured so much of their culture's vital essence in written words. Inspired by the feat, she resolved to create a similar treatise for the t'skrang even as her people sealed the Floating City against the Scourge. Combining her ancestral memories with the work of scribes and scholars from her library, she undertook the transfer of t'skrang oral traditions to written words. The fruits of her labor survive today as the *V'strimon Protocols*, a collection of writings to which the *aropagoinya* of House V'strimon add a new volume every year.

After the Scourge, the riverboats of House V'strimon were among the first to venture out from the safety of their kaer. Indeed, the airship *Earthdawn's* first encounter on its momentous journey out of Throal was a meeting with the V'strimonian riverboat *Shikasta* on the upper reaches of the Coil River. V'strimon crews were the first t'skrang to establish regular trade with Throal, the first to establish trade with the fledgling city of Urupa, and the first to cross the Aras Sea to lands beyond Barsaive. Today, these trading relationships form the foundation of House V'strimon's prosperous economic empire.

When the Therans returned to Barsaive, House V'strimon left no room for doubt about its contempt for the invaders. The *aropagoi's* riverboats regularly went out of their way to raid Theran river outposts, harass Theran troops on the march, and rescue entire river towns from the

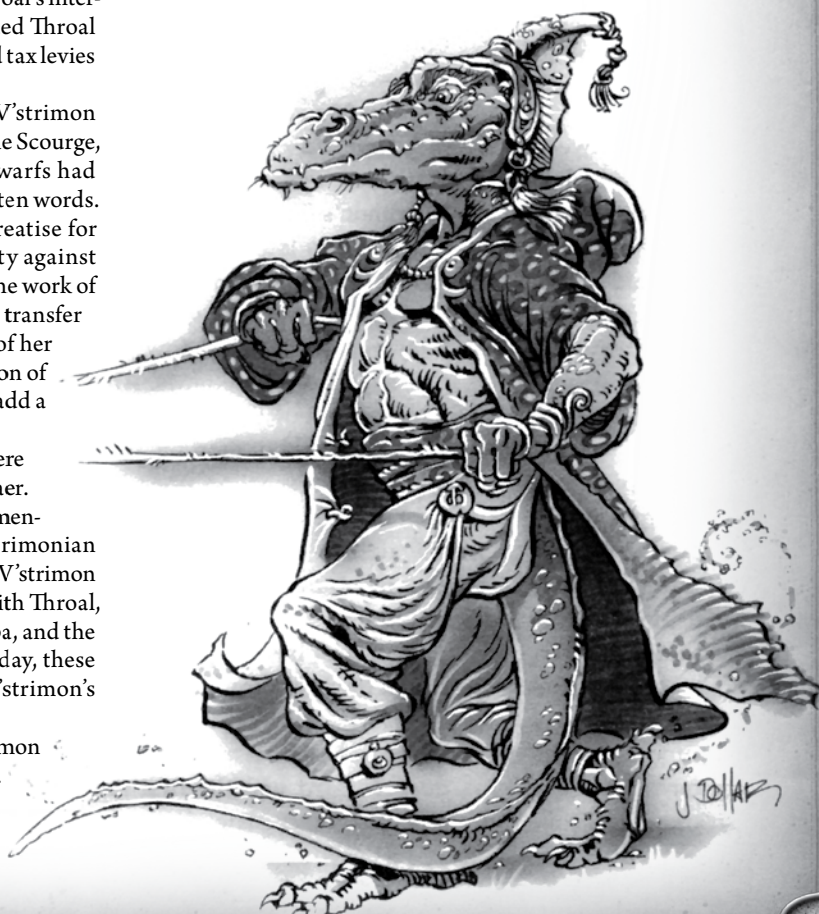
clutches of Theran slavers. More important, gallant V'strimonian riverboat crews and captains such as the famed Westhrall regularly ran a gauntlet of Theran airships and infantry to transport desperately needed food and raw materials up the Coil River to the besieged dwarfs. The heroic actions of the t'skrang enabled Throal to withstand a Theran blockade designed to starve the dwarf kingdom into submission. In 1456 TH, House V'strimon's continued support for Throal prompted Overgovernor Fallan Pavelis to deploy a fleet of 20 vedettes and a kila to destroy the riverboats docked in the harbor of the Floating City. Omoo of Urupa, an obsidiman Troubadour visiting the court of V'strimon, recounts the story, which stands today as House V'strimon's finest hour.

It was a late summer evening during the dark of the moon when word arrived from the Tower of Air that the Theran fleet was flying toward V'strimon. The *Shivalahala* V'strimon had just sat down to dinner, and everyone in the hall fell silent at the news. All eyes turned to the leader of the House, but the *shivalahala* continued to help herself from the plates of food on the table without saying a word. The messenger stood uneasily, shifting from foot to foot, his tail twitching. The crowd remained speechless as the *shivalahala* calmly picked up her fork and began to eat. The messenger repeated himself in his strongest voice, sounding all the louder in the surrounding stillness. "The Theran fleet has set course for our city and will reach here before daybreak tomorrow!"

After several mouthfuls of food, the *shivalahala* looked at the messenger and said, "Youngling, I'm not deaf. I heard you the first time." Then she returned her attention to her plate.

The young messenger, put out by this display of apparent indifference, said, "But Great Mother, what do you intend to do?"

The *shivalahala* put down her fork, wiped her lips with her napkin, and replied, "I intend to finish my supper. Worrying is bad for the digestion." And she took her fork in hand again and helped herself to more fish.



All that night, the *shivalahala* remained serene. When the castellan asked for instructions on deploying his regiments along the city's perimeter, the *shivalahala* said, "There's no cause for alarm. Let the young men sleep." When the harbormaster requested permission to evacuate the docks and send the riverboats south to Urupa, the *shivalahala* gently refused, reminding him that shipments were due in Throal that week. When the leader of the council of trade covenants suggested the *shivalahala* assemble the people of the city inside the Great Hall for their own safety, she replied that there was no need for such action. Instead, she held a brief audience with the chief steward of the city's College of the Vine and retired earlier than usual.

An hour before sunrise, the *Shivalahala* V'strimon awoke and came to see me before any of her greatly astonished servants could catch up to her. She appeared at the door to my room at the palace, dressed in a simple patterned robe like those worn by the novitiates of magical orders. She grinned the crooked grin peculiar to t'skrang and said, "I have need of an obsidiman who can sing."

I dressed swiftly—most unusual for one of my race—and followed her as she bustled to the foot of the city's Tower of Earth. There she found the entire College of the Vine waiting for her. I remember the chief steward was carrying a long length of rope coiled across his shoulder. Together, we all marched to the top of the tower like a squad of warriors deploying to repel the invader.

We spoke a general blessing in the Name of Garlen, preserver of hearth and home; then an unusually long and detailed prayer to Jaspree, Caretaker of Barsaive. Everyone stood in a circle around the *shivalahala*. The chief steward took the rope, handed one end to the t'skrang on his left, wrapped the rope around the *shivalahala's* waist, then went back to the edge of the circle to the next t'skrang on the left. When he had repeated this for each individual in the circle—ten times in all—the rope connected the *shivalahala* to her servants in a pattern of loops, like the petals of a flower. We waited there in the darkness before the dawn, alert and yet strangely relaxed, until the first light in the east caught the hulls of the advancing Theran vedettes.

Not until then did I realize that the rope was made of braided reeds. The t'skrang on the outside of the circle pulled their loops taut and began to walk slowly around the *shivalahala*, who pivoted in her bonds. As they walked, the t'skrang slapped their tails against the ground with whiplike force. The beating became a rhythm, and the walk became a slow, sedate dance. Then I knew what song I had been brought there to sing. It was the song of the Dreaming, the song my people share when anticipating the merging with the Liferock. At first my voice faltered, for the song is not for energy-wasters. But each time the circle completed a revolution, the *shivalahala* locked her eyes with mine, and I could not refuse her unspoken request. Gradually the tempo of the dance quickened, forcing me to use all my skill as an adept to keep up.

The dancers on the edge of the circle wove in and out among each other, and the floral pattern of the rope began to take a new, more complex form. The radius of the circle began to collapse toward the *shivalahala* as her bonds tightened, and the rope patterns grew more intricate. I felt a tremor underfoot, as if the whole tower were responding to the ritual, and I sensed the impending Oneness that an obsidiman normally feels only near a Liferock.

Electrified, I felt the energy of the dance take astral form and launch itself toward the Theran fleet. Suddenly the two vedettes in the vanguard dropped like stones from the sky. Within moments the other Theran vessels followed, as though the airships were ordinary boats that had tumbled over a waterfall. But they did not float when they struck the water. Instead, they vanished beneath Lake Ban with barely a ripple. Not one vessel survived the awesome might of that spell, not even the vast kila. The *shivalahala's* magic had sunk the Theran fleet.

After later research, I came to understand that the Elementalists of the College of the Vine had cast a spell they call Earth and Air against the Theran airships. The spell transformed all the kernels of elemental air inside the Theran fleet into elemental earth. With nothing to hold them in the sky, the ships fell to the ground far faster than ever they had left it. It truly was an awe-inspiring experience, and I doubt that I shall ever see its like again.

THE FLOATING CITY OF HOUSE V'STRIMON

At the center of Lake Ban lies the Floating City of House V'strimon. Five towers, arranged in the shape of a perfect pentagon around a sixth tower, form the foundation of the city. Hanging on and growing between these towers is a floating island of densely woven reeds more than 300 yards across at the widest point. A hexagonal weave is used in the platform, which is composed solely from live specimens of the lake's unique reed species. Tradition holds that the island is a single, living organism growing from a central root that extends all the way to the deepest part of Lake Ban. The reed island supports the weight of the city's remaining structures, which include riverboat piers and buildings more than three stories tall.

Each year, just after the first crocus blooms, the entire island blossoms with lustrous, purple flowers. The *aropagoinya* mark the occasion with the Festival of Flowers, a three-day holiday. At the end of the festival the city's residents pick all the remaining flowers and throw them onto the surface of the lake, where the current of the Serpent carries them down the river to the sea.

Were it possible to cram any more people into such a confined space, the Floating City might rival Travar and Bartertown for the title of Barsaive's most populous city. As it is, the city's relatively small size and its network of interlaced canals limit the amount of living space available. Despite these limitations, an impressive number of t'skrang make their homes in the Floating City, and the city's canals are choked with boats ferrying passengers and goods from place to place.

Though its appearance suggests otherwise, the Floating City is actually a citadel covered by a dome of densely woven elemental air. Beneath the surface of the lake, the city is protected by an equally impenetrable system of massive *refselenika*. The *refs* provided excellent protection against Horrors during the Scourge, and even today few non-V'strimon riverboat captains are capable of navigating the *refs* without endangering their ships and crews. As a result, most outsiders prefer to dock at one of the landings along the lakeshore and hire a V'strimon guide to take their ships into the Floating City. No one has successfully entered the city from the air since the end of the Scourge.

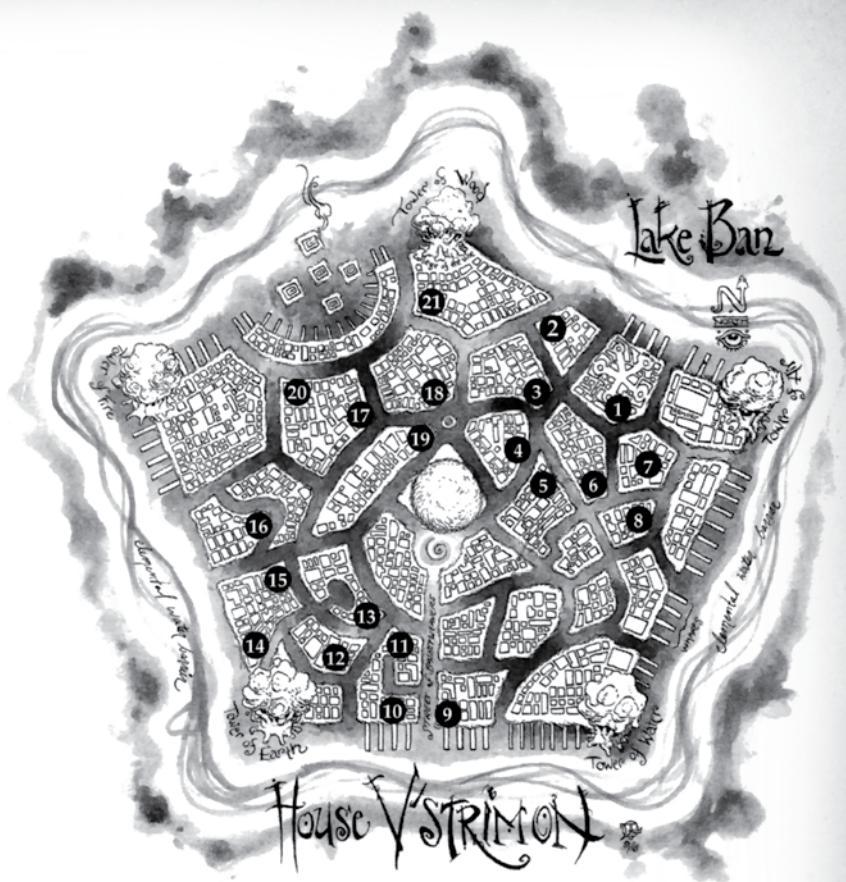
Once within the *refs*, a riverboat must cross more than 300 yards of open water before reaching the docks on the city's perimeter. This extra space may seem excessive, but vessels must frequently circle the city to find an open dock, as all are operated on a first come, first served basis. Travelers should keep this in mind when boarding a ferry to the city, because the arrangement prevents a ferryboat captain from knowing precisely where in the city he will land his vessel.

The docks are a patchwork of independently owned and operated facilities. Most *ref* guides know of an open berth somewhere in the city, but the traveler should be warned that the open dock will invariably belong to the guide's cousin, who pays a commission to his relative from the docking charge. Expect to haggle over the docking fee, which may be quite high. However, a well-paid V'strimonian dockmaster will watch over a ship in his care as if it were his own child.

The only vessels with assigned berths are V'strimon's war vessels, which dock at an isolated wharf reserved for their use on the

MAP KEY

#	Location
1	V'strimon Central Foundation
2	Upandal's Pride
3	Vranna's Basket
4	The Mermaid's Gift
5	Erendis
6	Dragonclaw
7	P'skarrot
8	Golden Crescent
9	Red Crest
10	Serpent's Coil
11	Watched by Chorrolis
12	T'schlone
13	Laughter in the Water
14	Swift Runner
15	Shivoam's Daughter
16	Whispering Wheel
17	Old Man of the Nets
18	Astendar's Dart
19	Riversong
20	D'zur's Longing
21	Lady of the Lake



3

northeast side of the city. The V'strimon fleet contains five warships. Two are based in Urupa, another at Kaer Eidolon near the Blood Wood, and a fourth patrols for pirates along the Serpent River between Lake Ban and Lake Pyros. The fifth warship is stationed at the Floating City, but even this vessel regularly sets out on various missions.

On almost any day, three to six V'strimon *shimorams* are docked at the fleet's wharf. These ships are about half the size of a typical t'skrang trading vessel. Unlike most riverboats, which have flat bottoms, *shimorams* have keels. This feature makes the *shimoram* faster and more maneuverable than any other type of fire-driven river ship. The *shimorams* are built in nearby villages, close to the raw materials used in their construction.

The city's armory and the V'strimon Foundation House are located near the war fleet's wharf. The armory is a long, low warehouse that holds caches of elemental air and fire kernels for use in fire cannons and fire engines, as well as enough armor and weapons to outfit 1,000 soldiers. The V'strimon Foundation House is actually a maze of interconnected houses and courtyards where sailors on leave from the war fleet can bivouac for a nominal fee.

The Marketplaces

The Floating City contains four main markets. The largest is located in the Plaza of the Scarves in the southeast corner of the city. This market serves as the central exchange for the trade routes of the Coil and Serpent Rivers, and contains auction houses, trading pits, warehouses, and specialty shops that offer every trade good imaginable. Many of the city's best inns and taverns lie along the edges of this market, catering to the often wealthy merchants who frequent the Plaza.

The busiest part of the Plaza of the Scarves is marked by a huge slate chalkboard labeled "Covenant Share Market." Here, individu-

als can meet with agents from t'skrang villages all along the Serpent River network and purchase associate shares in each village's annual riverboat journeys. Scribes of the share market record all transactions and provide documentation to both buyer and seller. When a riverboat completes its trip, shareholders can claim their cut of the profits from the village's agent at the share market.

When purchasing covenant shares, travelers must be wary of fraud. Mere months ago an agent from the village of Astoras appeared in the share market one day, extolling the virtues of owning a share of the riverboat *Serpentreach*. The agent said Astoras had been blessed with bumper crops of *kiratai* and *ustendar*, and expected to realize a handsome profit. Investors lined up by the hundreds for a share in the rich prize. Every three weeks the agent from Astoras appeared in the market with a letter from the captain of the *Serpentreach*, describing the incredible profits he was making as he traveled along the river. The price of the associate shares spiraled.

Then one day a traveler from the village of Sherah entered the market, saw the price on shares of the *Serpentreach* and begged to know the reason for the extraordinary cost. "You see," she said, "Sherah has a shipyard, and we have been laboring all summer to repair the *Serpentreach* of Astoras."

Within minutes an angry mob of investors had surrounded the so-called agent from Astoras. The "agent" turned out to be a Sherahan thief who had manufactured the entire ruse. The rogue was brought before the *Shivalahala* V'strimon, who had agents of her own seize the thief's tidy nest egg. His possessions were auctioned and all the money returned to the investors, though none recovered their full losses. The *shivalahala* then had the thief's tail cut off and the perpetrator thrown into the lake just outside the city's refs.

A visitor who asks a city native for directions to the "main market" will eventually find himself at the Solarus, a huge checkerboard of stalls and shops located at the base of the Tower of Fire on the city's

west side. At the Solarus, city dwellers buy their food and household items. Customers can choose from hundreds of varieties of rice, fish, fruits, beans, pots, pans, baskets—virtually anything imaginable. Finding a particular item, however, can be a challenge. The Solarus is a maze with very few landmarks, and vendors in search of the perfect location constantly exchange stalls with each other. The visitor who asks for directions to a particular merchant's stall is likely to be laughed at, misled, or sold something that is "not quite what you were looking for, but much cheaper." The Solarus remains open late into the night, doing business long after sunset by the light of the flame at the top of the Tower of Fire.

The Floating City's other main markets specialize in baskets and preserved fish. The Street of Basketweavers is a single canal that runs straight from the edge of the island to the center of the city. The canal is wide enough to accommodate the large skiffs that collect reeds from the South Marsh. These skiffs stop at each of the long row houses along the canal, where they sell their wares to the seven *k'rohyin*, or trade covenants, that specialize in the art of basketweaving for House V'strimon. Each *k'rohyin* has as many as 200 skilled craftsmen who turn the reeds into watertight baskets, baskets that preserve food against spoilage, decorative mats, and a myriad of other unusual basket designs. Although other basketmakers sell their wares in the Floating City, the trade covenants on the Street of the Basketweavers are renowned as the best in Barsaive.

The fish sellers conduct their business in the Plaza of Spices, located near the city's northwest wharves. The pungent aromas of fresh fish, pickled fish, and fresh spices—which most *aropagoinya* of House V'strimon think of as the good smells of home—engulf this market. The marketplace is built on six small islands inside a small harbor. Each island contains a large building, some as high as five stories, that house the so-called cooking covenants of House V'strimon. The facilities of these *k'rohyin* resemble armed encampments, so jealously do the fish cookers guard their secret techniques. To gain entry to a covenant kitchen, a visitor must produce the token of the covenant and know the password, which changes each day.

Every morning and evening, fishing boats crowd the market's eastern wharf, unloading the day's catch under the watchful eyes of the *k'rohyin* agents. The agents purchase fish by the boatload, then send for boats from their kitchens to pick up the fish. The laden kitchen boats enter their covenant houses by fortified gateways. Other *k'rohyin* agents buy spices and other ingredients from other markets and carefully transport their purchases to their covenant houses under the same tight security. Generally, *k'rohyin* agents

are suspicious of outsiders as well as agents from rival covenant houses, for the fish trade is so lucrative that competitors often resort to espionage and other extreme measures in their quests for ever-larger profits.

The Baths

Another feature of this distinctly t'skrang city is the plethora of bathing sites along the city's north, south, and west shorelines. Typically, bathing sites consist of wooden boardwalks that lead down to the water and buoy lines that extend 50 feet out from the water's edge to protect swimmers from encroaching boats. Boats that violate the bathing zones are subject to fines of up to 100 silver pieces. Most of the bathing sites also feature small shelters and buildings. Some are changing rooms, where bathers can leave their clothes and towels. Others are drying rooms with fire pits, in deference to the t'skrang sensitivity to temperature shifts.

During the early morning hours, when the bathing sites are most crowded, food vendors pull their carts to the boardwalks to offer bathers a little breakfast after their morning dips. Other vendors sell scented water, soap, and perfume. Non-t'skrang are advised to bring their own combs and brushes—t'skrang have no hair, and so no vendor sells such items.

The Floating City also boasts several private bathing sites for those put off by the spectacle of public bathing. The most famous is the Baths of the Nine Passions in the southwest part of town. For a fee of 40 silver pieces, a customer can receive nine ritual baths, each Named for one of the Passions. Each bath features a unique combination of temperature, scent, and atmosphere. For example, the Bath of Upandal is a steamy sauna with the sulfurous aroma of coal, while the Bath of Jaspre features cool water scented with rose and sweet jasmine. Wine is served in the Bath of Floranuus, while a magnificent banquet is provided in the Bath of Chorrolis. The Bath of Astendar has gained a lascivious reputation, the sole basis for which is a Troubadour song made popular during the Theran War, the refrain of which is: "I'll be hoping and dreaming to meet you alone by the Bath of Astendar in V'strimon."

THE FOUNDATION HOUSES

The central foundation of House V'strimon includes approximately 1,000 t'skrang from villages along the Coil and Serpent Rivers and Lake Ban. Advancement to the central foundation is a great honor, and those who are chosen are proud to show the brace-

ADVENTURE HOOK

The Golden Reed, a tavern near the Plaza of Scarves, is losing business. The tavern has a reputation as a high-class establishment, with prices of 50 silvers or more for a meal—however, its proven reputation brings wealthy clientele and the place is (normally) rarely empty. Sh'ondla, the t'skrang owner, has no idea why she is losing customers.

S'hondla asks the characters to help her investigate why the tavern is losing its reputation. Recently, she overheard a conversation between a rival tavern-owner and some surly-looking individuals saying that "the Reed will not serve for much longer". She can give the characters the Name of the rival: Nochurr, an ork with a bad reputation and owner of The Smiling Crojen. Despite its rough name, the tavern serves meals and wine of high quality, and competes directly with The Golden Reed for custom-

ers. Nochurr inherited the tavern a few months ago when his brother (and former owner) of the tavern died in an accident. The ork found a rundown house frequented only by dock workers looking to get drunk on cheap ale after the end of their work shift.

Nochurr wants to establish The Smiling Crojen as a new high-quality tavern. He decided to sabotage The Golden Reed—hiring a human Thief Named Mugga—to get rid of the competition. Mugga spread rumors on the streets and markets: "customers of the Reed got sick after eating their meal," and "the tavern's kitchen is filthy and full of vermin," and other defamatory stories of the gamemaster's invention. The characters can confront Nochurr or try to find Mugga (who is well-known in the local underworld) and help restore The Golden Reed's excellent and well-deserved reputation.

lets of reeds that betoken their membership. The central foundation serves as a pool of manpower and leadership for the *aropagoi's* war fleet, but the *niall* is not a tightly bound organization in the manner of ork scorcher bands or trollmoots. Rather, the members of the central foundation enjoy certain privileges, such as the opportunity to join the crew of their choice, captain a warship, or even to go home to their villages as heroes. Chief among the perquisites of central foundation membership is a room in the V'strimon Foundation House, located near the armory.

The V'strimon Foundation House is considered the finest place to live anywhere on the river (at least among t'skrang). The foundation house is a maze of courtyards, gardens, and fountains in which every turn greets the stranger with new surprises. The house, with room for a thousand or more t'skrang, is run like a cross between a luxury inn and a genuine village dome. A sailor returning from duty with the fleet will find a private room waiting for him, with clean bedding and many other amenities. He may stay as long as desired, with room, board, and a whole host of services provided for nominal fees. The foundation house also maintains an egg hatchery and an exemplary school system for hatchlings born of the foundation members.

Twice a year, during the meetings of the *aropagoi's* Council of Crew Covenants, the V'strimon Foundation House becomes a madhouse as crews from every V'strimon riverboat converge for a week of revelry and renewed acquaintances. But for much of the rest of the year, the foundation house is a quiet place with relatively few inhabitants. The housekeepers are a friendly but motley crew, made up of retired *aropagoinya*, grown children who never ventured out on the river, and a small staff of retirees from the inns around the Plaza of the Scarves.

Shortly after the founding of the Floating City, many of the best craftsmen in V'strimon's sphere of influence began to leave their home villages to join the trade covenants of the city. To satisfy the desire of these t'skrang for membership in a foundation, the *Shivalahala* V'strimon established a new kind of foundation called the *niall dynasthai*, or "powerful foundation." Each of these fraternal orders is dedicated to supporting one of the 20 "motherships" in the V'strimon fleet.

The motherships serve as reminders of House V'strimon's proud history. Six of these vessels provide ferry service around Lake Ban. Four more are showboats that travel the Serpent, providing entertainment. The remaining ten conduct regular trading voyages. None of the motherships are part of the *aropagoi's* war fleet; the t'skrang of V'strimon recognize that arming riverboats for war produces little profit.

Members of the central foundation and *niall dynasthai's* pay regular dues to support and supply their motherships, in much the same way as traditional crew covenants. The crews of many of these ships, however, are drawn from outside the foundation or *niall*. *Niall* members also share in the profits realized by their mothership crews.

Each *niall* also maintains a foundation house where *niall* members may live. The typical foundation house includes interconnected living quarters, usually with one central dining area and kitchen. Some of the foundation houses even have their own *lahalas*. Most maintain rooms for egtending and distribute hatchlings to menfolk who wish to sample the joys of parenting. Most important, the *nialls* operate schools where students may learn the particular craft of the *niall*. For example, the school of V'ranna's Basket is located near the Street of the Basketmakers and teaches the nuances of basket weaving. Troubadours run the school of Riversong, and the school of Upandal's Pride produces exemplary Boatmen. Any t'skrang can join a *niall* by paying the required dues, but each *niall* may discharge any member it finds too disruptive by refunding his dues.

Each year after the spring meeting of the V'strimon crew council, the *nialls* decorate their motherships for the Council Review festival. During this festival, the 20 motherships, along with any V'strimon warships in port, parade around the shores of Lake Ban, then enter the *refs* and circumnavigate the Floating City. At the southwest wharf, near the Plaza of Scarves, the *Shivalahala* V'strimon reviews the vessels and awards a special flag, called the Golden Scarf, to the most beautiful ship. The event is grand spectacle as only the t'skrang can appreciate, and the *nialls* plan their decorating schemes weeks in advance.



*While I'm usually not much for the t'skrang arts,
I'd tell anyone to go out of his way to behold the sheer beauty
and majesty of these ships. They go a long way to make
an airship look homely and down to earth.*

—Vrayma Dawnharrow of
Clan Burntclaw, Troubadour



THE SIX TOWERS

The five outlying towers of the Floating City are Named after the five elements: wood, fire, air, earth, and water. The Tower of Wood is actually an enormous tree that draws sustenance from the island's reeds. The reeds and vines are so closely intertwined with

ADVENTURE HOOK

The basketmakers on the Street of the Basketweavers are said to be the best in Barsaive; a reputation that has tempted many rivals to find out about the secrets of their mastership. Not long ago, the basketmaker Named S'rakar began to sell supreme work for a surprisingly low prices. As a result, the other weavers are afraid to lose their income, and hire the characters to investigate the secret of the new weaver to learn how he can operate on such a low budget.

At their investigations the group discovers that S'rakar's partner, a gnarled old human man Named Qulbas, is actually a questor of Vestrial. The questor arrived at the Floating City only a few weeks earlier and exploited S'rakar's habit of compulsive gambling. The t'skrang can't resist a game of cards or throwing some dices and has become heavily indebted by criminals. Qulbas bought off

S'rakar's debts and forced him to lower his prices drastically. If pressed S'rakar will break and tell the whole story, including that he is effectively operating at a loss. The t'skrang hopes that the characters will help him one way or another and points them to the place Qulbas lives.

Qulbas resides in a brothel not far from the Street of the Basketweavers. There he gathered a group of "loyal" followers around him, people that are also indebted to him (including the brothel owner, Fulkan). When confronted, he orders his followers to take care of the characters. Qulbas is rich and resourceful, and will flee the brothel if the player characters become a serious threat to his mischievous dealings to cause unrest. Of course, he is vengeful and will come back at the characters at a later time...

the tree's trunk and branches that distinguishing where the tree ends and reeds begin is quite difficult. Some say that the Tower of Wood sprang from a seed from the Wyrn Wood, which Queen Dallia sent to the *Shivalahala* V'strimon as a gesture of peace and good will between the elven and t'skrang races. The truth of this tale cannot be confirmed, but elves from all over Barsaive continue to make pilgrimages to see this tree, for it is said that the memory and magic of the ancient pre-Scourge Elven Court live within its branches and leaves.

Suspended with vines from the Tower of Wood are the basket-like quarters of the College of the Vine, the *aropagoi's* school of elemental magic. The college's staff and students are responsible for tending the island's reeds and ensuring their health by performing the required rituals. Traditionally, the *Shivalahala* V'strimon holds the title of master of the college, but in practice the Steward of the Vine oversees the operation of the school. Visitors to the island city should realize that the steward holds magisterial powers that he may wield against anyone found desecrating or destroying the reeds of the Floating City. Although it has not happened in recent memory, the steward may banish perpetrators of such crimes from the Floating City and sentence to death any exiles that return.

To the East of the Tower of Wood, a collection of smaller trees called the Long Grove extends along the lake's edge. The Long Grove is home to a large community of windlings called the Almarra. Originally, the Almarra lived in a kaer in the lake's South Marsh. When a Horror breached the kaer's defenses shortly after the Scourge began, an Almarran Winddancer Named Shirala flew to the Floating City to request refuge for the windling community. The effort of dancing through the citadel's extensive defenses so exhausted her that she collapsed and fell into the waters, and a fisherwoman Named Kreesta rescued her. Not knowing quite what to make of the windling, Kreesta brought Shirala to her *niall's lahalah*, who brought both of them before the *Shivalahala* V'strimon. Shirala begged the *shivalahala* to send a riverboat to rescue the windlings of Almarra. But the *shivalahala* refused the call for aid, claiming that House V'strimon could not risk the breach of its own citadel by sending a riverboat. The *shivalahala* said she could offer Shirala sanctuary within the Floating City, but no more. Then Kreesta the fisherwoman stepped forward and said, "I shall go."

The *jik'harra* of the simple fisherwoman so impressed the *shivalahala* that she granted Kreesta a boon.

"If I were to have a boon, *shivalahala*, it would be that you should come with us," Kreesta replied.

The *shivalahala* suddenly looked very sad and answered, "Ready your boat to sail at dawn." So Kreesta and Shirala prepared all that night for their journey. Just before dawn, the *shivalahala* announced herself with a knock on Kreesta's door and the three of them quietly left the Floating City. The *shivalahala* guided Kreesta's fishing boat through the refs, and Shirala showed them the way to her people's kaer. They found the windlings, as well as the Horror, which the *shivalahala* engaged in a long, bitter battle. During the skirmish, the Horror destroyed Kreesta's boat and killed the *shivalahala*, but not before the V'strimon leader dealt it a mortal blow. And so Kreesta built a raft to carry the Almarra away from their ruined kaer, then pulled the raft across the lake with the strength of her own swimming. When the fisherwoman reached the Floating City's *refselenika*, the voice of the old *shivalahala* spoke to her and guided her through the magical protections. When the group arrived at the Floating City, Kreesta the fisherwoman was no more, and a new *Shivalahala* V'strimon stood in her place.

Ever since that time, the windlings of Almarra have been utterly devoted to the *Shivalahala* V'strimon. In fact, a small, all-female corps of Almarrans known as the Shiralaki comprises the *shivalahala's* only bodyguard. In addition, the Almarra operate the most prestigious (if not always the most dependable) messenger service

in Barsaive. Apparently the Almarra have absorbed some of the renowned t'skrang bravado over the years of their residence in the Floating City; the windlings have developed a reputation for fearlessness in the execution of their duties.

The Tower of Fire contains an elemental spirit that the *shivalahala* rescued from a Horror-marked adept several centuries ago. In gratitude, the spirit, which takes the form of an ever-burning flame, has vowed to guard House V'strimon until the *shivalahala* passes her Name to her successor. Elementalists from across the province come to the tower to converse with this spirit, partly to practice the art of speaking the elemental tongue without fear of reprisal and partly to gain knowledge of changes in the elemental planes since the coming of the Horrors.

The city's Tower of Air is by far the tallest of the six towers, and it, too, has an unusual property. A Boatman who stands atop the Tower of Air can, with proper meditation, view any section of the Serpent River from the Servos Jungle to the Lalai Gorge or any part of the Coil River from its source in the Throal Mountains to the Aras Sea. The view resembles that from the crow's nest of a large riverboat, approximately 30 feet above the water. The observer can move his field of vision along the water at the same speed as a riverboat.

The Tower of Earth, while the shortest tower, still is impressive in its height. Its weight is even more the marvel, as its thick walls and heavy dark stones seem out of place in juxtaposition to the waters of the lake and reeds of the city. Just under its shadow lies a patch of dry earth upon which an obsidimen land house stands. The *shivalahala* apparently had a soft spot for obsidimen and felt such a place would comfort those brave enough to venture on the Serpent's waters. In addition, it has seen much use of late due to frequent visits by the *shivalahala* herself and various obsidimen rumored to be part of the Liferock Rebellion.

A true testament to the t'skrang mastery of water, the Tower of Water is a wonder to behold. It is made of translucent, constantly flowing blocks of elemental water, which provide a breathtaking view to those fortunate enough to find themselves near the tower at sunset. It is said that within carefully guarded areas of the Tower of Water one can sense and manipulate the many *refselenika* that surround the Floating City and that many a V'strimon Boatman has been taught the extent of these defenses there. It is also claimed that in its lower pools one can somehow "feel" all that moves in the waters of Lake Ban, and possibly beyond.

The Dome of House V'strimon

The central tower of the V'strimonian complex is a dome made of the indigenous island reeds. The largest freestanding dome in all of Barsaive, the structure can accommodate the island's entire population in times of crisis. The dome also serves as a meeting hall, where the *Shivalahala* V'strimon gives her public audiences and the *aropagoi's* covenant council conducts meetings on the first day of each new moon. The dome also contains the *shivalahala's* private chambers, which are renowned for the elegant craftsmanship of their extravagant design and furnishings.

Along the southern face of the dome lies the Well of Shivoam, which leads to a sunken pool 40 feet beneath the lake's surface. The walls of the well are made of tightly woven reeds, and three wooden staircases along the well's inner walls lead down to the pool. Three canals that feed the well pass through a series of baffles that prevent boats from tumbling over the edge of the well. Legend has it that after the Old Man of the Nets moved his family to live in V'ranna's Basket, the Spirit of Shivoam would come to visit him in the well. In memory of the Old Man, pilgrims who journey to V'strimon often stop to bathe in the well's sacred waters.

The Floating City's five canals converge just north of the dome. Where they meet lies a small island, on which stands the Westhrall

Memorial—an elemental water sculpture surrounded by fountains and cascades. The memorial commemorates the captain of the riverboat *Astendar's Dart*, a man known only as Westhrall and a much-loved hero of the Theran War. Its origins can be traced back to shortly after the Theran War, when the hero returned to the Floating City to settle down and raise his daughter, Jedaiyen. At that time, Westhrall demanded that the *shivalahala* erect a monument to his achievements in the war. Finding the *shivalahala* cool to the idea, Westhrall commissioned the sculpture and surrounding fountains with his own money. When the *shivalahala* discovered Westhrall's plans, she agreed to provide a place of honor for the statue near the dome.

Upon completion, the Westhrall Memorial was unveiled amid great pomp and ceremony in the Plaza of the Five Canals. But when the architects set the fountains going at the climax of the ceremony, Westhrall saw that the dazzling, dancing waters virtually obscured his statue. He turned angrily toward the *shivalahala* as if to strike her, but she said, "Look carefully, captain. You will see that there is one fountain for each and every crewman who died in the service of the glorious Westhrall."

It is said that the great captain began to weep inconsolably at the *shivalahala's* words.

Since the construction of House V'strimon's sixth and central tower, philosophers have speculated about its symbolic meaning. Many believe that the tower may hint at the existence of a sixth element, because the Floating City's other five towers represent the five known elements.

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If the reeds of V'strimon are simply one vast plant, then the whole of the island is woven of a continuous thread. Truly then, might not an image of the Great Pattern of Barsaive be seen in the woven reeds of the dome of the Great Hall of V'strimon?

—Geltharion Pan'del, Lightbearer

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THE SHIVALAHALA V'STRIMON

Greatly concerned about the arrival of the Theran behemoth on the shores of Lake Ban, the *Shivalahala V'strimon* has emerged as a leader of the opposition to the Therans. By working to create and sustain an alliance of Namegiver communities against the Theran incursion, the *Shivalahala V'strimon* hopes to protect House V'strimon and its holdings from Theran control and spare the region the worst depredations of Theran power.

Shivalahala V'strimon is a dignified figure who inspires loyalty in her humblest servants and obedience in even her proudest ship captains. She is widely acknowledged as the grand dame of the river and has transformed the t'skrang obsession with personal adornment into a public statement of the wealth of her people and her own excellent taste in clothing and jewelry. Indeed, it is said that when House K'tenshin captured her eldest daughter, the *shivalahala* supplied the full measure of the ransom with the gems and jewelry on her person. Her coterie of advisers and counselors has been compared to that retained by Queen Alachia of the Blood Wood, and it is said the *shivalahala* has a particular weakness for news and gossip from the Elven Court.

This mask of shallow urbanity, however, is a disguise. The *Shivalahala V'strimon* has no rivals in the language of trade and politics, profit, and risk. Her ambition—which she is wise enough never to reveal publicly, yet cunning enough to keep alive in Barsaive's rumor mills—is to unite House V'strimon, Throal, and the Blood Wood in a sphere of prosperity that will rival the economic power of Thera. She has propped up the waning fortunes of House Syrtis by lending the *aropagoi* riverboats and access to



trade routes, so that it might better resist the growing strength of House K'tenshin, a common enemy of Houses Syrtis and V'strimon, as well as check House Ishkarat's advances in the North. She has also supported certain factions within House Ishkarat to counter what she calls "the corrupting influence of the Denairastas of Iopos" on that *aropagoi*.

The *shivalahala's* strengths are not confined to trade and politics. Barsaivian Elementalists universally recognize the *Shivalahala V'strimon* as perhaps the greatest living authority on elemental

magic. She does not practice her magic often, however, leading some to speculate that the bulk of the *shivalahala*'s knowledge of Elementalism resides in the memories of a particularly unpleasant V'strimonian ancestor. Others, however, contend that the *shivalahala* is simply growing old and chooses to concentrate her dwindling energies on the business fortunes of House V'strimon. On the other hand, the *shivalahala* is undoubtedly a questor of Jaspre, for she makes no attempt to conceal her public devotions to the strange plant growth that forms the island of V'strimon.

Currently, she is particularly concerned with protecting House V'strimon's control of the Coil River, which provides the *aropagoi* with access to Urupa and the Aras Sea and enables House V'strimon to control the flow of trade from that city to Lake Ban and elsewhere along the Serpent. Theran military escorts have already enabled a few K'tenshin vessels to trade directly with Urupan merchants, and the *shivalahala* fears that House K'tenshin ultimately intends to wrest control of the valuable trade route from House V'strimon altogether.

Most observers believe that the *shivalahala* is nearing the end of her life, for she has served in the position since the middle of the Scourge, through the opening of the Floating City to the world approximately 100 years ago.

The *Shivalahala* V'strimon is a Twelfth Circle t'skrang Elementalist.

SHIVALAHALA V'STRIMON

"Yes, yes, that's all very interesting, but it's old news now, isn't it? If you've come that near the Blood Wood during your travels, then surely you have heard news about those ambitious Denairastas, hmmm? And how many riverboats of Ishkarat did you pass on the river? Oh, and if you by chance can remember, what was the asking price of a barrel of fish in Lalai? Captain Rh'gullian is taking the Whirlpool north next week, and we can change his manifest if the market looks good."

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Attributes

DEX (11): 5 STR (11): 5 TOU (13): 6
PER (17): 7 WIL (17): 7 CHA (17): 7

Characteristics

Initiative: 7 Physical Defense: 8 [13]^{FC}
Physical Armor: 0 Spell Defense: 13 [18]^{FC}
Mystic Armor: 3 [8]^{FC} Social Defense: 10
Death: 83 Recovery Tests: 2
Unconsciousness: 63 Knockdown: 5
Wound Threshold: 9 Movement: 6

Karma Points: 48/48

^{FC} Number in brackets used when *Shivalahala* V'strimon is in the Floating City, center of House V'strimon

Elementalist Talents (Knacks)

Air Speaking^D (13): 20 (Whispered Conversation)
Armored Matrix (12): 12
Armored Matrix (12): 12
Astral Sight (12): 19
Bargain with Summoned Creatures^D (12): 19
Cold Purify^D (12): 19
Durability [4/3] (12): 12
Earth Skin (12): 18
Elemental Hold^D (12): 19
Elemental Tongues^D (12): 19
Endure Cold^D (12): 18
Enhanced Matrix (12): 12
Enhanced Matrix (12): 12
Fire Heal^D (12): 19

Karma Ritual^D (12): 12

Metal Ward^D (12): 19

Plant Shelter (12): 19

Questor of Jaspre (11): 11—Animate Plant, Command Animal, Plant Growth (11): 18
Read/Write Language (7): 14—(Human/Scavian, Obsidiman, *Sperethiel*, Theran, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)

Read/Write Magic^D (12): 19

Reshape Object^D (12): 19

Spellcasting^D (12): 19

Spell Matrix^D (12): 12

Spell Matrix (12): 12

Spell Matrix (12): 12

Summon (Elemental Spirits)^D (12): 19

Summoning Circle^D (12): 19

Temperature^D (12): 19

Thread Weaving (Elementalism)^D (13): 20 (Create Thread Item)

Willforce (12): 19

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Skills

Barsaive Politics^K (4): 11

Conversation (8): 15

Craftsman (Tailor)^A (6): 11

Creature Lore^K (5): 12

Economics^K (7): 14

Etiquette (6): 13

Haggle (7): 14

Read/Write Language (1): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic)

Robe Embroidery^A (5): 12

Serpent River Trade Routes^K (6): 13

Speak Language (9): 16—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human/Scavian, Human/Vorst, Obsidiman, *Or'zet*, *Sperethiel*, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)

T'skrang Politics^K (6): 13

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Elementalism Spells

Elementalism (Any up to Twelfth Circle), Dragon's Breath^A, Earth and Air^M, Fire and Water^M, Liquid Arrow^A, Nutritious Earth^E, Plant Talk^M, Root Trap^M, Silver Shadow^E

^M Denotes spell in spell matrix

^E Denotes spell in enhanced matrix

^A Denotes spell in armored matrix

Weapons

Thread Crystal Spear (Rank 6; Damage 13; Range 13–25 yards/6–12 hexes; Initiative Step +1; 1 Strain Point: next Damage Test +3 bonus; 2 Strain Points: PhysDef +2; SpellDef +2 for 6 rounds or until the wielder makes an Attack Test with the spear)

Thread Items

Thread Reed Net (Major True pattern item; Rank 5; increase *Shivalahala* V'strimon's Physical and Spell Defense, and Mystic Armor by +5 when she is in the Floating City, center of House V'strimon)

Equipment

Craftsman Tools, Embroidered Robes, Embroidery Tools, Grimoire, Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Loot

Anklets, bracelets, earrings, gems, necklaces, and rings (worth 2,400 silver pieces total)

Legend Award

Twelfth Circle

Notes

As a t'skrang, *Shivalahala* V'strimon possesses the Tail Combat racial ability. *Shivalahala* V'strimon has 20,000 Devotion Points to Jaspre.

Elementalist Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Spell Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception—only Tests

Fifth Circle: Fire and Ice

Sixth Circle: Karma on Willpower—only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on spell Effect Test

Eighth Circle: +1 Spell Defense

Ninth Circle: Earth and Wind; Karma on Recovery Tests

Tenth Circle: Karma on controlled creatures or spirit Action Tests; +1 Spell Defense

Eleventh Circle: +1 Physical and Social Defense

Twelfth Circle: +1 Spell Defense; +1 Initiative Step

HIERARCHY

The *Shivalahala* V'strimon, the Council of Crew Covenants (*Tikka T'slahyin*), and the Council of Trade Covenants (*Tikka K'rohyin*) share decision-making power in House V'strimon. The trade council consists of representatives from each of the *nialls* that owe allegiance to House V'strimon *aropagoi* and representatives from each of the Floating City's foundation houses. Officially, the trade council meets each month in the Great Hall at the new moon. However, administering the *aropagoi's* fortunes requires such constant attention that the council remains continuously in session for all but a few days at the end of each month.

The trade council is responsible for ensuring that goods move through the *aropagoi's* shipping system and that covenant shares are returned to their *nialls*. Many t'skrang think of the trade council as a wishy-washy clique of paper-pushing bureaucrats, but in truth the council is a sophisticated institution. It must ensure that all the *nialls* of House V'strimon share in the *aropagoi's* prosperity, while simultaneously distributing the *aropagoi's* losses among the *nialls*—all without arousing the quarrelsome individualism of captains, crews, and foundations. When one considers the natural bluff and bluster of the t'skrang as a race, it is a wonder that House V'strimon's centralized planning system has lasted for so long. Much of the credit for this longevity can be attributed to the *Shivalahala* V'strimon's judicious use of her veto powers as president of the trade council.



It's a miracle the council hasn't fallen apart yet. Why, just last year I saw two captains at each other's throats. How's that for cooperation?

—Alvar Otterpaw, Boatman of the
Order of the Scavian Guard



The trade council effects its decisions primarily through its power to determine the trade routes and contracts included in House V'strimon's annual Protocol List, one of the oddest economic tools in all of Barsaive. Every captain of the *aropagoi's* fleet receives a certified copy of the Protocol List in the spring of each year. Any customer whose Name appears on the list can approach a captain of House V'strimon, demand the services of his riverboat, and expect to receive a set price and immediate attention. The Protocol List rarely contains more than 20 Names in any given year, and merchant companies have been known to go to great lengths to secure a place on it.

House V'strimon's crew council is made up of all the captains of the *aropagoi's* riverboats. It meets only twice a year, on the first full moons following the spring and autumn equinoxes. The crew council meetings are meticulously choreographed, formalized, grand, and glitzy affairs, full of pomp and circumstance. The key duties of the crew council are ratifying the decisions of the trade council; recognizing new members of the *aropagoi's* central foundation; and conducting a complete review of the condition, location, and captain of each of House V'strimon's riverboats. Technically, the crew council may recommend legislation in the same way as the trade council, but traditionally the crew council simply ratifies all trade council policies with a single voice vote. Most of a crew council meeting is devoted to the review of the riverboats. The riverboat review is a dynamic oration that may take up to three days, as the council's Reader of the Lists goes through the roster of vessels one by one and the captain of each riverboat boasts of his crew's exploits. When a riverboat cannot return to the Floating City in time to participate in a crew council meeting, the riverboat captain customarily sends a written report, which a representative recites before the assembly.

During the fall meeting of the Council of Crew Covenants, each riverboat captain submits the Name of one of his crewmen for membership in the *aropagoi's* central foundation. The selection process varies from vessel to vessel, but most captains allow the crews themselves to select a candidate by a show of hands. Records of these nominations are kept by the V'strimon central council, which traditionally grants membership in the central foundation to any candidate who is nominated three times. Typically, no more than 30 individuals receive membership in a given year. The *shivalahala* presides over the initiation ceremony, placing the bracelet of living reeds around the initiate's wrist. In addition to living space at the Foundation House, central foundation members receive the right to captain one of the foundation's motherships or warships.

The extent of House V'strimon's influence on the Serpent River is difficult to gauge, because the *aropagoi* does not exert direct control over the daily activities of its member villages. To qualify for a seat on the trade council, a village must send a special share of its profits to House V'strimon's trade council for three consecutive years. In return, member villages receive the protection of V'strimon's war fleet, access to business as defined by the Protocol List, and the competitive advantage that trade allies can exert against an isolated rival.

By and large, House V'strimon remains stable and united. The *aropagoi* continues to grow steadily more prosperous, and almost all V'strimonian *aropagoinya* view their *shivalahala* as a benevolent and competent overseer. Rancor within the trade council is rare, and when it does occur the *shivalahala* is quick to reconcile quarreling parties. Recently, some council members have suggested that House V'strimon withdraw from the Free Trade Compact in response to House K'tenshin's efforts to change the agreement in order to open up trade on the lower reach of the Coil River. So far, however, such proposals have garnered little support.

GOALS

During the Theran War, approximately 70 member villages held seats in House V'strimon's trade council. Since the end of that war, however, many villages have let their memberships lapse in the absence of direct threats from the Therans or House K'tenshin. As a result, House V'strimon currently enjoys the allegiance of only 40 member villages. Despite this drop, the lucrative Coil River trade and the *aropagoi's* close relationship with the Kingdom of Throal have enabled House V'strimon to remain one of the richest and most influential *aropagoi* of the Serpent River.

House V'strimon's primary goals are protecting its sphere of influence and maintaining its prosperity. In practical terms, this means checking the expansionist plans of its long-time rival, House K'tenshin. For centuries the two *aropagoi* have kept up a fierce feud, further fueled when the two houses fought against one another during the Theran War. Despite the Free Trade Compact that cemented the peace after that war, the feud continues and the riverboats of both *aropagoi* still engage in combat when they encounter one another on their respective houses' tributary rivers.

In recent years, House V'strimon has taken over six large river villages between Lake Ban and Lake Pyros previously under House K'tenshin's control. That development, along with the favorable terms House V'strimon enjoys under the Free Trade Compact, seems to have reinforced House K'tenshin's determination to regain its economic influence at the expense of House V'strimon. As a result, House V'strimon has repeatedly had to block House K'tenshin's attempts to persuade the compact signatories to renegotiate the portion of the pact that grants House V'strimon sole control over the Coil River trade. In particular, House K'tenshin wants the south Coil opened, so that it, too, may profit from the trade flowing through Urupa. So far House V'strimon, with the aid of House Syrtis, has been able to stymie House K'tenshin's efforts.

However, the K'tenshinian proposal has the support of the Theran Empire and even Throal, which fears a V'strimonian monopoly over the Coil River trade. House K'tenshin may yet succeed in its scheme unless House V'strimon can find some way to definitively stall the proposed changes.

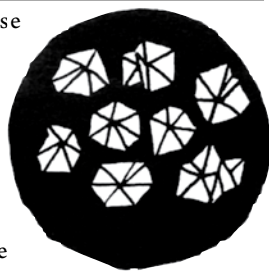
Understandably, the opposing goals of the Therans and House V'strimon have destroyed any hope for diplomatic relations between the two powers. Additionally, General Nikar of Triumph holds a personal grudge against the *Shivalahala* V'strimon and her house and would like nothing more than to see House K'tenshin's fortunes rise at House V'strimon's expense. In response to Theran and K'tenshin hostility, the *shivalahala* has strengthened V'strimon's ties with Throal as well as the other *aropagoi* of the Serpent by painting Thera and House K'tenshin as the common enemy to Barsaivian independence and free river trade. House Syrtis is largely behind V'strimon, while House Ishkarat continues to waver in hopes of playing both sides against the middle and coming out on top.

House V'strimon has also sought to check K'tenshinian expansion by supporting anti-K'tenshin rebels, most notably the villages of the newly revived House T'kambras, by aiding rebel groups opposed to the Therans and House K'tenshin behind the scenes. V'strimon blockade runners take shipments of supplies to House T'kambras and allied communities in the South Reach, while the *aropagoi*'s Floating City often provides refuge for agents of the Liferock Rebellion and the Eye of Throal. House V'strimon regularly provides fire cannons, elemental substances, and other supplies to the T'kambrian rebels, who have wrested control of more than half of the Tylon River trade from House K'tenshin in recent years and emboldened other settlements to resist K'tenshinian control. Recently, House V'strimon has even taken to hiring overland caravans to provide aid to their allies.

HOUSE K'TENSHIN

House K'tenshin, the House of Nine Diamonds, was founded two centuries before the Orichalcum Wars by four t'skrang villages west of Lake Pyros. These villages had acquired great wealth through piracy and, more importantly, they had acquired influence among the Therans through the Theran trading house of Carinci. Eventually the villages decided to build a huge river settlement from which they could absorb weaker communities into their growing network of alliances and propel their burgeoning enterprises to even greater success. They pooled their wealth and, through their contacts in House Carinci, bought the services of a number of skilled Theran Elementarists to aid in the design and construction of the ambitious new settlement: a city-sized kaer now known as the Sixteen Towers of House K'tenshin. The project also cemented an alliance between the t'skrang of House K'tenshin and the Theran Empire that has lasted for almost a thousand years.

As Theran influence in Barsaive grew, the fortunes of Thera's t'skrang allies in House K'tenshin rose as well. At that time, the land between the Servos Jungle and the Mist Swamps contained some of the finest farmland in all of Barsaive, and settlers from across the province had carved out a number of prosperous cities, towns, and trading posts along the banks of the Serpent River and its southern tributaries. Using military force and intrigue, the K'tenshin began to extort money and goods from nearby settlements. Eventually, the *aropagoi* gained control of all river settlements from the Mist Swamps east to Lake Ban and perfected a system of taxes, tolls, and protection money that enabled House K'tenshin to skim enormous profits from these settlements.



In those days, House V'strimon controlled the Coil River and House Syrtis ruled the Serpent from Lake Ban to Lake Vors. After careful consultation with the Therans, House K'tenshin attempted to strike a deal with House V'strimon that would enable V'strimon to concentrate on undermining the power of House Syrtis. House V'strimon had no interest in negotiating free passage across Lake Ban to an upstart band of pirates and racketeers, however, particularly one that engaged openly in slavery. House V'strimon's rebuff led to war between the two *aropagoi*, but the Orichalcum Wars soon overshadowed that conflict. The Orichalcum Wars, in turn, left Barsaive vulnerable to annexation by the Theran Empire.

Theran annexation proved a double-edged sword for House K'tenshin. Although the Therans supported their *aropagoi* ally's aspirations to control all trade on the Serpent, the annexation opened up increased opportunities for air transport in Barsaive, and competition from air transport soon slashed the profits of river traders. In the end, House K'tenshin found that its market had shrunk even as its power among the t'skrang had grown. Despite this setback, House K'tenshin managed to bring House V'strimon to heel and planted the seeds of dissent in House Syrtis during the 60 years between the end of the Orichalcum Wars and the Scourge.

House K'tenshin weathered the Scourge fairly well, thanks to the Theran magical spells incorporated into the Sixteen Towers during their construction. The *aropagoi*'s t'skrang fell into a reptilian torpor, like their brethren throughout Barsaive, and the Theran spells lengthened the K'tenshinians' hibernation. House K'tenshin did not emerge from the Scourge unscathed, however. At some point, 240 members of the *aropagoi*'s Kerioli *niall*—virtually the entire foundation—and four of its riverboats simply disappeared.

The House of Nine Diamonds awakened slowly after the Scourge lifted. Riverboats of House V'strimon, which had emerged from its slumber slightly before the opening of Throal, passed through the Sixteen Towers of K'tenshin while the towers' inhabitants still slept. The V'strimon riverboat crews, however, chose not to awaken their ancient rivals. The K'tenshin *aropagoi* did not awaken until the Therans returned to Barsaive and landed vedettes inside the Sixteen Towers—a coincidence that has led some to claim that the Theran Elementarists who laid the foundations of the Sixteen Towers intentionally incorporated spells to keep the K'tenshinians in a state of hibernation until the Therans' return.



Smart of those Therans, I'd say. I bet they wish they'd been able to do that to the rest of Barsaive. Good thing we never gave 'em the chance, but the buunda instead.

—V'Gogh Bonecracker, Innkeeper



Whatever the truth of this allegation, the returning Therans found in House K'tenshin an ally ready to aid them in the reconquest of Barsaive. To prove their allegiance, House K'tenshin invited a contingent of Theran t'skrang from House Carinci to take up residence in the tower vacated by the Kerioli *niall*. Soon, the Theran generals set a twofold role for the *aropagoi* in the reconquest. First, House K'tenshin would establish supply routes to Theran garrisons as the Theran legions pushed toward Throal; second, the *aropagoi*'s riverboats would blockade enemy vessels along the Serpent and Coil rivers to isolate Throal from its allies. With these plans laid out, Theran airships and K'tenshin riverboats set out from the Sixteen Towers to reconquer Barsaive, full of all the swagger and confidence of an imperial power certain of swift victory.

Both the Therans and their K'tenshin allies were surprised to discover that Barsaive and its people were no longer a ripe target for conquest. The *aropagoi*'s captains quickly discovered that House V'strimon had contacted almost all the river villages between Lake

Pyros and Lake Ban and placed them under its protection. Thus, House K'tenshin found itself forced to reconquer hostile villages that had once been its vassals. When the first K'tenshin warships reached the Floating City of House V'strimon in Lake Ban, they discovered that the rival house had fortified its city so heavily that even the most aggressive K'tenshin captains blanched at the thought of attacking it. Meanwhile, V'strimonian blockade runners made a mockery of House K'tenshin's efforts to block trade on the Coil River and isolate Throal.

House K'tenshin's performance during the Theran War was a disgrace to its proud warrior tradition, and the Therans did not hesitate to bring this fact to the attention of both the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin and the First Governor. When Overgovernor Pavelis chose to retreat to Sky Point, all of Barsaive knew that Thera had abandoned House K'tenshin to the mercy of its enemies.

Perhaps this abandonment made House K'tenshin's enemies prone to mercy. Some observers say that Barsaive's Troubadours, with their relentless lampoons of K'tenshin naval disasters, had rendered the *aropagoi's* predicament so comical that Throal found it difficult to be angry with its black-sheep neighbor. Other, more cynical observers speculate that Throal was none too anxious to destroy House V'strimon's primary competitor in the river trade, in the interests of Throal's prosperity. Whatever the reasons, the terms of the truce were a yoke that hung lightly around the neck of House K'tenshin. Indeed, some observers claim that the Free Trade Compact placed the *aropagoi* in a better position than it might have gained from a Theran victory.

The *shivalahala* realizes that House K'tenshin is risking ostracism among its Barsaivian neighbors by allying itself with the Therans again, but she believes the opportunities presented by the alliance far outweigh this risk. In fact, she believes that Theran military support will enable the *aropagoi* to not only consolidate its control over the Serpent River's South Reach but extend its influence beyond the region as well. So far, the *shivalahala's* gamble has been paying off. Emboldened by its new alliance, House K'tenshin has ruthlessly begun to exert its newfound power. As the *shivalahala* had hoped, no Barsaivian power—not even Throal—has proved able to confront the Theran forces supporting House K'tenshin.

Despite this success, the *shivalahala* recognizes that the Therans have re-formed the ancient alliance only because it serves their own purposes. The *Shivalahala* K'tenshin respects General Nikar as a military man and a warrior, and she welcomes the presence of the Therans as an opportunity to improve her *aropagoi's* fortunes. She knows, however, that the Therans would not hesitate to turn against House K'tenshin if they deemed such an action strategically advantageous, and so she has K'tenshin Naxos spies watching the Therans as closely as they watch House K'tenshin's avowed enemies.

THE SIXTEEN TOWERS

House K'tenshin maintains its headquarters at the junction of the Byrose and Serpent Rivers. Here, the Sixteen Towers of K'tenshin form a four-by-four gridwork that outlines nine diamonds, an arrangement that gave the House of Nine Diamonds its Name. The towers, which are the largest and tallest anywhere on the river, soar 300 feet above the water's surface and are each a bit more than 200 feet in diameter. Although the towers are spaced at regular intervals, their shapes are irregular. Some look like natural rock formations, in contrast to the smooth, man-made appearance of most of the Serpent's t'skrang village towers. Wooden and rope bridges span the gaps between the towers, and wooden balconies sprout like strange fruit on the stone ledges that jut out at every level.

On the surface of the water, the K'tenshin t'skrang have surrounded each tower with a wide, encircling boardwalk where boats of all sizes can dock and load and unload cargo and passengers.

The four central towers, known as the "Inner Towers," are so large that they can each house a full riverboat. These towers serve as dry docks for repairing and refurbishing the *aropagoi's* vessels. Before the Theran War, the roofs of these squat towers often docked Theran airships, including massive kilas. After the war, the Therans withdrew to Sky Point. In the past few years, however, several Theran airships have been sighted at the Sixteen Towers, giving rise to rumors that House K'tenshin is again strengthening its ties to the Theran Empire.

The bustle of the Sixteen Towers immediately dazzles any traveler entering the settlement for the first time. Here swarm t'skrang in boats, on bridges, along balconies, on airships, even swimming in the water. The settlement looks as if the Serpent had flooded an enormous city and everyone simply climbed up the tallest tower they could find to escape the rising water. Amazingly, this bustle represents only a portion of the Sixteen Towers' population, because most of the residents live in the traditional domes that lie at the base of each tower on the river bottom.

Each of the twelve "Outer Towers" is Named after the *niall* that lives in the tower's dome: the Abanos Tower, Byepo Tower, Gamaroon Tower, Daishan Tower, Edeinos Tower, Zeugmani Tower, Henika Tower, Thymbrium Tower, Ippikos Tower, Carinci Tower, Lamia Tower, Meru Tower, and Naxos Tower. The four Inner Towers are Named for each of the four pillars of *haropas*: The *Jik'harra* Tower, Kiatsu Tower, P'skarrot Tower, and *Kya'apas* Tower. The domes of the four Inner Towers reach inward toward the settlement's *t'slashina*—the central sheltered area where crops often grow—like the petals of a flower. An enclosed underwater garden called the *Haropakilea*, the Flower of *Haropas*, lies at the intersection of the domes. Legend has it that the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin ordered the garden planted during the years immediately before the Scourge, so that her people might better remember the beauty of the outside world. The garden features flowering plants of unusual size, shape, and hue, and many plants that radiate heat and light in every color of the rainbow. Certainly the *Haropakilea*

ADVENTURE HOOK

Agents of House V'strimon have made contact with a faction inside House K'tenshin opposing the alliance with the Therans. Delivering messages (and sometimes equipment) is dangerous, as the counter-intelligence of House K'tenshin has a close eye on rebel activity inside its own *aropagoi*.

The player characters are hired to act as ordinary merchants offering their goods to trade with House K'tenshin and thus get access to the river town of Jil'has close to the Sixteen Towers. Their contact is P'kralan, a t'skrang working at the docks. P'kralan is supposed to exchange new reports for House V'strimon for much-needed Potion Charms filled with a deadly poison (see the *Namegivers of Barsaive* book on p. 231). The rebels need these charms in the event of their capture to prevent themselves from revealing how far the resistance inside House K'tenshin goes.

Due to the close proximity to the heart of House K'tenshin, their forces are alert, so the player characters face a difficult and dangerous cloak and dagger mission.

is one of Barsaive's pre-Scourge marvels, and those who can swim will find it a sight unmatched in the province.

Outside the Inner Towers lies a cordon of twelve smaller towers submerged just below the water's surface. These are air ducts that keep fresh air moving through the underwater city of House K'tenshin. Between these towers and the defensive *refselenika* lies the complex's *t'slashina*, which is the most expansive on the Serpent River. To work such a large area, the K'tenshin regularly capture slaves from the primitive t'skrang tribes of the Servos Jungle.

THE NIALLS OF HOUSE K'TENSHIN

The twelve *nialls*, or foundations, of K'tenshin are Abanos, Gamaroon, Meru, Byepo, Zeugmani, Daishan, Edeinos, Henika, Ippikos, Lamia, Naxos, and Carinci.

Each *niall* owns a riverboat of the same Name and performs some type of specialized work to benefit the *aropagoi*. For example, the Abanos are slavers, and their tower is home to the largest slave auction in Barsaive. The Gamaroon and the Meru are both farmers, but the Gamaroon specialize in the underwater crops grown in K'tenshin's *t'slashina*, while the Meru farm rice, beans, and vegetables on the nearby riverbanks and the *aropagoi*'s plantations. Byepo handles the trade in elemental fire and other resources from the Scarlet Sea, and the Zeugmani turn these resources into K'tenshin porcelain in the glass-blowing shops of their tower. The Daishan *niall* makes baskets, while the Edeinos specialize in fish recipes. The Henika are woodcutters who harvest the rare and colorful hardwoods of the Servos Jungle and produce everything from barrels to furniture to decorative art. The Ippikos are hunters. Like the Henika, they depend on the Servos Jungle, where they obtain the hides, feathers, and wild animals that they sell to the people of Travar for the city's annual Founding festivities.

The Lamia *niall* runs the K'tenshin shipyards, which are located in the *Kya'apas* and *Kiatsu* Towers. The K'tenshin shipyards are considered by many to be the largest and best in Barsaive. However, K'tenshin shipwrights work only on riverboats that belong to the K'tenshin *aropagoi*. For years after the end of the Scourge, the Lamia *niall* petitioned the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin for permission to open a for-profit shipyard somewhere along the river. The *shivalahala* refused, however, because she rightly realized that any ship the Lamia repaired or refurbished would likely be turned against House K'tenshin when the Theran reconquest commenced. Soon after the Free Trade Compact went into effect, the *shivalahala* reconsidered her decision and allowed the Lamia *niall* to establish a dry dock in the village of Tremeer, just west of Lake Pyros. Now the shipyards of Tremeer and Denlikiyan, the unaligned village north of Lake Ban, vie for the reputation of finest shipyard in the province.

King Varulus III once described the Naxos *niall* to a visiting Blood Warder from the Elven Court as "the School for Spies and

Thugs," and with good reason. The Naxos *niall* trades in information and persuasion, and its members have refined gossip, rumor, and blackmail to a science. According to rumor (which may well have originated in Naxos), nothing moves on the river without the Naxos *niall*'s knowledge. Of course, the apparent failure of Thera and her allies to predict the actions of their enemies during the Theran War casts some doubt on the competence of the Naxos t'skrang. Another rumor, however, contends that Naxos deliberately misinformed the Therans on several occasions because the Naxos leaders had no desire to see the Therans triumph.

The last of the twelve *nialls*, Carinci, is Named after the Theran House Carinci. The tower that the Carinci occupy originally belonged to the Kerioli *niall*, which disappeared mysteriously

during the Scourge. The *niall* now consists mostly of Therans who relocated to the Sixteen Towers when the *aropagoi* headquarters served as a center of operations during the Theran War. After the war, the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin convinced many of the Theran t'skrang that lives of uncertain rewards in Barsaive would be preferable to the certain disgrace they would face upon returning to Thera. So persuasive was the *shivalahala* that a small crew of non-t'skrang asked to remain with the *aropagoi* as well, and so the ranks of the Carinci *niall* include orks, humans, and elves. The Carinci *niall* maintains facilities for Theran airships visiting the Sixteen Towers; in addition, many members of the *niall* are adepts in the combat Disciplines and serve on K'tenshin warships or teach at the *aropagoi*'s renowned war college.

The crews of visiting Theran airships prefer to bivouac in the Carinci Tower because the *niall*'s non-t'skrang members maintain a separate living area within the Carinci dome that is far removed from the relentless bustle of the *niall*'s communal t'skrang quarters.

THE SHIVALAHALA K'TENSHIN

The *Shivalahala* K'tenshin is a commanding leader whose presence demands obedience. She maintains a military outlook on life, and has little patience for answering too many questions when she gives orders. *Aropagoi* lore attributes this outlook to the fact that the first *Shivalahala* K'tenshin was a graduate of the Theran Military Academy, and that the present-day *shivalahala* is only twice removed from the original.

The *Shivalahala* K'tenshin's face and form provide no clue to her age, a phenomenon common to the *shivalahalas* of all the t'skrang *aropagoi*. Some individuals claim that the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin has guided the House since before the Scourge, an idea made credible only by the *aropagoi*'s long hibernation during the Scourge. If these tales are true, the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin has lived through the height of Theran power in Barsaive and surely remembers the ambitions of her *aropagoi* during those glory days—as well as her *aropagoi*'s humiliating defeats.

In many ways, the aftermath of the Theran War was the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin's defining moment. When the members of the Theran House Carinci made ready to retreat to Sky Point, she urged them to accept the tower of the vanished Kerioli *niall* as their



home. The Theran t'skrang accepted the offer, much to the consternation of many high-ranking Therans at Sky Point. Additionally, the *shivalahala*, accompanied by a squadron of ten soldiers, journeyed to Throal to personally negotiate the Free Trade Compact—and she used money from her private purse to pay the *aropagoi*'s reparations to House V'strimon, Throal, and House Syrtis. The latter action spawned a rumor that the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin bankrupted her personal treasury.

Currently, the *shivalahala* seems obsessed with restoring House K'tenshin to prominence in Barsaive. In pursuit of this goal, she runs House K'tenshin with brutally demanding discipline. She does not tolerate nonconformity or dereliction of duty. In recent years, the Therans have slowly increased their trade with House K'tenshin and increased the number of airships committed to protecting the Sixteen Towers in the event of a serious attack—actions that testify to the success of the *shivalahala*'s determined effort to make House K'tenshin the dominant power of the Serpent River.

The *Shivalahala* K'tenshin has another side as well. The *Haropak-ilea* is her creation, and the peace and beauty of that garden belie the stony, disciplined exterior the *shivalahala* customarily displays. She is also one of Barsaive's most sought-after teachers of the arts of war, and she personally oversees House K'tenshin's war college. In fact, some members of the K'tenshin council whisper that she spends far too much time at the war college and too little time minding the affairs of the *aropagoi*.

The *Shivalahala* K'tenshin is a Tenth Circle t'skrang Warrior.

SHIVALAHALA K'TENSHIN

"To my ears, these sound like excuses, captain. Excuses are a waste of my time and your breath. I asked for your report. Either give it or do not. Whatever you choose, the consequences are mine to decide. At present, I am not inclined toward leniency."



Attributes

DEX (14): 6 STR (14): 6 TOU (14): 6
PER (12): 5 WIL (19): 8 CHA (16): 7

Characteristics

Initiative: 6 Physical Defense: 12 [16]ST
Physical Armor: 6 Spell Defense: 7 [11]ST
Mystic Armor: 9 Social Defense: 9 [13]ST
Death: 126 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 98 Knockdown: 6*
Wound Threshold: 10 [14]^{WC}
Movement: 6

Karma Points: 40/40

ST Number in brackets used when *Shivalahala* K'tenshin is in the Sixteen Towers, center of House K'tenshin

WC Number in brackets used when *Shivalahala* K'tenshin is in the K'tenshin War College

* *Shivalahala* K'tenshin knows the Wound Balance talent

Warrior Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike (10): 16
Air Dance (10): 16
Anticipate Blow^D (10): 15
Avoid Blow^D (11): 17 (Bounce)
Cobra Strike (10): 16
Crushing Blow^D (10): 16
Durability [9/7] (10): 10
Earth Skin^D (10): 16
Karma Ritual^D (10): 10
Leadership (8): 15
Life Check^D (10): 16
Matrix Strike (10): 18
Melee Weapons^D (11): 17 (Deflect Blow, Improvised Weapons)
Resist Pain^D (10): 10
Second Attack^D (10): 16
Steel Thought (10): 18
Swift Kick (10): 16
Tactics (10): 15
Temper Self^D (10): 18

Thread Weaving (War Weaving)^D (10): 15

Tiger Spring (10): 10

Unarmed Combat^D (11): 17 (Head Butt, Pin Down)

Wood Skin^D (10): 16

Wound Balance^D (10): 16

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Skills

Barsaive Politics^K (4): 9
Botany^K (6): 11
Conversation (6): 13
Craftsman (Gardener)^A (6): 12
Farming^K (6): 11
Military Procedures^K (5): 10
Pilot Boat (7): 12
Read/Write Language (4): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human/Scavian, Theran, T'skrang)
Read River (6): 11
Speak Language (4): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human/Scavian, Theran, T'skrang)
Swimming (5): 11
Theran Military History^K (6): 11
Theran Military Organization^K (6): 11
Theran Politics^K (7): 12
T'skrang Politics^K (7): 12
^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Thread Crystal Ringlet (Rank 4; Phys 6; Myst 6; PhysDef +1)

Weapons

Thread Three-Axe (Rank 5; Damage 18; 1 Strain for focused axe +6 bonus to her next Damage Test and +3 to her Wound Threshold when the focusing ability is used), **Thread Broadsword** (Rank 4; Damage 17), **Thread Wooden Training Broadsword** (Minor place True pattern item; Rank 4; increase *Shivalahala* K'tenshin's Wound Threshold by +4 when she is in the K'tenshin War College; Damage 8; w/scabbard)

Thread Items

Thread Diamond with 16 facets (Major place True pattern item; Rank 4; increase the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin's Physical, Spell, and Social Defense by +4 when she is in the Sixteen Towers of House K'tenshin)

Equipment

Craftsman Tools, Farming Tools, Quiet Pouch, Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Loot

250 silver pieces

Legend Award

Tenth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Notes

As a t'skrang, *Shivalahala* K'tenshin possesses the Tail Combat racial ability. The *shivalahala* does not normally wear armor or carry weapons. In the rare event that she enters battle, she dons threaded crystal ringlet armor and may carry any of several thread weapons in her private armory.

Warrior Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense
Fourth Circle: Karma on Strength-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Battle Rites
Sixth Circle: Karma on Dexterity-only Tests
Seventh Circle: Karma on close combat Damage Tests
Eighth Circle: +1 Physical Defense
Ninth Circle: Battlefield Awareness; Karma on Recovery Tests
Tenth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests; +1 Physical Defense

HIERARCHY

The *Shivalahala* K'tenshin rules her *aropagoi* as an autocrat, with few close advisors. However, she generally reserves her executive prerogatives for matters that affect the *aropagoi* as a whole. She delegates supervision of many lesser affairs to the K'tenshin Council, which represents the twelve *nials* of the *aropagoi*. Each of the twelve *nials* supplies two representatives to the council: the *lahala* of the *niall* and her hand-picked appointee. The council elects one of its members as Advocate, an office unique to the K'tenshin *aropagoi*. Although the *shivalahala* alone is empowered to make policy for the *aropagoi*, the council can advise her and the Advocate can veto any of her decisions. Needless to say, the K'tenshin Advocacy is a difficult, if prestigious position.

The membership of the council, including the *shivalahala*, numbers 25—which corresponds to the sum of the towers and diamonds of the K'tenshin complex. This little piece of numerology may offer the casual observer some insight into the minds of t'skrang. The loss of the Kerioli *niall* during the Scourge effectively reduced the council membership to 23. This condition persisted up to the end of the Theran War, when the *aropagoi* offered the Theran contingent from House Carinci full membership in House K'tenshin. The offer—which essentially authorized the wholesale induction of a large group without regard to individual merit—was controversial at the time. However, any misgivings over this breach of tradition were apparently overshadowed by the K'tenshin belief that its failures during the war were caused by a break in its *kya'apas*, the perfect balance of the house as represented by the Council/Towers/Diamonds equation. When seen from this point of view, the loss of the Kerioli *niall* represented an imbalance that cursed the *aropagoi*'s efforts. The induction of the Therans filled this numerological void, and undoubtedly most K'tenshinian *aropagoinya* deemed it vital to healing the house's besmirched honor.

Another unique feature of the K'tenshin's governing structure is its practice of separating the members of the twelve *nialls* from those of associated foundations that maintain allegiance to the *aropagoi* but do not live within the Sixteen Towers. These associate villages do not have representatives on the K'tenshin Council and often operate under the direct supervision of an officer from the *aropagoi*'s headquarters, called a *diktos*. The associate *nialls* pay regular fees to the central *aropagoi* for safe passage along the river, usually an associate share of their riverboats' profits each year, but otherwise remain free to conduct their business as they choose.

Representatives from the central *nialls* privately approach prospective candidates for membership in the *aropagoi* proper. Candidates then petition the central *niall* of their choice, thus qualifying for the *g'doinya*.

Candidates who enter the *aropagoi* from an associate village are expected to move into the headquarters. *Aropagoinya* born within one of the twelve *nialls* qualify for full membership in the *aropagoi* immediately upon completing *kaissa*.

GOALS

Like every other t'skrang *aropagoi*, House K'tenshin seeks to expand its influence and increase its profits. To achieve this objective, the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin is directing her *aropagoi*'s efforts to meet three intermediate goals: renegotiating the Free Trade Compact; convincing the Therans that Barsaive is worthy of their attention; and re-establishing control of House K'tenshin's traditional territories, while preserving the *aropagoi*'s existing sphere of influence.

At present, the *shivalahala* demands that all K'tenshinian vessels observe the dictates of the Free Trade Compact to the letter, because the compact enables K'tenshin covenants to trade at the ports of the *aropagoi*'s former enemies in the Theran War—ports that would otherwise be closed to them. At the same time, she is maneuvering to renegotiate more favorable terms for House K'tenshin. Specifically, she wants the compact signatories to re-designate the lower reach of the Coil River, from Lake Ban down to Urupa, as part of the Serpent River.

Under the current terms of the compact, House V'strimon enjoys exclusive rights to trade on the Coil River. This monopoly has proved especially profitable for House V'strimon because Urupa is the sole port of entry for goods entering Barsaive from across the Aras Sea. By re-designating the lower Coil River as part of the Serpent, all the compact signatories—including House K'tenshin—would have equal access to Urupa and the Aras Sea trade.

So far, House V'strimon has jealously guarded its monopoly, but the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin's proposal has received strong diplomatic backing from the Theran Empire. Additionally, in this matter House

K'tenshin may have an ally in Throal, which has grown concerned over House V'strimon's maneuvers to keep prices high in the Aras Sea trade. If House K'tenshin can coax both Throal and the volatile House Syrtis faction to back its proposal, it may succeed. Not surprisingly, House V'strimon recently granted a position in the Aras trade fleet to a ship from House Syrtis.

By convincing the Therans that Barsaive is worthy of their attention, the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin hopes to encourage the Therans to increase their economic and military presence in the province. An increased Theran presence would undoubtedly raise the stature of Thera's main Barsaivian ally—House K'tenshin. To achieve this end, the *aropagoi*'s leaders have instructed K'tenshin crew captains to make cut-rate and even below-cost deals with Theran traders wherever they find them. Additionally, even the lowliest Theran Air Sailor is treated like a guest of honor at the Sixteen Towers. The *aropagoi* has also recently begun to send to the Therans any rare art treasures, magical artifacts, and orichalcum its crews obtain. The *shivalahala*'s strategy appears to be working, for each passing year sees more Theran airships docking at K'tenshin's towers.

Reestablishing control of its pre-Scourge territories and preserving the *aropagoi*'s existing sphere of influence are probably the most pressing tasks facing House K'tenshin. Currently, House K'tenshin is besieged from all sides. The most serious threat facing the *aropagoi* is its long-time rival, House V'strimon. For centuries the two competing *aropagoi* have engaged in a bitter feud, fostering a mutual hatred further sharpened when the two houses fought against one another during the Theran War. Although House K'tenshin sealed a peace with Throal and its allies by signing the Free Trade Compact, the pact did little to lessen the animosity between Houses K'tenshin and V'strimon. The riverboats of both *aropagoi* still engage in combat when they encounter one another on the *aropagoi*'s tributary rivers, and in recent years House V'strimon has taken control of six major river villages between Lake Ban and Lake Pyros that previously lay under House K'tenshin's control.

Furthermore, House V'strimon provides fire cannons, elemental substances, and other war materiel to the so-called House T'kambras, a group of t'skrang villages on the Tylon River. In recent years the T'kambrans, who also receive open support from the City of Kratas, have taken control of more than half the trade on the Tylon River—a river traditionally controlled by House K'tenshin. As if to add insult

ADVENTURE HOOK

When researching the history of a legendary artifact in the depths of Kaer Vilrum, a t'skrang Wizard Named Zsombol Vak stumbled over an old tome of Theran origin. However, Zsombol's hired translator wasn't able to keep his mouth shut about the tome's contents. Soon, everyone in the nerby town of Ghalum speculates about the magical formula able to create a powerful ward which could be used to strengthen an existing fortification of any size.

When the leaders of Ghalum make an offer to buy the tome, Zsombol gets greedy. He assumes that House K'tenshin might be interested to strengthen the magical defenses of the Sixteen Towers and intends to sell the tome to his *shivalahala*. He hires the player characters as an escort to the Sixteen Towers.

However, word spreads fast and both House V'strimon and House T'kambras send their agents to make an offer (or get hold of the tome in case Zsombol turns them down).

to injury, three K'tenshin warships languish in dry dock awaiting repairs because of the depredations of the T'kambrian captain Jedaiyen Westhrall, whose war ship, *Astendar's Desire*, has become the bane of K'tenshinian crews. House K'tenshin has offered a bounty on Jedaiyen's head, currently standing at more than 5,000 silver pieces. Despite monthly increases, the fee has gone uncollected.

The failure of K'tenshin warships to drive the upstart T'kambrians from the Tylon especially disturbs the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin, because the T'kambrians have inspired other South Reach settlements to rebel against House K'tenshin's tolls and taxes. For example, the T'kambrians recently saved a Scavian barge under attack from a K'tenshin flagship, and soon after that other Scavian barges stopped paying the yearly river toll to House K'tenshin. Shortly after the T'kambrians freed a Dinganni village from a K'tenshin extortion scheme, Dinganni along the length of the Tylon began threatening to lynch any *aropagoinya* of House K'tenshin.

Emboldened by House K'tenshin's weakness, the merchant enterprises of Travar constructed a fleet of airships to challenge K'tenshin's trade monopoly on the Byrose River. House K'tenshin's military failures have also emboldened the ravenous pirates of House Henghyoke, who seem to have a special appetite for K'tenshin boats and outposts.

With the return of the Therans, House K'tenshin can muster considerable resources against these threats, however. The twelve central *nialls* of the *aropagoi* remain the most populous on the river, and in their collective memory the glory of the Theran Empire in Barsaive remains fresh. A new generation of *aropagoinya* has risen through the ranks since the first Theran War ended, and they are determined to restore the honor of their *aropagoi*. The crews and their warships are a match for any on the river (with the possible exception of Jedaiyen Westhrall and *Astendar's Desire*), and a fear to behold because of their alliance with the Therans.

THE WAR COLLEGE OF HOUSE K'TENSHIN

The renowned War College of House K'tenshin is modeled after the Theran Military Academy. The war college's facilities in the Inner Tower of *Jik'harra* include training rooms, classrooms, and dormitories that can accommodate up to 600 students, making the war college the largest warrior school in Barsaive. The school's headmaster is the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin, who takes her duties as a teacher of the combat arts quite seriously. Each week she stalks the college's gymnasiums and practice rooms, making observations and comments, correcting students' form, and teaching classes in the history of riverboat combat. The college's faculty also boasts several grand masters of numerous unarmed combat styles, distinguished scholars of military history, and combat-oriented magicians.

Admission to the war college is one of the most sought-after privileges in Barsaive. The college, however, accepts only 25 new students from outside the K'tenshin *aropagoi* each year. All the remaining students come from within House K'tenshin. Training at the war college is guaranteed to any members of K'tenshin's twelve *nialls* who display the desire and fortitude for it. Aspiring students who cannot afford the college's fees can compete for twelve scholarships awarded to the winners of an annual open tournament. Candidates compete against one another in non-lethal combat, arranged by single-elimination rules. The twelve top finishers all receive free training at the college. The overall tournament champion receives a single coin of elemental water as well.

The full course of study at the war college takes six years. Most applicants from within the *aropagoi* join the year after their *kaissa*, the time that a t'skrang's gender becomes apparent. As a result, most students enter the college at the age of 14. No official age restriction exists, however. Some students have been as old as 30, and once a young human girl from Travar gained admission at the age of ten by winning the elemental coin at the tournament that year. The

student body is 99 percent t'skrang, although there are always a few students of other races wandering the halls of the tower.

The physical regimen of the college is uncompromisingly brutal. One of the more talked-about exercises students must endure during their first year is the "Standing Lesson." During this exercise, a class is brought to the top of the Tower of *Jik'harra* just before dawn. After the daily calisthenics routine, the class lines up and stands at attention. They are told not to move from their spots for any reason until the sun sets. Any student who moves is brought back the next day, and the day after, and the day after that, until he can accomplish the task.

The college teaches armed and unarmed combat, including advanced methods of underwater melee combat and riverboat boarding maneuvers, as well as the use of hundreds of melee weapons and specialized tactics for use against some of Barsaive's more common creatures. The college is especially renowned for its classes in the many forms of t'skrang tail attacks. T'skrang students can learn the use of the *ch'tard*, a four-inch blade attached to the tail, and the *skora*, a steel tail gauntlet used as a parrying weapon (see p.233 of the *Namegivers of Barsaive*).

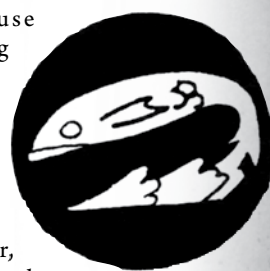
The student's life is more than physical training, however. The college also teaches military history, siege warfare, naval tactics, the design and construction of fortifications, reading, writing, mathematics, and organizational skills. Members of the Naxos *niall* teach an annual class on information gathering and the dissemination of misinformation, and students also learn how to craft makeshift weapons from raw materials, survival tactics, proper procedures for the operation and maintenance of fire cannons, and Theran etiquette.

The six-year course in the K'tenshin war college trains a student for battle, but the regimen is so exhaustive that less than half of those who start the training ever finish it. At the end of the training, the student is given a battery of written and oral examinations, after which he must engage one of his teachers in non-lethal single combat. The teacher must approve the student's conduct in the combat circle before the student may graduate. The *Shivalahala* K'tenshin herself presents gold and ruby rings to those who complete training. (These distinctive rings are customarily worn on the left hand.) Before the Theran War, the *shivalahala* also exacted blood oaths from graduates, in which the warriors had to swear never to harm House K'tenshin or any of its members. Since the war's end, however, the *shivalahala* has dropped this stricture for reasons she has yet to explain.

HOUSE T'KAMBRAS

About 12 years ago, House K'tenshin began raising its riverboat rates for cargo coming out of Daiche. For a while, the Kratas trading companies accepted the rate increases as the cost of business—after all, the *aropagoi* had a monopoly on the Tylon River trade. Eventually, however, Sagamon and his fellow Daicheans realized that House K'tenshin intended to slowly buy out the entire town. After consulting closely with Garlthik in Kratas, the merchants of Daiche began contracting cargo service from a confederation of pirates and privateers, who called themselves "House T'kambras," and opened numerous clandestine loading sites all along the Tylon.

Within months, spies from House K'tenshin uncovered the deceit, and soon the red and gold warships of House K'tenshin began to patrol the waters of the Tylon. After capturing one of the unaffili-



ated renegade riverboats, House K'tenshin sent envoys to confront Sagamon and demand an explanation. Witnesses claim the old dwarf simply shrugged his shoulders and said, "Well now, you found us out—but can you blame us, really?" Subsequently, Sagamon and the K'tenshinian envoys made a series of promises that both parties had no intention of keeping. Satisfied, the envoys returned to their warship and prepared to return to the Sixteen Towers.

Before the warship had gotten a hundred yards from the pier, however, another warship pulled into view—the first appearance of *Astendar's Desire* in the annals of Barsaive. Within minutes, the *Desire* had transformed the proud K'tenshinian warship into a useless derelict. Then the *Desire* pulled alongside its fallen foe and the renegade ship's captain, Jedaiyen Westhrall, demanded that the K'tenshin *aropagoi* drop their token earrings into the river or she would sink their ship. When the *aropagoi* chose to save the ship, Jedaiyen gave them a message to relay to the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin: "Bid the *shivalahala* to remember the ghost song of the *Shivalahala* T'kambras. The House of Swift Waters shall live as long as the River Tylon flows into Death's Sea."

▲ ▲ ▲

*I'd like to show that Jedaiyen a thing or two, myself.
She may handle riverboats well, but I long to see how well
she dances tail to tail. Then all will see that the
Taidancers of the War College truly rule the waters.*

—C'hali Teres'za Vosvard Ippikos,
Taidancer of House K'tenshin

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Since the appearance of *Astendar's Desire*, the Tylon River has become a hotbed of intrigue. For several years, House K'tenshin attempted to blockade Daiche from all river trade. This heavy-handed

tactic only strengthened anti-K'tenshin sentiments along the Tylon, however. The merchants of Daiche began hiring the nomadic Dinganni to transport their goods to secret loading sites along the Tylon's shores, where T'kambrian riverboats would pick up the cargo. The Dinganni hide the goods within their caravans, then make camp on the riverbanks. K'tenshin patrols can never be sure which encampments hide smugglers, and the Dinganni are such fierce fighters that attacking every Dinganni encampment is impractical.

The Scavians, who live in barge villages along the riverbanks, also aid the T'kambrians in their long-running battle with House K'tenshin. Long a favorite target of *aropagoi* patrols, the Scavians are happy to share their expertise in crafting elemental fire with House T'kambras. The Scavians regularly provide the T'kambrians with elemental fire for their riverboats' fire engines and fire cannons. In return, T'kambrian riverboats come to the aid of Scavian barges in nearly any circumstance. Many Scavian barges also smuggle freight out of Daiche and onto the Serpent River, where it can be transferred to other riverboats protected by the Free Trade Compact. The favorite port for making such exchanges is the trading town of Farram, where the Iontos River enters the Serpent.

House V'strimon, the traditional enemy of House K'tenshin, also uses the ongoing T'kambras-K'tenshin feud to harass House K'tenshin. Despite the repeated protests of the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin, House V'strimon continues to provide aid to the T'kambrians and V'strimon warships regularly escort Scavian barges on the Serpent. Although House V'strimon denies any involvement in the feud, the prominent role of Jedaiyen Westhrall, daughter of V'strimon's greatest modern hero, in the T'kambrian resistance strongly suggests otherwise.

Recently, House K'tenshin has apparently shifted its strategy. Although K'tenshin warships still patrol for T'kambrian vessels, they no longer attempt to blockade Daiche. Instead, K'tenshin riverboats have slashed their cargo rates in an attempt to drive the T'kambrians out of business. The merchants of Daiche, however, have wisely chosen to split their freight between both factions to prevent the formation of a new trade monopoly on the Tylon.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The fate of the Kerioli *niall* has been subject to speculation for t'skrang scholars ever since the Scourge ended. When a sunken riverboat is found on V'strimon territory and word of it spreads across the river communities, House K'tenshin becomes interested in finding out if this riverboat is one of the four that disappeared with the Kerioli *niall*.

The player characters are hired to escort a group of K'tenshin scholars to the wreck and salvage what they can find (without letting the characters know which *aropagoi* their employers hail from). They don't know what secrets the ship may hide, but the characters can feel that it must be of importance to them and their *aropagoi*.

Getting to the wreck is not easy, however: a ship full of T'kambrian river pirates is also interested the wreck, already salvaging the fire cannons to increase their ship's firepower when the group arrives. It's only a matter of time until a V'strimon warship will show up to deal with them (and salvage the wreck on their own).

While searching for a way to the wreck without being captured by the pirates, the characters encounter another group of adepts with the same intentions. These adepts have been hired by a Theran merchant who heard the rumors on the wreck being a Kerioli ship. The merchant wants to pick its secrets before anyone else and plans to sell whatever he finds to the highest bidder.

THE CENTRAL FOUNDATION OF HOUSE T'KAMBRAS

Since the rebirth of House T'kambras, many spies and scouts have been employed to discover the location, if any of their new central foundation, and their *shivalahala*, if she exists. The K'tenshin would pay a great deal for such information, and so not only have their own spies been looking, but so have those of independent intelligence brokers of Kratas. House T'kambras may just be a loose knit group of pirates and smugglers put together by Garlthik One-eye and given support by House V'strimon. If so, they are likely to fall apart without those patrons.

The K'tenshin fear; however, that one of the *lahalas* of House T'kambras may have escaped their attempt to destroy them all before the Scourge, and may have passed down the *aropagoi*'s collective memories to a currently living *lahala*. This would make the T'kambrians much stronger and more committed to fighting over the Tylon River. If they have a *shivalahala*, and the K'tenshin manage to discover her location, they will attempt to correct their oversight by killing her and destroying her central foundation.

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Unknown to history, the Shivalahala T'kambras was a powerful Elementalist as well as a Troubadour. When she was dying and sang her ghost song, she performed a powerful variant of the ritual that lahalas use to pass on their nialls' memories to their successors. Rather than passing her memories on to another t'skrang, who would have been killed by the K'tenshin, she

bestowed the memories of her aropagoi on the spirit of the river itself. If you ask me, I doubt that Jedaiyen Westhrall was being figurative in her message to the Shivalahala K'tenshin. However, I wonder if the spirit now rules the T'kambrians or if it passed the memory on to a lahala that escaped House K'tenshin?

—Alord Mach'ed, Free Trader

JEDAIYEN WESTHRALL, CAPTAIN OF ASTENDAR'S DESIRE

Jedaiyen Westhrall is rapidly on her way to surpassing her illustrious father as the greatest river captain Barsaive has ever known. No one is quite sure why Jedaiyen chose to abandon House V'strimon for the outlaw House T'kambras, but some believe she is acting on orders from the Shivalahala V'strimon—although the historical friction between the Westhralls and the shivalahala make such a claim almost unbelievable. Others believe that Jedaiyen intends to revive House T'kambras as a political entity. Or perhaps Jedaiyen simply wants to pursue *jik'harra*, and House K'tenshin, with its ties to Thera and involvement in the slave trade, makes the best possible target against which she can measure herself.

The riverboat *Astendar's Desire* was built entirely with the reward money that the Westhralls received from the Royal House of Throal in return for the elder Westhrall's extraordinary service to that kingdom. Jedaiyen's father designed the riverboat himself and personally oversaw its construction at the Denlikiyan shipyards, much to the exasperation of the engineers at Denlikiyan. The frame of that original riverboat lives on in the present-day *Desire*, a *shimoram* that features a split paddle wheel. This unique design innovation consists of a great wheel that runs the width of the ship, split into a left and right half. The vessel's fire engine can provide different amounts of power to the two wheel halves, which dramatically increases the ship's maneuverability in combat.

Jedaiyen has also increased the riverboat's firepower, and she has made a questor of Floranuus Named Milos a member of her crew. Milos, in turn, can use his Passion-granted abilities to enhance the *Desire's* Speed and Maneuverability.

Jedaiyen is a Seventh Circle t'skrang Boatman.



JEDAIYEN WESTHRALL

Attributes

DEX (17): 7 STR (12): 5 TOU (15): 6
PER (16): 7 WIL (14): 6 CHA (19): 8

Characteristics

Initiative: 6 Physical Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 5 Spell Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 3 Social Defense: 10
Death: 80 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 65 Knockdown: 5*
Wound Threshold: 10 Movement: 6

Karma Points: 28/28

* Jedaiyen knows the Wound Balance talent

Boatman Talents (Knacks)

Cast Net ^D (7): 14
Climbing ^D (7): 14
Durability [7/6] (7): 7
Evaluate (7): 14
Haggle (7): 15
Heartening Laugh (7): 15
Karma Ritual ^D (7): 7
Lion Heart ^D (7): 13
Melee Weapons ^D (8): 15
Pilot Boat ^D (8): 15 (Broadside)
Read River ^D (8): 15
Second Weapon ^D (7): 14
Speak Language (7): 14—(Human/Dinganni, Human/Scavian, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Thera, Windling)
Swimming ^D (7): 12
Swing Attack ^D (7): 14
Thread Weaving (River Weaving) ^D (7): 14
Throwing Weapons (7): 14
Wound Balance (7): 12

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Skills

Daiche City ^K (4): 11
Engaging Banter (4): 12
Fishing (4): 11
Mapmaking ^A (4): 11
Navigation (4): 11
Read/Write Language (1): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic)
Serpent River Trade Routes ^K (4): 11
Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, T'skrang)
Tactics (4): 11
T'skrang Politics ^K (4): 11

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Hide Armor (Phys 5; Myst 1; Init 1)

Weapons

Barbed Net (Damage 7; Entangle 14), Broadsword (Forged +3; Damage 13), Casting Net (Entangle 10), Short Sword (Forged +2; Damage 11), 2 × Barbed Throwing Nets (Range 8–16 yards/4–8 hexes; Entangle 11), 2 × Daggers (Forged +1; Damage 8; Range 10–20 yards; 5–10 hexes), 2 × Spears (Forged +3; Damage 12; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

Thread Items

Thread Giant Crocodile Teeth Necklace (Rank 4; +4 bonus to Strength—only Tests)

Equipment

Fishing Kit, Mapmaking Tools, Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case, Wealthy Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

Gold nose ring, chain, and earring (worth 50 silver pieces), 230 silver pieces

Legend Award

Seventh Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Notes

As a t'skrang, Jedaiyen possesses the Tail Combat racial ability.

Boatman Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity—only Tests

Fifth Circle: Flow of Kiatsu

Sixth Circle: Karma on Charisma—only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on Action Tests on riverboats

Astendar's Desire

Speed: 7

Base Price: NA

Maneuverability: 10

Firepower: 21/21

Hull:

Armor: 16

Ramming: 28

Cargo: 45

Damage:

Derelict: 68

Critical: 21

Destroyed: 75

Crew:

Captain: 7 (15)

Crew Size: 75

Morale: 74

Crew Rating: 18

Special Rules

Milo, Questor of Floranuus (9): 9

—Increase Stamina, Increase Speed (9): 17, Speed Ship (9): 15

Milo can use the Speed Ship power to increase the Speed and Maneuverability of the *Astendar's Desire* by distributing his 9 Questor Ranks between these two characteristics. For example, he could add +6 to the ship's Speed and +3 to the ship's Maneuverability steps, or all +9 to either the ship's Speed or Maneuverability step. This effect lasts for a duration equal to the Speed Ship Test result in hours.

HOUSE HENGHYOKE

In recent years the crews of the mysterious House Henghyoke, the House of the River Otter, have acquired a reputation as the most bloodthirsty and rapacious pirates anywhere in Barsaive. The reputed cruelty of Henghyoke's river raiders exceeds that of Theran slavers. Henghyoke's riverboats have raided settlements and attacked vessels along every mile of the Serpent and its tributaries, and even prey upon the fierce t'skrang of House Ishkarat. Typically, Henghyoke river raiders descend on their victims like thieves in the night. Captives seized in their raids never return, and the raiding parties vanish without leaving any clue to their movements. They seem to strike at random from their secret base, presumably located somewhere on the Serpent River. No known village pays House Henghyoke tribute or claims association with the mysterious *aropagoi*.

Unlike the crews of other *aropagoi*, House Henghyoke's crews do not observe the rules of *bakshevas*. Instead, they take everything they can lay their hands on and destroy whatever they cannot take. Their favorite booty includes riverboats, slaves, and the egg-hatching pools of t'skrang villages; the latter has fueled much speculation about the nature of House Henghyoke.



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*They are actually quite a bit of fun to be around, let me tell you.
You just need to know how to talk to them is all.*

—Theormaz, T'skrang River Pirate

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One striking feature of the t'skrang of House Henghyoke is their absolute silence. Those who have fought against them report that Henghyoke warriors never cry out, even when wounded or surprised. Captured Henghyoke *aropagoi* never crack even under the most severe interrogation, and mind spells directed against Henghyokian subjects invariably induce comas or death in their targets.

Every *aropagoi* of House Henghyoke wears a silver collar around his neck. These collars are fashioned to resemble an impossibly elongated river otter swallowing its own tail, and fetch 100 silver pieces or more in the larger markets along the river. However, any attempt to wrest the collar from a captured raider produces hideous effects on the captive. The collars have no locks or latches and must be cut off by a metalsmith. In addition to the obvious hazards of this procedure, most captives deprived of their collars immediately go insane or catatonic. Occasionally they erupt into berserk furies, threatening foe and friend alike.

This mysterious *aropagoi* received the Name "Henghyoke" from victims who observed Henghyoke raiding parties using huge, trained river otters during raids. In t'skrang legends, the "henghyoke" were a race of shape-changing river otters known for their playful pranks and magical knowledge. Apparently, the raiders of House Henghyoke keep trained river otters as pets and servants. Reportedly, some of these otters have been bred to unusually large sizes—anywhere from five to seven feet long—and trained to assist in raids. No record exists of House Henghyoke prior to the Scourge. Just after the Scourge, piracy became a common practice along the Serpent River as villages came out of hiding and took up the old ways, so it is hard to pinpoint when the first Henghyoke attack occurred. The Henghyoke escalated their raids at the same time the Therans returned to Barsaive, which has fostered speculation that House Henghyoke, like House K'tenshin, is aligned with the Theran Empire. However, Henghyoke raiders regularly prey on both K'tenshin and Theran traders. In fact, the Therans offer bounties for the apprehension of Henghyoke raiding parties.

After the Theran War and the signing of the Free Trade Compact, the other *aropagoi* began to cooperate to repel Henghyoke raids, which seemed to subside for a while. Soon, however, it became apparent that the Henghyoke were simply redirecting most of their attacks against settlements and traffic along the Serpent's tributaries. More than half of the Serpent's tributaries enter the river west of Lake Ban in the vicinity of the Servos Jungle, leading many observers to speculate that the Henghyoke headquarters lies somewhere in the maze of waterways that snake through the jungle.

The paucity of facts available about the Henghyoke has fueled many theories about the *aropagoi*'s structure and origins. One apocryphal story claims that the *Shivalahala* Henghyoke is actually the last of the magical henghyoke from t'skrang folk tales. Evon Tyr-lath, a noted scholar from Urupa, has advanced the theory that the *Shivalahala* Henghyoke is a powerful Illusionist who has hidden her village from the eyes of her fellow Namegivers. Tyr-lath suggests that the raiders' primary settlement actually lies right in the middle of the river, but the *shivalahala*'s magic causes boats to pass by it every day without seeing or bumping into it.

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For someone to think that the dishonorable "House" of Henghyoke has a shivalahala at all is simply preposterous. This so-called scholar certainly has a lot to learn about the t'skrang race.

—G'klak Mooneya Syrtis

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ADVENTURE HOOK

While traveling near the Servos River, the adventurers are attacked by a band of vicious velos (see the *Gamemaster's Guide* on p. 204). Seemingly from out of nowhere, a solitary t'skrang with a silver band on his neck rushes into the fray and wards off the attackers with a strange, feathery medallion. Their new silent companion stays with them, motioning for food and water on occasion, but pointing out dangerous plants and other hazards to aid them. As the group arrives at a small village to cross the river (or continue their journey by riverboat), they notice their companion wears a scarf around his neck that had been absent before.

Once on the ship, the t'skrang seems very edgy and always stay close to the group so they can speak for him if need be. However, before long he is confronted by the crew of the ship and taken below the deck without much explanation. Soon, a V'strimonian warship pulls up and

after an exchange between the captains the characters witness their benefactor carried onto the warship. The merchant captain then politely asks them to come quietly and leads them to the warship captain, who has a few questions for them. Any aggressive moves at this point will bring down the crews of both ships to help subdue the characters.

Throughout this interrogation they will find out fragments of their benefactor's allegiance with House Hengjyoke, hopefully in time to distance themselves from him. Their sympathies for him will only cause suspicion and the V'strimonians will continue to watch the characters after their release, which occurs after arrival at the Floating City. Any attempts to free their benefactor will bring them up against both the authorities of V'strimon and of Throal—who are questioning this pirate in the Floating City itself...



A TOUR OF THE SERPENT

The Serpent seems a rather appropriate Name for many reasons, not the least of which is that it seems the very things that one casts upon the waters, come back to aid, or more often, to bite one.

• SHIVALAHALA SYRTIS •

THE NORTH REACH

The North Reach is one of the most dangerous stretches of the Serpent River. For much of the river's length, isolated settlements are the only signs of Namegiver civilization. Following the Serpent north toward the edge of the province, it passes through rugged canyons, then into uncharted lands where its mysterious source lies.

The confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers marks the southern boundary of the North Reach. West of that point, the river enters Lake Vors, home of House Ishkarat. This *aropagoi* conducts trade like the other *aropagoi* of the Serpent, but it has also closely allied itself with the Denairastas clan of the city of Iopos. As a result, Ishkarat riverboats often ferry spies, informants, and others working for the Denairastas while ostensibly making trading runs. These services enable Denairastan spies to move along the entire length of the Serpent River with ease, which, in turn, keeps the clan's leaders well informed about *aropagoian* politics. The alliance has proved profitable for the Ishkaratans as well; Denairastan advice has greatly aided House Ishkarat in its campaign to expand its influence by taking control of nearby t'skrang river villages.

Two hundred miles west of Lake Vors, the Serpent curves south around the wooded hills of Glenwood Deep. More than 30 windling clans make their homes in the trees of the Deep, forming the largest concentration of windlings in Barsaive. Fierce rivalries among these clans occasionally erupt into open warfare, but like most windling endeavors, these disputes are quickly resolved and forgotten. The windlings of the Deep are also known for their wanderlust, and their extensive travels allow them to spread their intense dislike of the House Ishkarat t'skrang across Barsaive.



If ever you have an urgent need, a quest for consolation, magical aid, or wisdom, then go to the faeryfolk who live in the heart of the Glenwood Deep. The dangerous journey is worth it. Frightful spirits, dark shadows that haunted our dreams and took our children, were plaguing my village. We had no other recourse and so I set out to find if the stories of kind and powerful folk in this deep woodland were true. Never have I found myself so listened to and understood, never so taken aback by the sincerity of the reply. If ever, you are in need my friend, go and ask the winged ones who but for stories will cast their spells on your behalf. Let their light hearts lift yours and so keep their legend alive.

—Ellainor, Elder of Buranth



As the river winds north from Glenwood Deep, it enters the shadow of the Scol Mountains. Here, the river narrows—often to a width of a mile or less—and deepens. Its banks become steep walls of rock, occasionally broken by waterfalls and terraced cataracts created by small tributaries that flow out of the nearby mountains. T'skrang river villages grow increasingly isolated here, and riverboats commonly travel two or more days at a time before passing a settlement.

The surrounding lands are largely uninhabited, but the nearby Scol Mountains are home to isolated trollmoots. The trolls of the region do not possess airships, but conduct raids astride massive thundra beasts. All attempts to contact these trolls have so far ended in angry threats and violence.

More than a thousand miles northwest of Lake Vors, the river passes near the city of Iopos, whose population exhibits a fanatical loyalty to the city's rulers, the dynastic clan of Denairastas. Recently, thousands of men and women have begun digging a massive canal designed to link Iopos to the Serpent River. A few hundred miles north of Iopos, the river passes through the Grand Cataracts, a towering cascade of water more than a hundred feet high and half a mile wide. Beyond the cataracts, the river continues up into the mountains and quickly becomes unnavigable. The source of the Serpent lies somewhere in this region, but has not yet been found.

LAKE VORS

Lake vors takes its Name from the t'skrang word vors, which translates as "deep." The lake is 20 miles wide at its widest point and more than a thousand feet deep at its center. The cold depths of the lake foster some unusual species of fish and freshwater mollusks, including an edible snail that grows as large as a troll's fist. The snails are considered a delicacy at the Elven Court. A perceptible current, which runs from west to east along the lake's 60-mile length, circulates the water.

The north bank of the lake consists of high bluffs that rise two to three hundred feet above the water's edge. For centuries the area remained largely uninhabited, until the Ishkaratans constructed the town of Axalekso atop the bluffs. The hills to the North of these bluffs hold rich deposits of rare metals. At one time these hills contained considerable deposits of orichalcum as well, but these were depleted before the Scourge. The lake's south bank forms the bottom of a vast basin that curves gradually up to the Tylon Plateau. During the annual rainy season, the lake overflows the south bank and deposits several feet of fertile mud along the bottom of the basin.



Near the western shore of the lake, a rock outcropping juts up from the depths of the lake like a massive, roughly hewn pillar. Atop this outcropping lies the Citadel of House Ishkarat, formerly the Fortress Isle of Maratha. The t'skrang of House Syrtis built the fortress many centuries ago, selecting the site for its commanding view of the lake. The Syrtisian leaders then deeded the fort to the Maratha *niall*, in exchange for a vow to protect the lake from pirates and other enemies of House Syrtis. The fortress remained in Marathan hands until a few years ago, when House Ishkarat captured it.

Along the shores of Lake *vors* lie several small villages inhabited by t'skrang, dwarfs, elves, and humans. These village residents are a mix of Throalic settlers, elven refugees disenchanted with the corruption of the Blood Wood, t'skrang from the lower castes of House Syrtis seeking a better life for their hatchlings, and former residents of kaers located in the surrounding hills. An uneasy peace prevailed among the villagers when the lake was under the dominion of the Maratha *niall*, although disputes between miners occasionally led to some bloodshed on the north bluffs. Generally, the Marathans focused their energies toward rebuilding the Scourge-ravaged river villages between Lake *vors* and the River Mothingale, leaving the lake villages relatively free to conduct their own affairs. The *niall* occasionally exacted tribute from the lake villages or enlisted their help to fight off pirates, but otherwise interfered little with village life. Life under Ishkaratan rule has proved quite different, however. Shortly after assuming control of the lake, the Ishkaratans began rounding up all able-bodied adult villagers. These unfortunate Namegivers were then forced to work as laborers in the construction of Axalekso, during which many of them died. Additionally, the Ishkaratans exact exorbitantly high taxes from the villages and regularly execute dissenters.

In addition to the lakeshore settlements, several isolated villages lie along the small rivers and streams that branch out from Lake *vors* and the nearby sections of the Serpent River. None of these rivers are navigable by riverboat, so visitors must use barges, canoes, or footpaths to reach these hinterland settlements.

THE MID REACH

The Mid Reach of the Serpent River, the so-called Silver Crescent, describes a wide arc that stretches from the wild lands of north central Barsaive down to the lowland settlements near Lake Ban. Traditionally, the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers, just south of the Blood Wood, marks the northern boundary of the Mid Reach. Here sits the fortress known as Kaer Eidolon, where Syrtisian riverboats and troops from the Blood Wood stand watch against the warships of House Ishkarat.

From the plains south of the Blood Wood, the river passes between the Scythia, Caucavic, and Throal mountain ranges, drawing strength from numerous alpine tributaries. Here the river passes through wooded hills dotted with river towns and villages fortified against the fierce raiders who live in the surrounding highlands. In pre-Scourge times these hills were among the most scenic in Barsaive. Their green expanses and the snow-capped mountain peaks that rise behind them like pale shadows inspired the famed Theran poet, Iagen of Parlainth, to write that "the land has been sculpted by a supernatural genius whose first intent was to arouse in the observer a true appreciation of the power of nature and its supremacy over mortal concerns."

Attracted by the beauty of the land and the abundant game animals in the woods and waters, many wealthy Therans, who came to Parlainth during the Theran annexation of Barsaive, built private retreats in the region's hidden valleys and woodland dales. Dozens of towns and villages arose along the Serpent's banks as the region's native inhabitants grew the food and made the goods that kept life comfortable for the Theran colonists.

As the Scourge approached, the Therans abandoned their sprawling villas, which now lie in ruins. The wooded hills have begun to regain their green mantles, but much of the area's wildlife remains warped and feral and many of the tributaries flowing out of the Caucavics remain choked and filthy. Even on the river, where the t'skrang hibernated through the long years of the Scourge, many a village tower stands empty—a silent memorial to the victims of those terrible times.



A bit of Barsaive's pre-Scourge splendor survives in the Cliff City of Lalai Gorge, which is universally recognized as one of the province's architectural marvels. Located just south of the Caucavic Mountains, the Cliff City is home to House Syrtis, the House of the Dragon Moon. The Serpent's oldest *aropagoi*, House Syrtis has controlled the Mid Reach for millennia and continues to dominate that stretch of river.

South of the Cliff City, the Serpent passes into the foothills of the Throal Mountains. Here, small independent colonies of elves, dwarfs, humans, and t'skrang raise livestock, grow tea, and cultivate vineyards that produce some of Barsaive's finest wines. The area is also home to the dwarf settlement of Tansiarda and the t'skrang village of Denlikiyan, which is renowned for its boatyards.

THE RIVER MOTHINGALE

The River Mothingale and its tributary, the Lesser Mothingale, have connected the elven civilization of the Blood Wood with the Serpent River system since the dawn of Namegiver history. In ancient times, elven trading ships plied the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers and even ventured out into the Aras Sea. As t'skrang power grew along the Serpent, tensions between the elves and the t'skrang inevitably increased, culminating in open warfare between the two Namegiver races, as commemorated in the t'skrang legends of the War Against the Elves (for more information, see **House Syrtis** on p. 19). As elven power waned, the elven fleet slowly shrank. However, elven vessels remained a common sight along Barsaive's rivers until the Elven Queen Alachia's decision to isolate her kingdom from the rest of Barsaive. At that time, the queen ordered her subjects to destroy all remaining elven ships. Now, Masae Seorach and his *Mallornica* (see **The Coil River** on p. 60), and the ruined shipyard at the southern edge of the Blood Wood remain the only traces of the elven kingdom's once proud fleet.

The ruins, located along the Mothingale, are all that remain of an ancient shipyard unlike any other in Barsaive. The elves abandoned the yard and destroyed all of its magical devices when their queen ordered the destruction of the elven fleet. Explorers who have visited the ruins say an atmosphere of loss and sorrow hangs over them, as if something vital to the elven race was destroyed along with the docks and equipment.

As the Mothingale exits the Blood Wood and flows toward the Serpent River, it passes through rough steppes and withered highlands. The Mothingale runs swift here, but remains navigable. Its banks are desolate and uninhabited, and the stretch of river contains little of interest to travelers save for an ancient obelisk that rises some 26 yards from the middle of the river about 70 miles north of the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers. The downstream face of the obelisk is covered with carved t'skrang pictographs, and its upstream side bears an inscription in archaic *Sperethiel*. Scholars who have translated the elven script say it describes a peace treaty between the Queen of the Wyrms Wood and the *Shivalahala* Syrtis, and identifies the obelisk as a marker that indicates the boundary beyond which no t'skrang riverboat may trespass. Many t'skrang who have journeyed to the site believe the obelisk is historical evidence of the legendary War Against the Elves.

KAER EIDOLON

At the confluence of the Mothingale and Serpent Rivers lies Kaer Eidolon, a site of great historical and strategic importance in northern Barsaive. Originally, the site was occupied by a small group of elven exiles who fled the Wyrms Wood shortly before Queen Alachia instituted the Ritual of the Thorns. The Elven Court kept no record of these mysterious individuals, but their story is truly remarkable. Judging by the archaeological evidence, the group

traveled nearly four days from the Wyrms Wood to reach the site, transporting all the supplies they would need to erect a kaer, and then somehow completed two-thirds of their kaer before finally succumbing to Horrors. Appropriately enough, the first explorers of the Blood Wood region Named the site *eidolon*, the elven word for phantom.

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On the fourth day of my assignment to Kaer Eidolon I already grow sick and tired of these lizards! I fear their ruckus and tomfoolery will be the end of us. Though some think the queen's policies unreasonable, the more I see of the outside the more I understand the true depths of her wisdom. How I wish for the days of our elders, when elves had the skill to tame these waters! But to duty, Guardian Bird would be appalled at my aim of late. These cursed waters play their own tricks, but the others tell me it only takes a few weeks to grow accustomed to them. Weeks... the thought already makes me long for the woods again.

—From the Journal of Alevar, Woodsman

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Nearly a century later, Kaer Eidolon became the site of the first elven military installation constructed outside the Blood Wood in modern times. Some observers even claim that the fort at Eidolon, the result of a Syrtisian/elven alliance, may herald the end of the Elven Court's long, self-imposed isolation.

The origins of the fort can be traced back approximately 10 years, when emissaries from House Syrtis arrived at the Elven Court bearing a proposal from the Syrtisian High Chamber. In that proposal, the Syrtisian leaders suggested that the elves and t'skrang of House Syrtis set aside their historical animosities and join in a defensive pact to check the expansion of House Ishkarat. At that time, the Ishkaratans had recently seized the headquarters of a Syrtisian *niall* based at Lake *vors* and had begun taking control of Serpent River villages east of the lake, causing great concern in the Syrtisian High Chamber. Certain Syrtisian leaders concluded that the Ishkaratans intended to seize control of the Mothingale and Serpent confluence, and they correctly judged that the elves of the Blood Wood would be greatly disturbed by such a prospect.

The Elven Queen, fearing that the River Mothingale would provide an ideal springboard for an Ishkaratan invasion of the Blood Wood, quickly sent a reply expressing her interest in the proposal. Within weeks, elven and Syrtisian military engineers had begun to lay the foundations of a new fortress on the walls of the abandoned kaer.

The unique fortifications at Kaer Eidolon reflect a marriage of t'skrang and elven architecture. The fort's stone and earthen ramparts are reinforced with wood and vine, and the fort was outfitted with such marvels of engineering as a system of retractable piers that can be pulled out of the water in the event of an amphibious assault and special fire cannons that can strike at enemies up to 700 yards away.

The troops stationed at the fort, an unprecedented mix of Syrtisian and elven soldiers, also reflect the unique nature of this joint venture. Kaer Eidolon's elven troops primarily consist of elves born outside the Blood Wood, who journeyed to the Elven Court to see for themselves the corruption of the Ritual of the Thorns and to draw their own conclusions about the Elven Schism. Apparently, Queen Alachia chose to station such cultural pilgrims at the kaer to minimize the chance that their influence might disrupt the status quo in the Blood Wood.

The joint venture proved its worth in 1502 TH when a Syrtisian fleet, backed by Kaer Eidolon's impressive fortifications and river patrols, soundly defeated an Ishkaratan force at the Battle of Sejanus.

Since that time, House Ishkarat's warships have restricted their activities to Lake *vors* and the Serpent River west of the lake.

Additionally, the project has provided unforeseen benefits to both the elves and Syrtisians. A genuine camaraderie has developed between the t'skrang and elven troops, particularly the elves from outside the Blood Wood, which has done much to break down the distrust and animosity that has separated the two Namegiver races for centuries. The fort has also provided the Syrtisian military with an excellent place to train the new common-born officers it so desperately needs to bolster its command ranks, which still contain many feeble-minded Syrtisian noblemen.

In recent years, however, the rose that blooms in Kaer Eidolon has begun to show thorns as well. The rivalries between the Syrtisian *nialls* burn brightly within the t'skrang ranks, and these rivalries lead to serious incidents at times. Mock battles between the riverboats of rival *nialls* occasionally produce casualties, and the constant competition between officers from rival *nialls* often hampers the readiness of the t'skrang forces. Understandably, several of Queen Alachia's officers have grown disenchanting with the Syrtisian command of the fortress and have begun pushing for a rotation that would put Kaer Eidolon under elven command for part of each year. Additionally, many of the fort's elven troops choose not to renew their commissions. As a result, replacement troops arrive almost daily, severely reducing the effectiveness of those troops. Finally, all of these various tensions have been exacerbated by the lack of Ishkaratan attacks in recent years, a phenomenon that has made the elves' and t'skrang's common enemy seem increasingly remote.

Kaer Eidolon has also become the center of a black market that shuttles goods between the Blood Wood and House Syrtis. Although Queen Alachia's long-standing edicts expressly prohibit all nonessential contact between her elves and outsiders, the t'skrang have always associated the word "forbidden" with "profitable." The fraternization of elven and t'skrang troops, combined with the elven regiment's rotating roster, has provided an irresistible opportunity for black marketeers. The t'skrang have even found the perfect cover for their secret operations: the t'skrang tradition of *tessesta*, exchanging gifts with departing comrades-in-arms. Typically, the fort's t'skrang troops begin planning their *tessesta* months before their elven colleagues depart for the Blood Wood, so that they can realize the most profit from their chance to trade t'skrang goods for elven ones. Such trade has become so lucrative that many t'skrang officers engage in the practice themselves or accept bribes from their troops in exchange for their silence on the matter.

MARREK

The city of Marrek lies on the patch of land between the Caucavic and the Serpent Rivers, marking all that is left of this once-proud human kingdom. Marrek prospered after the Orichalcum Wars, explored lands, fought wars, and gained a reputation for assassinating nobles from other kingdoms. When Marrek became involved in the assassination of a Theran councilor, it lost the support of the Theran Empire. The Theran's feelings remained hurt for centuries, and they eventually decided Marrek could do without their magical protections from the Horrors. Today, scholars say the kingdom of



Marrek exists in Name only, having been completely ripped apart during the Scourge.

The Kingdom of Marrek was known for its shrewd dealings in many areas, trade and politics prominent among them. It is said Marrek knew secrets from the inner circles of every kingdom in Barsaive. Some claimed Marrek even knew the daily habits, routines, and favorite dishes of every major noble in the province. This outstanding intelligence is the suspected source of Marrek's success in foreign assassinations. Its spies, reflecting the flexibility and resourcefulness common to humankind, were quite adept at infiltrating every level of rival kingdoms. Many claim these spies were most often followers of the Journeyman Discipline, able to pick up not only new skills, but also whatever magical abilities would be most useful along the way. While this seems unlikely, it has not stopped a number of Journeymen from searching Marrek's old territories in hopes of learning the secrets of possible Ghost Masters.

While flexibility certainly played a role, Marrek's prowess in alchemic pursuits is also credited for the kingdom's murderous achievements. Potions, poultices, and charms of all sorts were a major export of the kingdom, some rumored to grant incredible strength, speed, or even intellectual ability for a time. Many powerful alchemic items are said to have their origins or major production there. Records of illicit sales of poisons also have come to light over the centuries since the Scourge began.

Appropriately enough, these facets continue on in the present day city of Marrek. While still only a relatively small city, it boasts a lion's share of alchemists' shops, with exotic ingredients, talismans, and baubles from all over Barsaive and beyond. The magical community often wonders how much the myths of Marrek's history of alchemy have been exaggerated to increase sales. In addition, the cooperation of Namegivers on equal terms is an impressive feature of the growing community. Marrek boasts an airship, a large drakkar Named *Truthbringer*, manned by an alliance of lowland trolls and human airmen. The chief of the city watch is a former ork scorcher chieftain Named Durmoot Snarltooth, who, along with some loyal friends, remained in the city's service as many orks left for Cara Fahd. A small trade covenant of displaced t'skrang has recently opened up shop in the city; further adding to the mix that is Marrek.

The Truthbringer's first mate is a madman through and through. He loves to jump off the side of the blinking ship with only a small rope round his waist! I swore he was a goner or a fool until he set foot on the other side of the ship. He nearly got an axe in the head! And the crew are just as crazy, thinking they can prove trolls can be civilized and all, through their respectful trading. Never did understand those honor-less lowlanders. At least they can sail well enough; they still have some of the mountain blood in 'em, it seems.

—Belwharg of the Stoneclaws

The city's origins remain mysterious, however. The ruling family supposedly arrived a few decades after the opening of Throal and began as poor traders, taking the Name of the ancient human kingdom that once prospered on this land. Their current wealth makes many wonder at the possibility of ancient Marrekan treasure hiding in the hills and forests; indeed, adventurers occasionally go questing in the wild lands that once made up the kingdom. Currently, the rulers are working to solidify their minor trading agreements and alliances with the nearby powers of House Syrtis and Throal. It appears they may still fear the wrath of Thera over their Name-sake's actions.

My latest theory is that Marrek's rulers are actually Marrekan nobles reclaiming their heritage after a stint living in the kaers of others. I haven't been able to find any manifests to prove it yet, but I believe it's just a matter of searching hard enough. A mysterious family of well-to-do humans is likely to have made a kaer's record books.

—Kallarian, Scholar of Jerris

THE PILGRIMAGE ROUTE

For millennia, t'skrang from all over Barsaive have traveled to the Mid Reach to walk the Pilgrimage Route, which stretches from Ayodhya to the Cliff City of House Syrtis. The ancient footpath runs close by the Serpent River for 15 days' journey and passes through some of the most revered t'skrang sacred sites. On nights of the full moon, it is said that the path's smooth white paving stones glow with a soft light.

T'skrang say that those who tread the white stones walk a path of purity and communion with the Passions, and observations of magicians who have visited the path seem to support that contention. The route passes several places that were warped or corrupted by Horrors, but even in such areas the path itself remains safe ground where magicians can cast raw magic without risking the usual dangers.

Unfortunately, the pilgrimage route begins at the hill of Ayodhya—which is where the Therans landed their massive behemoth that marked their return (see **The Fortress City of Triumph** on p. 65). No one has been able to walk the pilgrimage route since.

Ayodhya rises more than 160 yards from the plains southwest of Lake Ban and dominates the surrounding landscape for miles. According to t'skrang legend, the Old Man of the Nets ordered his children to carry his chair to Ayodhya and build his funeral pyre atop the hill when he knew his time had come to die. (Ayodhya literally translates as "spirit chair.") When they had finished doing as their father had asked, the Old Man's children turned to him for guidance, but found he had died while they worked. They placed his body and chair in the middle of the pyre and set the wood ablaze. Although the Old Man's body burned to ash in the flames, his wooden chair resisted the fire. The children then carried the chair back to the Island of Reeds in Lake Ban and set it at the foot of the table in their *niall's* dining hall. On certain days of the year, the Old Man's spirit appeared in the chair during the evening meal, dispensing wisdom and retelling the tales of his many adventures. To this day many t'skrang *nialls* set aside a chair for the *niall's* ancestral spirits, should they decide to visit.

Interestingly, obsidimen also revere Ayodhya. Obsidimen pilgrims often climbed the spiraling path up the hill to the Liferock located at its top. The Liferock is home to a brotherhood whose members include the merchant Omasu (see **How It Came To Pass** on p. 16 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*). Why the obsidimen venerate the hill remains unknown, but the Thera's life-draining magic has been depleting the energies of the Liferock and a number of obsidimen trapped inside since the behemoth landed. These obsidimen are imprisoned forever, and the spirit of the Liferock is doomed to wither away to nothing.

A small shrine to the spirit of the Earth, Shivos, marked the beginning of the t'skrang Pilgrimage Route at the base of the Liferock. The path then wound down the hill's steep slopes to the river's edge, now mostly obscured by the Thera fortress. The route follows the Serpent's contour to a shrine to the Old Man of the Nets on the south shore of Lake Ban. From there, pilgrims boarded a small, oar-driven ferry that carried them to the Floating City of House V'strimon. Typically, pilgrims spent a day visiting each of the towers of the city, then boarded another ferry that took them to the mouth

of the Coil River on the northwest shore of the lake. There, on the sandy white shoreline, lies a massive flat black rock that contains a fossilized impression resembling a grossly oversized t'skrang footprint. According to t'skrang legend, Shivoam, the dragon-spirit of the Serpent River, made the footprint when she came to her husband's marriage bed for the very first time.

From Shivoam's Footprint, the path heads north along the lakeshore, then closely follows the contours of the Serpent River. Along this stretch, pilgrims commonly passed travelers on a dwarf caravan road that runs parallel to the pilgrims' path. In several places, only a

few yards separate the two routes. The two routes never intersect, however, for the dwarfs took great care not to cross the sacred t'skrang path when they built their caravan road (even when doing so required impressive feats of engineering).

On the fifth day of the journey, the path enters a stand of trees called the Grove of Memory. Those who pass through the grove receive visions of the past. Adepts have discovered that by carrying a magical item through the grove, one can occasionally receive insights into one of the item's Key Knowledges. Several years ago a Wizard Named Talmagore attempted to turn this little-known fact to his own gain. He set up a stall just outside the Grove of Memory and promised customers that he

could penetrate the deepest mystery of any magic item by carrying it into the trees. He enjoyed considerable success for his first two years in business, realizing enough profit to replace his ramshackle stall with a beautiful house. Then one day he walked into the grove and never returned. His faithful servant, Grimaud, now tends Tal-magore's house. Grimaud offers bed and board to all pilgrims but refuses to set foot inside the grove for any reason.

A few days north of the Grove of Memory lies the river village of Kralipur. Kralipur is home to the Sacred Flame, which has been vigilantly guarded by the independent Unnao *niall* and its *lahala* for centuries. The source of the ever-burning flame is said to be a scale from the carapace of the Dragon of the Sun, T'schlome. Pilgrims would write prayers on reed paper, then toss them in the flame. The resulting ashes reputedly acted as charms powerful enough to ward off the undead and lesser Horrors.

As the path enters the Throal Mountains, it passes through a cave where an ancient sculptor has carved the images of the Four Founders, the legendary great dragons that created heaven and earth. The images of Shivoam, T'schlome, Shivos, and Syrtis, each as large as life, are carved in bas relief into the walls of the cavern. Legend has it that the eyes of these carvings were immense opals, each the size of dinner plate, but thieves stole them long ago. The legends go on to say that when a worthy pilgrim passes under the gaze of the Four Founders, the spirits of the first dragons will bestow a special gift of strength on him. Since the opening of the kaers, however, no pilgrim has ever reported receiving such a gift.

Deep in the mountains, the path reaches the Pool of Floranuus. The waters of this spring collect in a deep pool, and the bright red sand at the bottom of it gives the water the appearance of freshly spilled blood. Pilgrims would dive into the pool to grab a handful of this sand, for it is said a pouch of it placed under one's pillow protects against nightmares of all kinds (see the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 106).

Farther north, the path enters the Canyon of a Thousand Voices. This narrow canyon acts as a natural amplification and echo chamber. A single shout may bounce between the canyon's sheer stone walls until it becomes nearly a thousand times louder. Occasionally, a pilgrim who cries out a question would hear a second voice giving him an answer amid the echoes of his own voice.

As the path nears Lalai Gorge, it crosses over the Alidar River on a natural stone bridge. The rock formation, which arches several hundred feet above the river, is wide enough for only one person to cross at a time. Tradition states that while crossing this bridge, a pilgrim will confront a vision of his greatest fear, which he must overcome to get to the other side.

The Pilgrimage Route ends at the Pinnacle Gate of the Cliff City. From the Pinnacle Gate, the pilgrim could take in a breathtaking view of the wide ribbon of the Serpent River below him, the Caucavic Mountains across the gorge, and the highest peaks of the Throal Mountains behind him. At the Pinnacle Gate, House Syrtis maintains a large shrine to Shivoam, the dragon-spirit of the Serpent River. An attendant at the shrine greeted every pilgrim with gifts of food and an offer of shelter. Additionally, any pilgrim who could show he has visited each of the sacred places on the path received a silver medallion bearing the sign of the Dragon of the Moon.

The attendant then arranged private audiences with the *Shivalahala* Syrtis for all pilgrims who had completed the path. Those individuals were escorted to a special audience chamber deep inside the Cliff City. The high ceiling of the chamber contains numerous openings that channel cascades of water from the Serpent, which collects in basins on the chamber's floor. Within this web of waterfalls, the *shivalahala* would await the traveler. She would speak the pilgrim's Name and bless his journey. The pilgrim could then ask one question of the *shivalahala*, which she must

answer if she could divine a true reply. Very few questions had ever gone unanswered, and no answers had ever been false—although quite often the *shivalahala*'s replies were maddeningly obscure.

This practice inspired the popular Troubadour's tale of Loloish of Framling. According to the tale, Loloish was a common-born t'skrang who fell desperately in love with the *Shivalahala* Syrtis. In an effort to prove himself worthy of the *shivalahala*'s love, Loloish worked his way through the ranks of the *aropagoi* until he became captain of a riverboat. He dedicated his life and his crew to the service of the *shivalahala*, and eventually his Name became known to her. He revealed his heart to the *shivalahala* on many occasions, but she would make no answer one way or another. After much introspection, he disguised himself as a pilgrim and set out on the Pilgrimage Route. When he completed the journey, he asked his one question of the *shivalahala*: "*Shivalahala* of the Moon, dost thou love me as I love thee?" Forced to reveal the truth, the *shivalahala* revealed her love for Loloish, and the two lived ever after in the trust of one another's souls.

SETTLEMENTS OF THE MID REACH

South of the Cliff City and north of Lake Ban, the Serpent enters the foothills of the Throal Mountains. The isolated pastures of this region are ideal for raising sheep and goats, and fields of green tea and some of Barsaive's most renowned vineyards flourish in the deep, rich topsoil. The region's natural bounty has attracted elven, dwarf, human, and t'skrang settlers, who live in small villages and terraced farms perched along the Serpent's steep banks and the surrounding hills. These Namegivers live side by side in mutual tolerance and abide by the laws and customs of Throal, but they pledge allegiance to none of Barsaive's major powers.

DENLIKIYAN

The village of Denlikiyan, one of the wealthiest river settlements in Barsaive, lies along this stretch of the Serpent. The hero Shen Denlikiyan, chief engineer and advisor to the Syrtisian *nialls* during the War Against the Elves, claims a prominent place in t'skrang legends and his descendants take great pride in their heritage. The shipyards of Denlikiyan are among Barsaive's finest, and the village's engineers are responsible for the innovations that led to the creation of the renowned *shimoram* riverboat design. Indeed, Denlikiyan's yards represent most of the handful of yards that can build a fire engine—and thus, a complete riverboat—from scratch. Rumor has it that after nearly a century of shipbuilding, Denlikiyan now sits on top of one of the largest stashes of gold coin in all of Barsaive.



During the past decade or so, the village's expert shipwrights and rumored wealth have attracted numerous well-organized raids, including two staged by Henghyokian pirate vessels, one staged by an Ishkaratan raider masquerading as a crippled V'strimonian riverboat, and four by mercenary bands of adepts—one of which claimed to have been in the pay of King Varulus III. So far, however, the village has successfully resisted all attempts to wrest away its secrets and gold.

—Rhouden, Vorst Engineer



TANSIARDA

Just south of the confluence of the Onman and the Serpent Rivers lies the town of Tansiarda, home of a consortium of dwarf engineers and magicians embarked on one of the most ambitious endeavors in Barsaive's history: to bridge the Serpent River. The

Old Theran Road to Parlainth runs through the town, and a well-traveled dwarf caravan route passes near the riverbank opposite Tansiarda. Additionally, the town lies close to a set of abandoned t'skrang village towers, which the dwarfs plan to use as piers to support their bridge. Although the plan seems technically feasible, it has aroused the ire of House Syrtis' Wavram *niall*, which is based in the area. Tensions have been running high between Tansiarda's dwarfs and the t'skrang of nearby villages.

On the trading route between Tansiarda and the Kingdom of Throal, the trading town of Ardanyan flourishes from the traffic. Founded by a group of wealthy merchants, the town boasts above-average defenses and provides travelers with a safe haven from the ork scorchers threatening the area.

OTHER SETTLEMENTS

As the river flows northwest of the Lalai Gorge, settlements grow increasingly sparse and better fortified. Although many maintain docks, most are set hundreds of yards back from the river's banks. Here, pioneer farms give way to communal settlements, whose inhabitants tend common fields by day and retreat to homes protected by thick walls as night falls. Most of these settlers are survivors from kaers in the Caucavic foothills who have come to the water's edge to escape the highland raiders; they live mainly by trade with passing riverboats. The southern banks of the river are also home to dwarf mining camps, full of prospectors who pan the river's water for the precious minerals that wash down from the nearby mountains.

In these parts, danger may come from any direction—the hills, the woods, the river, even from neighboring towns. The highland raiders of the nearby Throal and Caucavic Mountains, some of the most savage and desperate folk in all of Barsaive, are particularly feared. These primitive bands of humans, dwarfs, and orks strike with weapons of stone and bone, but the ferocity of their attacks more than compensates for their unsophisticated arsenals. Typically, a highland raiding band tries to kill every able-bodied defender, then carries off a village's food supplies and remaining inhabitants before torching the settlement's huts. Most settlers believe that the raiders use their unfortunate captives as slaves, but some suspect that the raiders worship the Horrors and sacrifice their prisoners to these evil entities.

After a riverboat of human raiders struck at several villages in the past few months, settlers have also begun to watch the river with increased vigilance. No one has been able to identify the riverboat by Name, however, and none of the crew covenants of the Mid Reach have reported any of their boats missing. The dwarfs of the region have expressed surprise at the lack of response by the Syrtisian t'skrang, but the t'skrang seem to believe that they are the only Namegivers capable of maintaining a fire engine for more than a few months. They contend that the human raiders will eventually run out of fire or run aground and have to abandon their riverboat.



Given these dangers, it should come as no surprise that the inhabitants of the region view all strangers as potential threats.

LAKE BAN

As the largest freshwater lake in Barsaive, Lake Ban is home to the Floating City of the t'skrang House V'strimon (see p. 32). The city is built entirely on platforms made of woven reeds growing upward from the lake bottom. Lake Ban's location—midway between Throal and Urupa, at the junction of the Coil and Serpent Rivers—has made it a major economic and cultural crossroad. The Floating City, along with the bustling towns and villages along the lake's shores, makes Lake Ban the undisputed heart of the Coil River Valley, as well as one of Barsaive's most civilized regions.

The landing of the Theran fortress of Triumph at Ayodhya has had a strong impact on the region, as the V'strimon have marshaled their warships to protect their city from attacks by the Therans and their allies, House K'tenshin. The K'tenshin seized control of the Serpent River between Lake Pyros and Lake Ban during the Theran's arrival, which in turn led to open hostilities between the two houses.

THE COIL RIVER

The Coil River is one of the most prosperous stretches of the entire Serpent River system. From its source in the Throal Mountains to the Aras Sea, the Coil runs as swiftly and strongly as the Serpent and is home to more people than the rest of Barsaive's mightiest waterway. Once considered unnavigable for much of its northern length, the river "smoothed out" during the Scourge. Riverboats can now sail north up the Coil, then ride its underground tributaries through the mountains to the Kingdom of Throal.

Midway through its course, the Coil flows into Lake Ban, connecting the Coil with the Serpent River. From Lake Ban, the Coil flows southeast through the fertile steppes between the Serpent River and the Aras Sea. Shortly before it enters the sea, the river divides into three branches, which form the Coil Delta. At the confluence of the central branch and the Aras lies the city of Urupa, Barsaive's foremost seaport. Situated under the steep cliffs that border the sea, Urupa was first settled by former kaer dwellers who arrived shortly after the Scourge ended.

Despite its relative youth, Urupa has quickly grown into one of the province's richest cities. Its strategic location and the high volume of lucrative trade conducted along its docks have attracted the attention of most of Barsaive's major trading companies, as well as the Kingdom of Throal and even the Theran Empire.

Adipae Rapids

The Coil River is more densely populated than any comparable length of the Serpent, primarily because the steep banks and deep channel keep the river from flooding even during the wet season. Because flooding is so rare, numerous frontier towns populated mainly by dwarfs from Throal have sprung up all along the Coil's northern banks.

Tradition has it that before the Scourge, the Coil's farthest navigable point north was at Adipae Ford, about 50 miles upstream of Lake Ban. Even today, the rapids at Adipae look intimidating, so it is not surprising that the first explorers from House V'strimon assumed the Adipae rapids were impassable. Early in the Theran War, however, the *Shivalahala* V'strimon ordered Captain Westhrall to find a river passage to Throal. After exploring all the tributaries that enter the Serpent from the Throal Mountains, Westhrall faced the unpleasant prospect of crossing the rapids at Adipae.

According to the legend, Westhrall had anchored *Astendar's Dart* just south of the rapids and sent a scouting party up along the banks to gauge the condition of the river upstream when a K'tenshin warship suddenly came surging up from behind. Realizing that his crew, split between the land and the water, was grossly outnumbered by the approaching K'tenshinians, Westhrall reportedly said, "Damn the rocks! Full speed ahead!" The K'tenshin captain watched aghast as his enemy entered the torrid waters of Adipae, and suddenly lost his nerve for pursuit. Westhrall, meanwhile, discovered that the turbulent water of the rapids actually covered the rocks to a considerable depth. He passed upstream without incident and went on to discover five different underground rivers leading to the Kingdom of Throal.

Once underground, Westhrall discovered a world utterly different from the one to which he was accustomed. The underground rivers proved to be a labyrinthine puzzle enshrouded in darkness, which concealed their peculiar dangers. After several successive journeys through the maze, Westhrall discovered that the rivers changed course over time, and found himself doubly lost. Eventually, the dwarfs of Throal had to maintain a series of stations along the underground rivers to guide the riverboats to the cities of Throal. These underground rivers are all but impassable now and used only by those rare riverboats given express permission to do so by King Neden.



Ah, go find my third cousin, for he is master of those waters. Pah! Never mind Neden's permission; go find Hodanticus, he knows a secret way in. Mind you, it requires a little hiking and the stomach to brave some choppy waters, but is nothing compared to what I and my kin have faced day in, day out in the Tylon. It nearly killed us all years back. Anyway, he'll get you in, and he even charges less than I do. Just make sure and tell him I sent you now, lad.

—Cousin Vodanicus



Darranis

Today, the rapids at Adipae are so well mapped that few riverboat captains fear them. Upstream of the rapids, the river is wide open for another 250 miles, with no appreciable hazard before it reaches the town of Darranis. At Darranis, a major caravan route winds down from the highlands out of Bartertown. In the years since the Theran War, the Darranis road has become a vital link between Throal and the Serpent River system, and the town has grown explosively.

Many Namegivers come to Darranis in search of work that merchant houses and independent caravan owners have to offer—mainly for transporting goods from Darranis north to Throal and vice versa. The steady demand for workers feeds many people, but forces many to spend most of their time on the road, leaving their women with the burden of raising their families. Payment is low because many people are able and willing to join a caravan, what makes for poor living conditions for the families left behind.

On the other hand, specialized crafters and the owners of the many taverns and trisnaris have a higher income and live in much better conditions than most of Darranis' inhabitants. Even though social unrest is a growing threat (fueled by a recent uprising demanding higher wages and better living conditions for the caravaneers), the majority of Darranis' population keeps their mouths shut.

Since the landing of the Theran behemoth, Darranis has become a hotspot for spies and smugglers. While the former use the town mainly as a retreat to deliver reports and keep their heads low, the latter provide enchanted weapons forged in Throal to support the Liferock Rebellion and agents of House V'strimon.

Most important merchant houses from Throal and their competitors, such as the Overland Trading Company, don't have warehouses and offices in Darranis, because most of the goods that arrive in Darranis are transported further into Barsaive.

Westhrall's Passage

The opening of the river north of Adipae led to the construction of new t'skrang river villages for the first time in more than a millennium. Even today, new village towers are going up along the stretch of river now called Westhrall's Passage. Apparently, so much time has passed since the t'skrang constructed a village that the engineers and Elementalists on the project are working from ancient texts and the ancestral memories of *Lahala Desti Denvi*. The *lahala's* involvement in the project is quite controversial, for she has abandoned her village to participate in this task.

Axalalail

The Coil's southern course between Lake Ban and Urupa is lined with farming villages, nestled behind stockades for protection against ork scorched from the surrounding plains. This part of the river contains only one remarkable town, the so-called Swinging City of Axalalail, which translates from the t'skrang as "New Lalai." The town is built entirely on platforms suspended in a grove of massive trees that grow at the site. The town's t'skrang residents, who built the town with the aid of a windling clan, use rope swings to move from platform to platform.



After I was familiar with using the ropes to get from one platform to another, I enjoyed every moment of my visit in Axalalail. Traveling by foot seems dull afterwards.

—Gillian, Human Thief

ADVENTURE HOOK

A Throalic merchant hires the characters to bring a shipment of enchanted weapons to Darranis and deliver them to a t'skrang merchant there. The t'skrang is an agent of House V'strimon planning to deliver the weapons to rebels hiding in the jungle near Lake Pyros. A group of Theran agents in Darranis got wind of the deal, however, and killed the t'skrang merchant a few days before the characters arrive. The Therans now wait for the player characters in ambush...

A handful of Elementalists are responsible for overseeing the trees and to make sure that the platforms and buildings are well maintained. The most experienced of these, a t'skrang Named L'tskarr, plays an important role in local politics and spends much time debating with city officials over the building of new platforms. Rumors say that L'tskarr is getting tired of his work and will retire soon, even though it is unclear who will follow in his footsteps.

The unusual architecture of Axalalail has lead to an ever increasing number of visitors, most of them coming by riverboat. While most trade takes places close to the docks, many taverns and trisnaris are found throughout the whole city. Most offer not only delicious meals, but also a spectacular view over the surrounding landscape. Due to the hazards of getting around in the city, most inhabitants don't drink much alcohol, or only watered-down ale.

Axalalail serves as a trade hub for the southern stretch of the Coil River. It is the only major settlement between Urupa and Lake Ban, and most riverboats traveling between these destinations make a stop in Axalalail to offer their goods. People from the surrounding villages travel to Axalalail each day and sell livestock, vegetables, and other trade goods—some of which are taken to Urupa or the Floating City of House V'strimon at Lake Ban. Axalalail is a primary producer of crayfish and the famous t'skrang spices, which can be found in the shallow river bays close to the town.

Showboats

House V'strimon, the Kingdom of Throal, and the Fenestral chamber of House Syrtis have recently begun an unusual joint venture to build five open-air amphitheaters along the west bank of the Serpent's Mid Reach, near well-settled areas along the Serpent and the Coil River. They intend to offer these facilities to passing showboats in return for a share in the gate receipts.

The only amphitheater completed so far, about a mile north of Tenshi Landing on Lake Ban, resembles the Aulcroft Amphitheatre in Urupa, and seats 5,000. Many observers have voiced doubts about the profitability of this ambitious project, pointing out that fewer than 5,000 people live near enough to the finished theater to attend performances, even if they wished to spend the time and money. Confidence in the project has steadily declined over the past few months, and work on a second site near the town of Axalalail has been suspended.

URUPA

Founded less than 100 years ago by residents of seven nearby kaers and citadels along the shores of the Aras Sea, the port city of Urupa lies at the confluence of the Coil River and the Aras Sea. Although considerably smaller than the great cities of Barsaive such as Travar, Iopos, and Bartertown, Urupa is the province's fastest growing metropolis.

Located on a peninsula that shelters one of the finest harbors on the Aras Sea, Urupa is separated from the mainland by 500-yard cliffs. Additionally, a 6-yard wall that contains five 24-yard watch-towers surrounds the city. In the mouth of the city's harbor lies a compact but imposing fortress called Shabira's Redoubt, which bristles with steel spikes and fire cannons. The city's military numbers more than 2,000 soldiers, and citizens who wish to vote in local elections must pay for the privilege by contributing enough money to arm and supply one soldier or sailor in times of war.

Urupa's fleet contains eight airships and five naval vessels, including two V'strimon warships that each boast 40 fire cannons. Despite its impressive military forces, Urupa's main business is trade, not conquest, and the city's location serves its commercial ambitions well. The city's harbor provides ideal shelter against the severe storms common to the Aras Sea, and the Urupan peninsula juts into the Aras about a half a mile north of the mouth of the Coil River's main branch. Urupa therefore lies at a natural crossroads. Goods from all across Barsaive are transported down the Serpent and Coil Rivers, and then pass through Urupa and on to distant ports all around the Aras Sea. At the same time, exotic goods from foreign Aras ports are transported to Urupa and up the Coil and Serpent Rivers to Throal, the Blood Wood, and other Barsaivian cities.

Urupa's burgeoning power as Barsaive's dominant Aras Sea port and its strategic location have drawn the attention of groups from all over Barsaive and beyond. Thera and Throal, Iopos and Travar, the t'skrang *aropagoi*, the Elven Court of the Blood Wood, and countless others have all made a place for themselves in the crowded streets of Urupa. The city is home to every Namegiver race in Barsaive, from windlings to obsidimen. In turn, Urupa's diverse population lends the city a cosmopolitan air matched by few other Barsaivian settlements.

Crowded as it is, Urupa can hardly be called one of Barsaive's more beautiful cities. Although it contains much to please the eye and ear, such as the Aulcroft Theater and the Three Temples to the Passions, the city's architecture and layout are less than inspired. Built to last of available materials, with little thought to the aesthetic pleasure of future generations, Urupa's square, solid buildings are constructed of unadorned blocks of stone cut from the drab gray cliffs that loom over the city. Even new buildings display few architectural flourishes, because the city's inhabitants rarely choose to fund ambitious architectural projects with money they can spend on business enterprises.

Let me tell you of the beauty of Urupa. Oh, it lies not in the city and its buildings, but in the sea itself. Never in all my days in Barsaive have I seen more beautiful waters! The sweet, fresh air blowing in your face off the shining, frothing sea is the best way to wake up! And the ships that ply its waters, with their billowing sails, illustrious curves, and purposeful bustle, have a life about them that is all their own. The place will always hold a certain magic for me, and I hope through my words it will for you. So, let me sing you the tale of how such a marvelous place came to be ...

—Beldeaux of Ar Kham

The Chief Councilor of Urupa is Named Fellidra Jer, a masterful Troubadour who has led the council for the past eleven years and enjoys great popularity among Urupa's citizens. Among her chief concerns

is the flow of trade between the city of Urupa and the rest of Barsaive. Both the Theran/K'tenshin and Throal/V'strimon trading alliances are attempting to negotiate an exclusive arrangement with Urupa to secure the city's rich Aras Sea trade for their ships. So far, Fellidra Jer has managed to keep the council neutral on the issue. The influx of unique merchandise from across the Aras Sea has already drawn many more merchants and traders from all over Barsaive than Fellidra believes is good for Urupa. Even the local merchants worry that the outsiders will open permanent shops and take up residence in the city.

Recently, Fellidra received word that several cities across the Aras Sea have come under attack by an army approaching from the East. In response to this news, she has hired a group of adventurers to seek out the truth of it.

THE ARAS COAST

Aside from Urupa, a few scattered fishing and trading settlements, and the recently re-settled t'skrang village of P'shestis, the rugged Aras coast of Barsaive is largely uninhabited. The village of P'shestis is located near the confluence of the Coil River and the Aras Sea.

The village's original inhabitants abandoned the site at the time of Urupa's founding, but in recent years a small community of t'skrang, which calls itself the Loyal Order of the Shining Crescent, has reopened the village's towers. Deriving its Name from a P'shestis riverboat lost in a storm on the Aras Sea in 1498 TH, the Loyal Order is actually a monastic community dedicated to the Passion Upandal, rather than a true t'skrang crew covenant or foundation. Reportedly, each member of the order shares a vision received in a dream of the lost riverboat returning to P'shestis from out of the deep sea. Although such beliefs may seem strange to outsiders, the t'skrang of the order are friendly and welcome visitors at all times.

The order's founders, who emigrated from Urupa's P'shestis sector, cleared the abandoned village's *t'slashina* and began to cultivate t'skrang spices. The sale of spices now serves as the order's sole source of income and has proved lucrative enough to enable the t'skrang of P'shestis to begin refurbishing the abandoned village's shipyard. Apparently, the community seeks to establish a facility for building and repairing fire engines that will rival the shipyards at Denlikiyan and Tremeeer.

The ruins of Kaer Otoks, the second major landmark of the Aras coast, lie about 300 miles southwest of Urupa at Aras Nehem, in an area of jagged cliffs and deep caverns filled with an unusual variety of enchanted and elemental life forms. The surrounding coastline makes navigation extremely treacherous for air and water ships alike, and black storm clouds seem to perpetually fill the skies above the long-abandoned kaer. A row of five cavernous openings that emerge from the cliff some 160 yards above the surging waters mark the entrance to Kaer Otoks.

Those who have survived the approach to the cliffs report that one can feel and hear an enormous rush of wind sucking into the five caverns. Others have reported visions of the Mad Passions Dis, Raggok, and Vestrial. According to legend, the cliff-side kaer contains the Abyss of Aras Nehem (see p. 164 of the *Gamemaster's Companion*), a massive rift in the Earth that exposes a limitless void in which the Horror Ristul resides.

South of Aras Nehem, the coast contains a few small towns and villages that have sprung up since the Scourge. Most of these are concentrated near the delta of the Dragon Mountain River, which flows from the mountain range of the same Name. Most of these settlements maintain fishing fleets, which harvest fish from the Aras. A few of these towns have begun to trade with the People From Across the Aras Sea. Twice a year, vessels from these towns make trade expeditions to Urupa and the scattered fishing settlements along the Aras coast.

These coastal fishing villages, most located at the confluences of the hundreds of small rivers that flow into the Aras, are the most fascinating of all the coastal settlements. Centuries of isolation

have left these communities untouched by much of the outside world. Throal and Thera are no more than vague rumors to these fisherfolk, who provide a fascinating window into Barsaive's distant past. Although the customs of these people may seem rustic and their dialects barely comprehensible, a patient traveler who makes the effort to seek them out may be rewarded with strange and rare gifts or trade items. In fact, the Aras coast is the location of the fabled River of Gold. It is said that gold can be scooped from the river like fish and that the precious metal is so plentiful that the local people trade with it as if it were common iron.

Masae Seorach and the Mallornica

The *Mallornica*, which sails the Aras Sea, is believed to be the only elven sailing ship still in existence. The sole surviving example of the legendary elven vessels described in t'skrang and elven lore, the *Mallornica* features a sail woven with elemental air, which catches the slightest breath of wind, and a keel carved from a single tree and coated with thin layers of elemental wood.

The *Mallornica* is a remarkable sight, with a hull made of wood as white as the clouds, a high curving prow that actually bears leaves in the summer months, and three masts that each tower more than 16 yards above the ship's deck. The front mast is lateen rigged, and the two rear masts bear square-rigged sails and an enormous spinaker sail that serves as a second rudder.

The *Mallornica* also boasts fire cannons and two ballistae that propel enormous harpoons. The ballistae are used to hunt levitahns in the deepest parts of the Aras Sea. In addition, the entire crew of the *Mallornica* is trained in the use of the elven warbow.

Masae Seorach's Name translates as "birth seed of the sundering," apparently an assumed Name. According to rumor, no one save the Elven Queen knows his true identity. Seorach is free of the thorns that mark the elves of the Blood Wood, but no one knows where he might have sought shelter during the Scourge. At every port on the Aras Sea he has left a standing offer of an orichalcum coin as a reward for any information that might lead to the discovery of a way to reverse the Ritual of the Thorns. However, Seorach denies any association with the Seekers of the Heart. The captain does not appear to follow the path of any particular Discipline, leading some to speculate that he is one of the few Barsaivian elves who have set foot on the Path of Lords.

Masae Seorach is an elf Ninth Circle Woodsman, Seventh Circle Songsmith, Seventh Circle Archer, Seventh Circle Elementalist, and Seventh Circle Swordmaster, following the *Sa'mistisha* path of the Journey and the Wheel (see p. 24 of the *Namesgivers of Barsaive* book). He is currently on the Path of Lords.

MASAE SEORACH

Attributes

DEX (18): 7 STR (12): 5 TOU (13): 6
PER (15): 6 WIL (15): 6 CHA (18): 7

Characteristics

Initiative: 7 Physical Defense: 12
Physical Armor: 3 Spell Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 5 Social Defense: 11
Death: 98 Recovery Tests: 2
Unconsciousness: 81 Knockdown: 5*
Wound Threshold: 9 Movement: 7

Karma Points: 36/36

* Masae knows the Wound Balance talent

Archer Talents (Knacks)

Bank Shot^D (7): 14
Call Missile (7): 13
Climbing (7): 14
Creature Analysis (7): 13

Direction Arrow^D (7): 13
 Evidence Analysis (7): 13
 Flame Arrow (8): 14 (Explosive Flame Arrow, Fire Arrow)
 Great Leap (7): 14
 Impressive Shot^D (7): 14
 Long Shot (7): 13
 Mystic Aim^D (7): 13
 Thread Weaving (Arrow Weaving)^D (7): 13
 Throwing Weapons^D (7): 14
 True Shot^D (7): 14

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Elementalist Talents (Knacks)

Air Speaking^D (8): 14 (Far Speaking, Whispered Conversation)
 Astral Sight (7): 13
 Cold Purify^D (7): 13
 Earth Skin^D (7): 13
 Elemental Hold^D (7): 13
 Elemental Tongues^D (7): 13
 Enhanced Matrix (7): 7
 Fire Heal^D (7): 13
 Item History (4): 10
 Read/Write Magic^D (7): 13
 Spellcasting^D (8): 14
 Spell Matrix^D (7): 7
 Spell Matrix (7): 7
 Spell Matrix (7): 7
 Spell Matrix (7): 7
 Summon (Elemental Spirits)^D (7): 13
 Thread Weaving (Elementalism)^D (9): 15 (Create Orichalcum)
 Willforce (7): 13

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Songsmith Talents

Bedazzle^D (7): 14
 Disguise Self^D (7): 13
 Emotion Song^D (7): 14
 Enduring Art (7): 14
 Engaging Banter^D (7): 14
 Evaluate^D (7): 13
 First Impression^D (7): 14
 Forge Weapon (7): 13
 Haggle^D (7): 14
 Mimic Voice (7): 14
 Navigation (7): 13
 Performance^D (7): 14
 Read/Write Language (8): 14—(Human/Scavian, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Theran, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)
 Resist Taunt^D (7): 13
 Speak Language (7): 13—(Human, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Theran, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)
 Steel Thought^D (7): 13
 Thread Weaving (Art Weaving)^D (7): 13

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Swordmaster Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike (7): 14
 Disarm^D (7): 14
 Etiquette (7): 14
 Heartening Laugh^D (7): 14
 Lasting Impression (7): 14
 Maneuver^D (7): 14
 Melee Weapons^D (7): 14
 Parry^D (7): 14
 Riposte^D (7): 14 (Claw Riposte)
 Second Weapon^D (7): 14
 Taunt^D (7): 14
 Thread Weaving (Weapon Weaving)^D (7): 13
 Tiger Spring (7): 7
 Unarmed Combat (7): 14
 Winning Smile (7): 14

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Woodsman Talents (Knacks)

Anticipate Blow^D (9): 15
 Avoid Blow^D (10): 17 (Cover)
 Detect Weapon (9): 15
 Dominate Beast (9): 15

Durability [7/6] (9): 9
 Karma Ritual^D (9): 9
 Lion Heart^D (9): 15
 Missile Path^D (9): 15
 Missile Weapons^D (10): 17
 Quick Shot (9): 16
 Safe Path^D (9): 15
 Search (9): 15
 Sense Danger (9): 15
 Silent Walk^D (10): 17 (Shadow Hide)
 Spot Armor Flaw (9): 15
 Sprint (9): 9
 Stopping Aim^D (9): 16
 Thread Weaving (Forest Weaving)^D (9): 15
 Tracking^D (10): 16 (Identify Tracks)
 Wilderness Survival (9): 15
 Wood Skin^D (9): 15
 Wound Balance^D (9): 14

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Skills

Aras Sea Area^K (4): 10
 Blood Magic Lore^K (4): 10
 Blood Wood History^K (5): 11
 Craftsman (Woodworker)^A (5): 12
 Dragon Lore^K (4): 10
 Fishing (5): 11
 Mapmaking^A (5): 11
 Read River (5): 11
 Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic)
 Research (4): 10
 Ritual Magic Lore^K (4): 10
 Robe Embroidery^A (4): 11
 Sail Embroidery^A (5): 12
 Sailing (10): 17
 Speak Language (2): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic, Sperethiel)
 Streetwise (3): 9
 Swimming (10): 15
 Tattooing^A (4): 11
 Urupa City^K (3): 9
 Wood Carving^A (5): 12

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Elementalism Spells

Air Armor^M, Beastform, Calm Water, Crunch Climb, Dispel Elementalism Magic, Earth Blend, Earth Darts, Fireball^E, Flame Darts, Flame Strike^M, Flameweapon, Gills^M, Great Sticky Vines, Grounding, Hunter's Sense^M, Icy Surface, Lightning Bolt, Living Wall, Nutritious Earth, Plant Feast, Plant Talk, Purify Earth, Purify Water, Repair, Resist Cold, Resist Fire, Resist Poison, Root Trap, Shield Willow, Snuff, Thrive, Tree Merge, Weapon Back

^M Denotes spell in spell matrix
^E Denotes spell in enhanced matrix

Armor

Fernweave (Phys 2; Myst 3), Buckler (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17)

Weapons

Broadsword (Forged +3; Damage 13), Short Sword (Forged +2; Damage 11), 2 × Daggers (Forged +1; Damage 8; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), 2 × Hawk Hatchets (Damage 9; Range 24–48 yards/12–24 hexes), Thread Elven Warbow (Rank 4; Damage 16; Range 72–144 yards/36–72 hexes), Quiver (40 warbow arrows)

Thread Items

Thread Mallornica Keel (Rank 4; Mallornica Maneuverability +4 when Masae is at the helm), Thread Mallornica Sail (Rank 4; Mallornica Speed +4 when Masae is at the helm)

Equipment

2 × Booster Potions, Carving Tools, Climbing Kit, Cloaksense Brooch, Elfweave Robe, Embroidery Tools, Fishing Kit, Forge Tools, Grimoire, 2 × Healing Potions, Last Chance Salve, Mapmaking Tools, Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case, Quiet Pouch, Wealthy Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

155 gold pieces

Legend Award

Ninth Circle (Group)

Notes

As an elf, Masae possesses the Low-Light Vision racial ability.

Archer Abilities

Fifth Circle: Arrow's Eye View

Seventh Circle: Karma on ranged combat Damage Tests

Elementalist Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Spell Defense

Fifth Circle: Fire and Ice

Sixth Circle: Karma on Willpower—only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on spell Effect Tests

Songsmith Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Social Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Charisma—only Tests

Fifth Circle: Centerpiece

Seventh Circle: Karma on Artisan Tests

Swordmaster Abilities

Fifth Circle: Flourish

Seventh Circle: Karma on melee weapon Damage Tests

Woodsmen Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception—only Tests

Fifth Circle: Hunter's Strike

Sixth Circle: Karma on Dexterity—only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on a companion's defensive Action Tests

Eighth Circle: +1 Physical Defense

Ninth Circle: Guardian's Service; Karma on Recovery Tests

The Mallornica

As magnificent as it is, the vessel was only one of nearly a hundred elven sailing ships that plied the waters of the Serpent River and the Aras Sea in pre-Scourge times. When the Elven Queen Alachia began to isolate the Wyrn Wood from the outside world, she ordered the destruction of all elven ships and shipyards. According to the story, the *Mallornica's* captain, Masae Seorach, and his crew so loved their ship that they could not allow its destruction. Their defiance made them outcasts, banished from Wyrn Wood for eternity. The *Mallornica* continues to sail the Aras. To date, Masae Seorach has not taken the vessel up the Coil River into Barsaive proper, apparently out of concern that the Elven Queen may attempt to destroy the ship.

The *Mallornica* moves four ranks faster than a standard sailing ship at every wind speed (see p. 62 of the *Gamemaster's Companion*). In addition, the ship may move even faster when Seorach is at its helm.

The Mallornica

Speed: 4+wind speed*

Base Price: NA

Maneuverability: 4+wind speed*

Firepower: 15/15 archer (enemy crew only);

12/15 ballistae; 13/13 fire cannons

* See the Sailing Speed Table on p. 62 of the *Gamemaster's Companion*.**Hull:**

Armor: 17

Ramming: 21

Cargo: 120

Damage:

Derelict: 73

Critical: 23

Destroyed: 80

Crew:

Captain: 10 (17)

Crew Size: 50

Morale: 79

Crew Rating: 18

Special

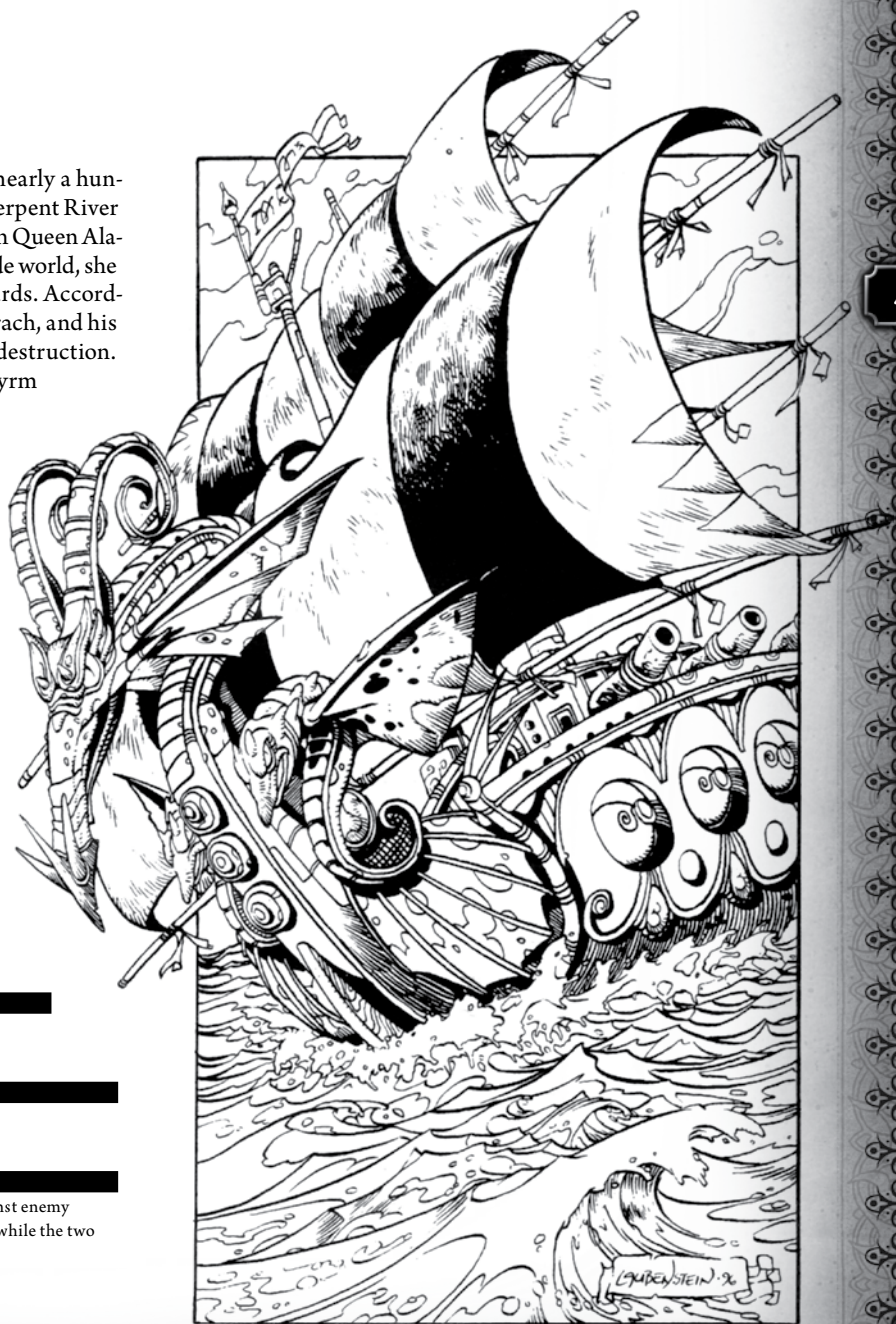
Elven Archers grant a separate 15/15 firepower attack usable only against enemy crew (note that only 20 crew members may fire bows at any one time), while the two ballistae act as separate 12/15 firepower attacks.

THE FORTRESS CITY OF TRIUMPH

Clearly visible from the Serpent River, the grounded behemoth towers over the nearby landscape. Travelers and Namegivers approaching the area in the direct vicinity of Ayodhya will be stopped and questioned by Theran patrols if they can't be identified as belonging to the Theran military. If a traveler doesn't have a good reason to be here, he will be escorted away from the fortress (as long as he doesn't pose a threat, which will be met with force).

The Therans rely on trade with the locals, and barter with Barsaivians of any race for goods, slaves, and information—the Therans even employ Barsaivians (including local adepts) to further their goals. The Therans are cautious, however, and never allow any non-Therans to wander around on the premises of their fortress alone.

The fortress is also home to literally hundreds of support personnel, including diplomats, couriers, scribes, scholars, and nearly two-dozen spies. The spies report to Spymaster Gendel (see p. 70



for game statistics). In turn, Gendel reports directly to General Nikar. Most of these spies are Third Circle adepts of the Thief and Scout Disciplines.

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Within scant hours of the behemoth's landing, the stone walls and towers of its foundation were growing and digging themselves into the ground—as if the fortress was sending roots into the earth! The outer walls stretched and expanded slightly to encompass the upper portion of the hill, establishing the Theran military city of Triumph overnight.

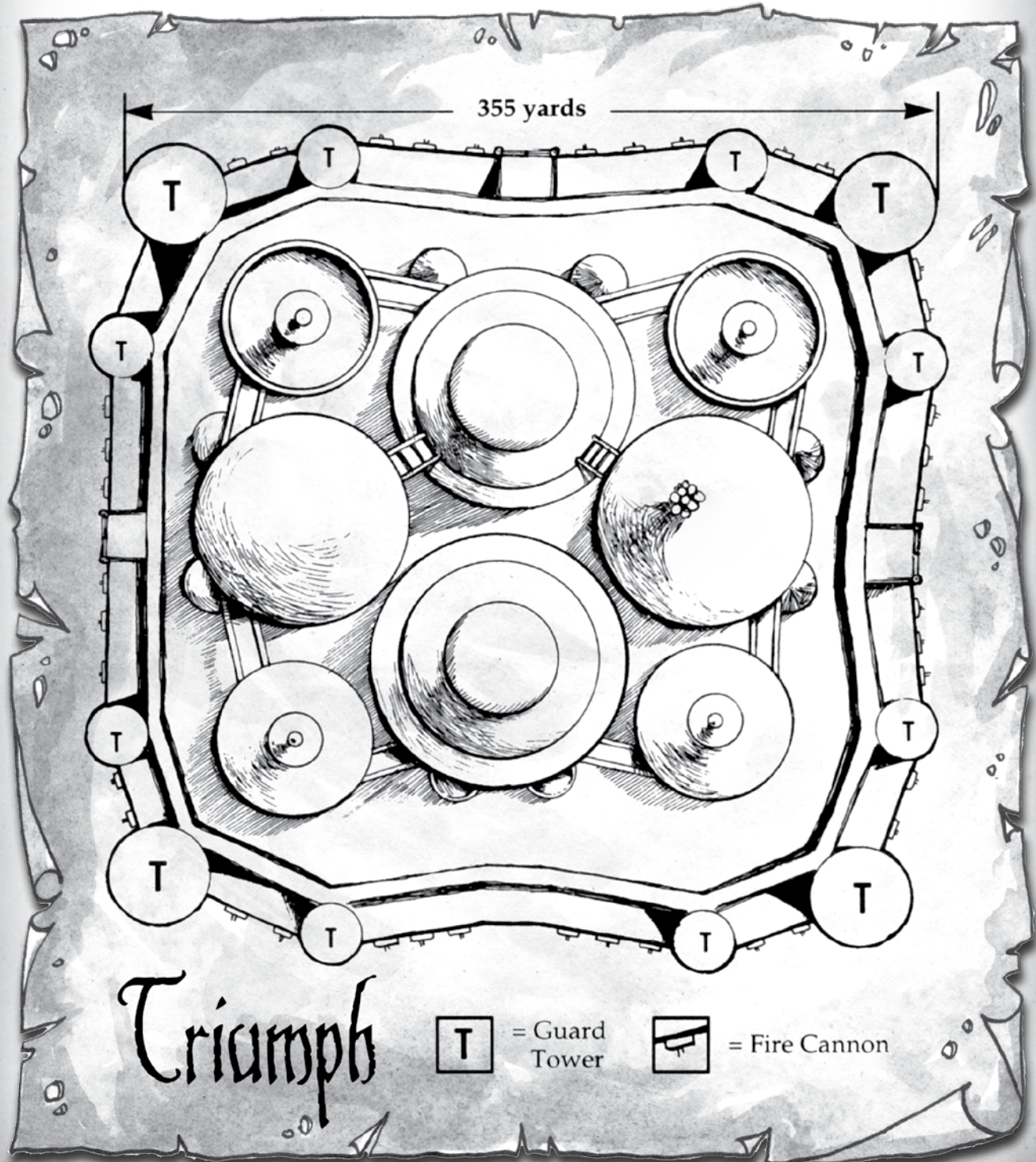
—Brazak Skar, Human Axemaster

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Triumph's Defenses

The central part of the behemoth-turned-fortress includes the keep and towers of the former airship. Elemental magic was used to anchor the vessel's walls once it landed to provide additional stability. Also, the foundations of the towers and walls extend deep into the hillside to provide a strong defense and (so rumor has it) numerous secret tunnels and passages under the fortress city. The city contains considerable room for expansion, and slaves are imported daily to work at fortifying the new citadel.

Each of the fortress' perimeter walls is made of solid stone, roughly 355 yards long, 30 yards high, and 2 yards thick. Each wall has Physical Armor of 25 and a Death Rating of 85 (see **Barriers**



and Structures on p. 108 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*). Additionally, the walls have been magically reinforced; each has a Spell Defense of 24.

The east, west, and north walls each contain a magically enhanced wooden gate with a Spell Defense of 18. Each gate is reinforced with metal bands that provide Physical Armor of 11 and a Death Rating of 35. Additionally, each gate is guarded at all times by a patrol of five soldiers that includes two or three adepts (see **Ground Troops** on p. 73). At least 10 additional five-man patrols perform guard duty at the fortress at all times, five outside the city's perimeter and five inside the fortress.

Each of the four perimeter walls houses 10 fire cannons on pivoting mounts that enable defenders to aim at individuals as well as at airships. To attack a single character or creature with a fire cannon, the attacker makes a Missile Weapons Test against the target's Physical Defense. This Attack Test requires use of the Called Shot combat option (see p. 222 of the *Player's Guide*), and thus incurs a -3 penalty and causes the attacker 1 Strain Point of damage. This penalty can be increased at the gamemaster's discretion as per the normal rules for Called Shots (see p. 222 of the *Player's Guide*). A Good Result on the Attack Test inflicts an Armor-Defeating Hit.

Any individual hit by a fire cannon suffers Step 18 damage. If the Missile Weapons Test fails with a Poor result, the fireball strikes within 3 yards of the target and causes Step 9 damage to the target and anyone else within 4 yards/2 hexes of the impact point.

Twelve guard towers are located along the city's perimeter: one at each corner and two along each wall. Each tower contains a team of three soldiers and a special light quartz that can shine a focused beam of light onto the ground below or into the air. These lights are used to forestall ground attacks and to help guide airships to the fortress at dusk and during stormy weather. All of these towers are manned at all times.

Finally, the fortress is surrounded by a dome of elemental air that acts as a barrier to airships and any other flying objects larger than the average Namegiver. Airships can enter the dome by using a spell known only to Azim Keel and his Elementalist assistants (see **Magical Support** on p. 73). The dome has a Spell Defense of 24, Physical Armor of 25, and a Death Rating of 100 against airship attacks.

General Nikar Carinci

"Thera will reclaim this rebel province and re-establish the rule of imperial law. Your struggles are futile against the power of our glorious army. But by all means fight; your vain attempts to resist the might of the empire will make our victory all the more glorious."

General Nikar Carinci has led a long and glorious career in the service of the empire. Unlike most of his brethren from House Carinci, Nikar has never displayed interest in matters of trade. Always a warrior at heart, Nikar enlisted in the Theran army at a young age and worked his way up through the ranks of the cavalry to become one of Thera's elite *k'stulaami* griffin riders. He advanced in his Discipline as he saw combat in many of the empire's far reaches, eventually receiving command of his own wing of riders and later rising to the command of an entire division.

Though his abrupt and abrasive manner have lost him points in Theran social and political circles, Nikar's daring exploits have earned him the admiration and loyalty of his comrades-in-arms, as well as considerable fame among Thera's general population. These characteristics made the flamboyant Nikar an ideal choice to lead the Theran operation in the rebel province of Barsaive. (The fact that the mission removed the ambitious and restive general to one of the empire's outermost provinces for an undetermined length of time also contributed to the First Governor's decision.)

General Nikar has taken to his assignment with his usual zeal. Undoubtedly, he views it as an opportunity to earn himself further

fame, influence, and wealth, but he also wishes to avenge the death of his former comrade and fellow t'skrang, Go'lan. Go'lan died when House V'strimon Elementalists downed the Theran airship he commanded over Lake Ban. Nikar considers the destruction of the airship treachery against the empire and has hoped for an opportunity to face the rebels of Barsaive on the field of battle ever since his friend's death.

As military commander of Triumph, Nikar is technically out-ranked by Overgovernor Kypros. In practice, however, the arrogant Nikar can do whatever he wants in Barsaive and Kypros must comply, because Nikar enjoys the favor of the First Governor and the empire. Overgovernor Kypros is fiercely jealous of Nikar's popularity with the First Governor and the citizens of Thera; he anxiously awaits the day that Nikar makes a fatal mistake and falls from grace. Then Kypros can reassert his authority over all of Barsaive.

General Nikar is a Tenth Circle *k'stulaami* t'skrang Cavalryman.

NIKAR CARINCI

Attributes

DEX (16): 7 STR (16): 7 TOU (16): 7
PER (18): 7 WIL (13): 6 CHA (19): 8

Characteristics

Initiative: 8 Physical Defense: 13
Physical Armor: 8 Spell Defense: 12
Mystic Armor: 4 Social Defense: 11 [16]^T
Death: 109 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 91 Knockdown: 7*
Wound Threshold: 11 Movement: 6
Karma Points: 40/40

^T Enhanced by +5 in the Triumph (see Thread Items)

* Nikar knows the Sure Mount talent

Cavalryman Talents (Knacks)

Animal Bond^D (10): 18
Armor Mount^D (10): 16
Avoid Blow (10): 17
Blood Share (10): 17
Charge^D (11): 18
Critical Hit^D (10): 10
Dominate Beast (6): 12
Down Strike (10): 17
Double-Charge^D (10): 17
Durability (7/6) (10): 10
Empathic Command^D (10): 16
Fearsome Charge (10): 18
Karma Ritual^D (10): 10
Leadership (8): 16
Melee Weapons^D (11): 18
Mount Durability (6/5) (10): 10
Rally (10): 18
Spirit Mount (11): 18 (Water Mount)
Steel Thought* (1): 7
Sure Mount^D (10): 17
Thread Weaving (Rider Weaving)^D (10): 17 (Talent Linking)
Trick Riding^D (10): 17
Unmount^D (10): 17
Wheeling Attack^D (10): 17
Wheeling Defense^D (10): 17

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

^{*} Italized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

^{*} Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Bracers

Skills

Air Sailing (4): 10
Animal Training (5): 13
Craftsman (Leatherworker)^A (4): 11
Etiquette (3): 11
Gliding (6): 13
Heartening Laugh (5): 13
K'stulaami Culture^K (5): 12
Military Procedure^K (3): 10

Missile Weapons (5): 12
 Read/Write Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Theran)
 Resist Taunt (5): 11
 Speak Language (5): 12—(Dwarf/Throalic, Theran, Troll, T'skrang/K'stulaami, Vasgothian)
 Swimming (4): 11
 Tactics (7): 14
 Theran Military Organization^K (7): 14
 Theran Politics^K (6): 13
 Throwing Weapons (4): 11
^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Leatherwing (Rank 6; Phys 8; Myst 3; PhysDef +1; Tail Parry PhysDef +1 bonus; Gliding Tests +1 bonus; Magical Treasures p. 113)



Weapons

Windclaw (Rank 6; Damage 18; Damage Tests +4 bonus when above opponent; Magical Treasures p. 115), 2 × **Daggers** (Forged +1; Damage 10; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), **Thread Longbow** (Rank 4; Damage 18; Range 60–120 yards/30–60 hexes), Quiver (w/40 longbow arrows; Forged +1)

Thread Items

Behemoth Stone (Minor Pattern Item of the Triumph; Rank 5; +5 bonus to General Nikar's Social Defense while he is in the Triumph fortress), **Protective Bracers** (Rank 4; SocDef +1; SpellDef +2; Steel Thought +1 Rank Bonus)

Equipment

3 × Booster Potions, Climbing Kit, Cloaksense Brooch, Craftsman Tools, 2 × Healing Potions, Last Chance Salve, Quiet Pouch, Wealthy Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit, Lightwing (see below)

Loot

89 gold pieces

Legend Award

Tenth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Notes

As a t'skrang, Nikar has the Tail Combat racial ability.

Cavalryman Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense
Fourth Circle: Karma on Charisma—only Tests
Fifth Circle: Masterful Horseman
Sixth Circle: Karma on Dexterity—only Tests
Seventh Circle: Karma on his mount's Attack and Damage Tests
Eighth Circle: +1 Physical Defense
Ninth Circle: Gait Mastery; Karma on Recovery Tests
Tenth Circle: +1 Physical Defense; +1 Initiative Step

Commentary

General Nikar is a k'stulaami t'skrang, born with a gliding membrane stretching from each wrist to each hip. This allows him to glide using his Gliding skill. In fact, Nikar's love of flight and open spaces initially led him into the cavalry. The general carries a curved cavalry blade Named Windclaw and wears hardened leather armor Named Leatherwing that has been modified to not interfere with his gliding abilities and accommodate his tail. Nikar has woven a Rank 5 thread to a minor pattern item of the Triumph. This thread is attached to his Social Defense and is effective while he is within the citadel's walls. This bonus appears as a number in parentheses in the above statistics. He may weave other threads once the new Theran base is firmly established. The general has also discreetly put word out that he would be most interested in acquiring a House V'strimon pattern item.

LIGHTWING

Attributes

DEX: 5 STR: 7 TOU: 9
 PER: 6 WIL: 4 CHA: 5

Characteristics

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 7
Actions: 1 **Spell Defense:** 8
Attack (5): 10 **Social Defense:** 7
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 4
 Claws (5): 12 **Mystic Armor:** 1
 Death: 110* **Recovery Tests:** 4
Unconsciousness: 93* **Knockdown:** 8
Wound Threshold: 14 **Movement:** 10**

* These values modified by Nikar's Mount Durability talent
 ** This value is also the Flying Movement Rate

Powers

Enhanced Senses [Sight] (5): 11

Equipment

Bit, Bridle, Harness, Saddle, Stirrups, and Blanket

Legend Award

Fourth Circle

Loot

Beak and feathers worth 3d6 × 10 silver pieces (worth Legend Points)

Commentary

Lightwing is a combat trained griffin.

THERAN ACTIVITY

The mere presence of the Theran forces at Triumph forcefully reminds Barsaive's people of the Theran Empire's power, but the Therans at the fortress are by no means idle. As mentioned before, the Therans provide military muscle for House K'tenshin ventures. Theran troops and airships regularly escort K'tenshin riverboats and maintain watch over the southern Serpent River. Additionally, the Therans have begun to conduct more trade with House K'tenshin, and through them with several towns and villages along the Serpent River and on the shores of Lake Ban. Additionally, Theran forces based at the city are performing elemental mining in the area.

Patrolled Territory

The area controlled by the Therans reaches to the Servos Jungle on the West, Lake Ban on the East, and the Badlands on the South. Apart from the slave business, there is little to no Theran activity on the river and lakes; the Therans prefer to leave the military operations in these areas to their allies of House K'tenshin.

The area within half a day's walk from the fortress city is clearly under Theran control. The behemoth arrived with two full cohorts of Theran troops—nearly a thousand warriors. Half of these were brought in from the Theran Eighth Legion stationed at Sky Point; and the remainder from the Fifth Legion transported to Barsaive aboard General Nikar's flotilla. The soldiers patrol the plains north of Triumph up to the Adipae Rapids (see p. 60). In addition, the Therans have several vedettes on patrol duty (see the **Airship Fleet** section on p. 70 for more information and game statistics). There is a pattern to their patrol routes, although it changes regularly.

General Carinci's forces have established a number of outposts at strategic positions or near local villages. Each outpost acts as a base for about 120 soldiers. Usually, one half of the stationed soldiers man the outpost at all times while the other half patrols the surrounding area. The patrols limit most of their activities to daytime, returning to the outposts or Triumph for the night. All outposts are permanent settlements, fortified with wooden palisades and a surrounding trench. For more information and game statistics, see **Ground Troops** on p. 73.

Between a day's and half a day's walk from the fortress, foot patrols regularly visit the villages along the river or the plains to the North. The Therans have taken responsibility for these settlements and protect them from harm. T'skrang *nialls* are controlled by House K'tenshin, however, backed up by Theran soldiers if need be (the unruly *nialls* were usually affiliated with House V'strimon prior to the behemoth's landing).

Slaves

The flotilla brought approximately 200 slaves from Thera and Sky Point to help construct the city and serve the needs of its Theran inhabitants. Additionally, the Therans have established an open slave market in the town of Servalen (see p. 77 for a description) to bolster the city's work force and supply slaves for export to Vivane and other Theran slave markets.

The city's slavemaster is an elf Named Mabon Ardos, a Sixth Circle Beastmaster and Rank 7 questor of Dis (see p. 87 for game statistics). Ardos rules the slave pits under the city with an iron hand, treating his charges as if they were animals.

The Elite

The six Fifth Circle adepts of the Elite answer directly to General Nikar. This group undertakes special assignments for the general, such as special-delivery courier services, reconnaissance missions, assassinations, and thefts. The group also performs jobs for Azim Keel as needed. The members of the Elite have formed a group True pattern, and each has woven threads to it.

The Elite have served as a special task force for the nobles of House Carinci for the past several years. Like most of the forces at the Theran fortress, the Elite were stationed at Triumph at Nikar's personal request.

Affern, a human Archer who is also a long-time acquaintance of both Nikar and Windsearcher, leads this group. The rest of the team are Oortaal, an ork Nethermancer from Vasgothia; Landrial, an elf Scout from the Theran province of Creana; Gradan Sharpaxe and Larm Keenedge, a dwarf Warrior and Weaponsmith respectively, brothers from southwestern Barsaive; and Praylar Sightshifter, a troll Illusionist from the Caralkspur Mountains in Vivane province.

Use the statistics starting on p. 90 of the **Gamemaster's Companion** for these adepts. Additionally, the members have formed a group True pattern, to which each of them has woven two Rank 3 threads. The gamemaster determines the specific talents, characteristics, or abilities to which each member has woven his threads.

Elemental Mining

The Therans have been quick to exploit the rich deposits of True elements in the region surrounding the fortress. The Therans claimed rights to these deposits as soon as they landed and began mining them almost immediately. Theran vedettes skim the surface of Lake Ban and the Serpent River, dredging for True water, while slaves work tunnels into Ayodhya to mine True earth, living crystal, and other valuable minerals from the roots of the Liferock. The obsidimen within the Liferock are aware of what is going on above them, but are powerless to stop it.

Expeditions of Theran troops and Elementalists gather kernels of True wood in the Servos Jungle, while vedettes comb the skies over the fortress during storms and high winds to net kernels of True air. Additionally, Theran slaving raids on the Scavian communities in the South Reach and mining expeditions in the area of Death's Sea net small catches of True fire.

The collected elements are stored in the tower of Azim Keel, who uses them to bolster the fortress city's defenses and take care of other magical needs. Surplus elements are shipped back to Vivane and other regions of the empire for sale to merchants and magicians.

Searching the Mist Swamps and the Badlands

Theran exploration parties also venture out into the Mist Swamps and the outskirts of the Badlands near the south Serpent River. These parties are searching for ruins and lost kaers that may contain treasures to be sent back to Thera.

One particular group, under the supervision of Azim Keel, is looking for the ruins of an ancient Theran magical laboratory that dates to a time before the Scourge. Reports of such a find have made their way to the Great Library of Throal and the Therans are determined to locate the laboratory before anyone else does.

Many local inhabitants fear that the Theran intrusions into the Mist Swamps may anger the great dragon Aban, who dwells in the swamps. Even the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin has warned the Therans that their expeditions may invoke the dragon's wrath, but General Nikar ignores her protests.

Trading of Goods and Slaves

The fortress city of Triumph also provides a way station and central hub for Theran merchant and slave ships from Vivane and Sky Point. The base enables the Therans to extend their slaving and trade activities deeper into Barsaivian territory, reaching all the way to Parlainth and Urupa. Goods flow from Vivane through Triumph, while slaves, elemental kernels, and toll money flow back from Triumph into the Theran Overgovernor's hands.

In fact, the expansion of Theran trade and influence facilitated by the base constitutes as much of a threat to Throal and its allies

as the increased Theran military presence. To counter the economic threat, Throalic and V'strimon merchants have redoubled their efforts to solicit the business of other cities and merchant guilds along the Serpent. Both the Theran/K'tenshin and Throal/V'strimon trading alliances are attempting to negotiate an exclusive arrangement with Urupa to secure that city's rich Aras Sea trade for their ships. So far, Urupa has carefully remained neutral on the issue and stalled the emissaries of both alliances.

Upgraded Intelligence Gathering

General Nikar and his spymaster Gendel are using the rapidly expanding Theran trade network as a cover to create a network of spies to report activities across Barsaive. House K'tenshin's Naxos Foundation has provided invaluable aid in this effort by helping the Therans infiltrate observers and informants into the various merchant ships and caravans that pass through the region controlled by Theran forces.

However, the Liferock Rebellion and the Eye of Throal have also begun to infiltrate agents and cultivate informants among the various merchant groups. Thera's enemies use these agents and informants to keep abreast of Theran activities and to feed false intelligence to the Theran spies.

Spymaster Gendel

Gendel is the *akarenti*, or spymaster, of the Theran fortress city. As such, he oversees a large network of spies and contacts throughout central and eastern Barsaive. Though Gendel answers first to Nikar, he also reports to General Illfaralek, the Theran spymaster of Vivane. Gendel's contacts in Barsaive include numerous agents in many towns and cities, such as Travar and Urupa, as well as Agramen, a Theran sympathizer and operative in Haven.

Gendel is a Seventh Circle human Scout.

SPYMASTER GRENDEL

Attributes		
DEX (18): 7	STR (13): 6	TOU (15): 6
PER (15): 6	WIL (12): 5	CHA (12): 5
Characteristics		
Initiative: 5	Physical Defense: 11	
Physical Armor: 9	Spell Defense: 11	
Mystic Armor: 2	Social Defense: 10	
Death: 80	Recovery Tests: 3	
Unconsciousness: 65	Knockdown: 6	
Wound Threshold: 10	Movement: 6	
Karma Points: 35/35		
Scout Talents (Knacks)		
Astral Sight ^D (7): 13		
Avoid Blow (7): 14		
Climbing ^D (8): 15 (By The Fingernails)		
Disguise Self (7): 13		
Durability (6/5) (7): 7		
Empathic Sense ^D (7): 12		
Evidence Analysis ^D (7): 13		
Item History ^V (4): 10		
Karma Ritual ^D (7): 7		
Melee Weapons (7): 14		
Navigation ^D (7): 13		
Read/Write Language (7): 13—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)		
Research ^V (4): 10		
Resist Taunt ^{V*} (5): 10		
Search ^D (7): 13		
Silent Walk (8): 15 (Shadow Hide, Traceless Stride)		
Speak Language ^D (7): 13—(Theran, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)		
Sprint (7): 7		

Steel Thought^{V**} (5): 10

Thread Weaving (Scout Weaving)^D (7): 13

Tracking^D (8): 14 (Adept's Best Friend, Animal's Best Friend, Astral Tracking, Identify Tracks)

Versatility (4): 4

Wilderness Survival^D (7): 13

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

^V Learned through Versatility talent

* Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Brooch

** Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Amulet

Skills

Akarenti Group^K (4): 10

Conceal Object (3): 10

Detect Trap (4): 10

Disarm Trap (4): 11

Haven Town^K (4): 10

Lip Reading (3): 8

Lock Picking (4): 11

Maneuver (3): 10

Parlathin Ruins^K (4): 10

Read/Write Language (1): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic)

Read/Write Magic (3): 9

Riposte (4): 11

Speak Language (2): 8—(Human, Theran)

Streetwise (5): 11

Swimming (1): 7

Trap Initiative (4): 11

Travar Town^K (4): 10

Urupa Town^K (4): 10

Wood Carving^A (4): 9

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Hardened Leather Armor (Phys 5; Init 1), **Buckler** (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17), **Espagra-Scale Cloak** (Phys 3; Myst 1; Init 0/1)

Weapons

Broadsword (Forged +3; Damage 14), **Short Sword** (Forged +2; Damage 12), 2 × **Daggers** (Forged +1; Damage 9; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

Thread Items

Protective Amulet (Rank 4; SocDef +1; SpellDef +2; Steel Thought +1 Rank Bonus), **Protective Brooch** (Rank 4; SocDef +2; SpellDef +1; Resist Taunt +1 Rank Bonus)

Equipment

Adventurer's Kit, 3 × Booster Potions, Carving Tools, Cloaksense Brooch, Mapmaking Tools, Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case, Quiet Pouch, Thieves' Picks and Tools, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

210 silver pieces

Legend Award

Seventh Circle

Notes

As a human, Gendel possesses the Versatility racial ability. Gendel has used the Versatility talent to learn the Item History, Research, Resist Taunt, and Steel Thought talents.

Scout Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception—only Tests

Fifth Circle: Enhanced Senses

Sixth Circle: Karma on Dexterity—only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on companion's environment interactive Action Tests

Airship Fleet

The fortress city of Triumph is home to an air fleet composed of two Theran kilas and six stone vedettes, all with full crew complements. Most often, the kila known as the *Righteous* is stationed over the confluence of the South Reach of the Serpent River and Lake Ban, and the vedettes transport crewmen and supplies between the kila and the fortress city as needed. Captain Drak Windsearcher commands the *Righteous*. Captain Solen Ogan commands the second kila, the *Defiant*, which typically patrols the length of the south Serpent River. If the *Righteous* is assigned other duties, the *Defiant* takes up the post at Lake Ban. (For kila game statistics see p. 72 of the *Gamemaster's Companion*).

The vedettes stationed at the fortress city include four vessels from the Seventh Fleet at Sky Point: two mining ships, the *Amethyst* and the *Moonstone*; and two combat vedettes, the *Dauntless* and the *Ferocious*. Generally, three vedettes patrol the perimeter of the fortress city, while the other three perform elemental mining and courier duties. From time to time, the vedettes also escort Theran ground forces or K'tenshin riverboats on trips to some of the less hospitable regions of the Serpent River.

Generally, the patrols will not bother travelers unless they directly oppose the Theran forces. It is unlikely a vedette will land to interrogate a small band of travelers, for example, as they are alert for serious threats to their presence in Barsaive. Of course, the patrols are also a show of force to the people living on the land claimed by the Therans.

Captain Drak Windsearcher

*"You think the pirates of this backwater are dangerous, sailor?
Obviously, you have never seen a shipful of
mad Vasgothian raiders howling for your blood."*

▲ ▲ ▲

Captain Drak Windsearcher and General Nikar are old friends who have served together for many years. When the First Governor chose Nikar to lead a mission to Barsaive, the general wanted his old comrade at his side and chose Windsearcher to command the kilas and vedettes assigned to the fortress.

Windsearcher is originally from Vasgothia, a Theran province near Barsaive. Raised in that savage, Horror-scarred land, he learned little of the pleasantries of the Theran court. His love of travel and a fascination with the airships of the empire led him to join the Theran navy as a lowly crewman. Determined never to return to Vasgothia, he patiently learned the Way of the Air Sailor as taught by his Theran superiors and became a skilled fighter and sailor. Eventually, his faithful service to Thera earned him his present rank.

The troll captain is utterly loyal to General Nikar, whom he respects and considers a friend. Windsearcher is not as pleased about the prospects of this mission as Nikar, but he keeps his opinions to himself. He feels that the rebellious factions of Barsaive should be crushed as quickly as possible, and he believes that the empire is not taking strong enough measures to that end.

Drak Windsearcher is a Seventh Circle troll Air Sailor. He commands the kila *Righteous*.



DRAK WINDSEARCHER

Attributes

DEX (16): 7 STR (19): 8 TOU (20): 8
PER (13): 6 WIL (13): 6 CHA (13): 6

Characteristics

Initiative: 5 Physical Defense: 10 [14]^R
Physical Armor: 8 Spell Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 4 [8]^R Social Defense: 8
Death: 79* Recovery Tests: 4
Unconsciousness: 64* Knockdown: 8**
Wound Threshold: 13 [17]^R
Movement: 7

Karma Points: 21/21

^R Enhanced by +4 on the *Righteous* (see Thread Items)

* Adjusted by Blood Magic

** Drak knows the Wound Balance talent

Air Sailor Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike^D (7): 14
Air Sailing^D (8): 14 (Assault)
Avoid Blow^D (7): 14

Climbing^D (7): 14
Distract^D (7): 13
Durability (6/5) (7): 7
Empathic Sense^D (7): 13
Great Leap (6): 13
Karma Ritual^D (7): 7
Melee Weapons^D (8): 15
Resist Taunt^D (7): 13
Riposte (7): 14
Speak Language (7): 13—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Talean, T'skrang, Windling)
Steel Thought* (1): 7
Swing Attack^D (7): 14

Taunt (7): 13
 Thread Weaving (Air Weaving)^D (7): 13
 Windcatcher (7): 13
 Wound Balance^D (7): 15

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)
 * Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Skull Amulet

Skills

Creature Lore^K (3): 9
 Mapmaking^A (4): 10
 Military Procedure^K (4): 10
 Read/Write Language (3): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Theran, Vagothian)
 Second Weapon (4): 11
 Speak Language (3): 9—(Theran, Troll, Vagothian)
 Tactics (3): 9
 Theran Military Organization^K (3): 9
 Throwing Weapons (4): 11
 Unarmed Combat (4): 11
 Vagothian History^K (4): 10
 Wood Carving^A (2): 8

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Blood Pebble Armor (Phys 5; Myst 3; Init 1; 4 Blood Magic Damage),
Footman's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 19)

Weapons

Windrazor (Rank 6; Damage 19; Shocksword ability: 2 Strain; add Step 4 Electric die to all Damage Tests made with the sword until the end of the round; see Magical Treasures p. 115), **Troll Sword** (Forged +3; Damage 17), 2 × **Troll Daggers** (Forged +2; Damage 13; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), 2 × **Troll Spears** (Forged +3; Damage 16; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

Thread Items

Kila Stone (Major Pattern Item of the *Righteous*; Rank 4; +4 bonus to Captain Drak's Physical Defense, Mystic Armor, and Wound Threshold while he is in the onboard the *Righteous*), **Protective Skull Amulet** (Rank 4; SocDef +1; SpellDef +2; Steel Thought +1 Rank Bonus)

Equipment

4 × Booster Potions, Carving Tools, Cloaksense Brooch, Death Cheat Charm (3 Blood Magic Damage), 2 × Healing Potions, Mapmaking Tools, Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case, Quiet Pouch, Wealthy Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

210 silver pieces

Legend Award

Seventh Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Notes

As a troll, Drak possesses the Heat Sight racial ability.

Air Sailor Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense
Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity—only Tests
Fifth Circle: Collaborate
Sixth Circle: Karma on Charisma—only Tests
Seventh Circle: Karma on Action Tests made on an airship

Commentary

Surprisingly swift and graceful for a troll of his size, Windsearcher wears blood pebble armor implanted in a series of colorful Vagothian patterns across his skin. He normally enters combat wielding a footman's shield and a curved broadsword Named Windrazor, the twin of Nikar's Windclaw.

Solen Ogani

Solen Ogani is the captain of the *Defiant*, one of the Theran kilas stationed at the Triumph fortress. A Fifth Circle human Air Sailor, Ogani originally hails from the province of Talea. He joined the Theran navy at a young age and quickly established himself as a natural leader, fighting alongside Drak Windsearcher in several battles in recent years. When General Nikar was selecting the officers for his airship fleet, Windsearcher suggested Ogani, who readily accepted the post as captain of the *Defiant*.

Though he doesn't consider Barsaive an important province, Ogani is loyal to both Windsearcher and Nikar and would never question or refuse their orders.

SOLENI OGANI

Attributes

DEX (18): 7 **STR** (14): 6 **TOU** (12): 5
PER (15): 6 **WIL** (12): 5 **CHA** (12): 5

Characteristics

Initiative: 6 **Physical Defense:** 11
Physical Armor: 11 **Spell Defense:** 8
Mystic Armor: 6 **Social Defense:** 7
Death: 64 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Unconsciousness: 51 **Knockdown:** 6
Wound Threshold: 9 **Movement:** 6
Karma Points: 25/25

Air Sailor Talents (Knacks)

Acrobatic Strike (5): 12
 Air Sailing^D (6): 11 (Assault)
 Avoid Blow^D (5): 12
 Climbing^D (5): 12
 Distract^D (5): 10
 Durability (6/5) (5): 5
 Empathic Sense^D (5): 10
 Great Leap (5): 12
 Karma Ritual^D (5): 5
 Melee Weapons^D (6): 13
 Second Weapon^V (3): 10
 Swing Attack^D (5): 12
 Thread Weaving (Air Weaving)^D (5): 11
 Throwing Weapons (5): 12
 Versatility (1): 1
 Windcatcher (5): 10

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

^V Learned through Versatility talent

Skills

Heartening Laugh (3): 8
 Mapmaking^A (3): 9
 Military Procedure^K (3): 9
 Read/Write Language (3): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Talean, Theran)
 Speak Language (4): 10—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human, Talean, Theran)
 Tactics (3): 9
 Talea History^K (3): 9
 Talea Politics^K (3): 9
 Theran Military Organization^K (2): 8
 Unarmed Combat (3): 10

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Thread Hardened Leather Armor (Rank 3; Phys 8; Myst 2; Init 1),
Thread Crystal Buckler (Rank 3; Phys 3; Myst 3; Deflect 1/1; Shatter 17)

Weapons

Broadsword (Forged +2; Damage 13), **Short Sword** (Forged +1; Damage 11), 2 × **Daggers** (Forged +1; Damage 9; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), **Hawk Hatchets** (Damage 10; Range 24–48 yards/12–24 hexes)

Equipment

2 × Booster Potions, Cloaksense Brooch, Mapmaking Tools, Quiet Pouch, Wealthy Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

80 silver pieces

Legend Award

Fifth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Notes

As a human, Solen possesses the Versatility racial ability. He has used the Versatility talent to learn the Second Weapon talent.

Air Sailor Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense
Fourth Circle: Karma on Dexterity—only Tests
Fifth Circle: Collaborate

Griffin Riders

A wing of 12 *k'stulaami* griffin riders augments the city's airship defenses. Typically, pairs of griffin riders accompany vedette

patrols. In addition, each kila carries two pairs of griffin riders when on patrol. The griffin riders are under the personal command of General Nikar and serve as his honor guard, though the second-in-command, *strategos* T'char, oversees the wing's regular operations. When the griffin riders operate independently, they are on special missions—often to survey an area requested a ground patrol or to scout areas that cannot be covered by the vedettes. While a group of rebels may be able to avoid foot patrols, evading the watchful eyes of a Griffin Rider is much harder to achieve.

The griffin riders are all Fifth Circle *k'stulaami* t'skrang Cavalrymen equipped with broadswords, thread hardened leather armor, and rider's shields.

GRIFFIN RIDERS

Attributes

DEX (16): 7 STR (18): 7 TOU (13): 6
PER (11): 5 WIL (16): 7 CHA (16): 7

Characteristics

Initiative: 5 Physical Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 11 Spell Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 4 Social Defense: 9
Death: 70 Recovery Tests: 2
Unconsciousness: 57 Knockdown: 7*
Wound Threshold: 9 Movement: 6

Karma Points: 20/20

* Has the Sure Mount talent

Cavalryman Talents

Animal Bond^D (5): 12
Animal Training (4): 11
Avoid Blow (4): 11
Blood Share (4): 10
Charge^D (6): 13
Durability (7/6) (5): 5
Empathic Command^D (5): 12
Karma Ritual^D (5): 5
Melee Weapons^D (6): 13
Mount Durability (6/5) (5): 5
Thread Weaving (Rider Weaving)^D (5): 10
Sure Mount^D (5): 12
Trick Riding^D (5): 12
Wheeling Attack^D (4): 11

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
^{Italicized} Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

Skills

Air Sailing (1): 8
Craftsman (Leatherworker)^A (1): 8
Gliding (3): 10
K'stulaami Culture^K (1): 6
Military Procedure^K (1): 6
Read/Write Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, Theran)
Speak Language (3): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic, Theran, T'skrang/*K'stulaami*)
Tactics (1): 6
Theran Military Organization^K (1): 6
Theran History^K (1): 6
Throwing Weapons (2): 9

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Hardened Leather Armor (Rank 3 Phys 8; Myst 2; Init 1),
Rider's Shield (Phys 3; Init 1; Deflect 2/0; Shatter 19)

Weapons

Charge Sword (Forged +2; Damage 14; +1 Damage Test bonus when above opponent; -2 Attack Test penalty when dismounted), **Flail** (Forged +2; Damage 14). 2 × **Daggers** (Forged +1; Damage 10; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

Equipment

Booster Potion, Cloaksense Brooch, Craftsman Tools, Traveler's Garb, Griffin (see below)

Loot

80 gold pieces

Legend Award

Fifth Circle

Notes

As t'skrang, Griffin Riders have the Tail Combat racial ability.

Cavalryman Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Charisma—only Tests

Fifth Circle: Masterful Horseman

Ground Troops

Approximately one-fifth of the troops are adepts of Second Circle or higher. The remaining Theran troops comprise an even mix of non-adept human, elf, and dwarf infantrymen, along with an occasional ork or troll.

THERAN SOLDIERS

Attributes

DEX (14): 6 STR (14): 6 TOU (12): 5
PER (11): 5 WIL (11): 5 CHA (10): 5

Characteristics

Initiative: 5 Physical Defense: 8
Physical Armor: 6 Spell Defense: 7
Mystic Armor: 1 Social Defense: 6
Death: 34 Recovery Tests: 2
Unconsciousness: 26 Knockdown: 6
Wound Threshold: 9 Movement: 6

Skills

Acrobatic Strike (3): 9
Air Sailing (1): 6
Avoid Blow (2): 8
Climbing (2): 8
Craftsman (Leatherworker)^A (1): 7
Great Leap (2): 8
Melee Weapons (3): 9
Military Procedure^K (1): 6
Read/Write Language (2): 7—(Dwarf/Throalic, Theran)
Speak Language (3): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human, Theran)
Tactics (1): 6
Theran Military Organization^K (1): 6
Throwing Weapons (3): 9
Unarmed Combat (3): 9
^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Hardened Leather Armor (Phys 5; Init 1), **Buckler** (Phys 1)

Weapons

Broadsword (Forged +1; Damage 12), 2 × **Daggers** (Damage 8; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), **Net** (Size 3; Range 6–12 yards/3–6 hexes; Entangle 12)

Equipment

Adventurer's Kit, Climbing Kit, Craftsman Tools, Trail Rations (1 week), Traveler's Garb

Legend Award

First Circle

Magical Support

The city's chief magician, Azim Keel, commands a team of 16 Fifth Circle Elementalists. Two Elementalists are assigned to each of the eight troop divisions based at Triumph. One of these usually accompanies each kila and patrol vedette; the other Elementalists work on elemental mining operations, augment Triumph's magical defenses, and assist Azim Keel in his experiments and summonings as needed. The fortress also contains several Wizards, as well as a pair of Nethermancers. Each of these magicians is Third Circle or higher.

Azim Keel

"There must be some way to remove the True earth from the Liferock. Certain legends that I have studied suggest some possibilities, but none of these provide as elegant a solution as I would like. Obviously the matter calls for more careful study."

Azim Keel is a *ghareez*, the corrupted windling race that dwells in the Theran Empire. Also known as "the Ice Magician," Azim is chief magician for Nikar's forces. He commands a small cadre of Elementalists that handles the expedition's magical needs and oversees most magical operations in Triumph, as well as elemental mining operations within and outside of the city. He advises Nikar in all matters magical and, when not attending to his other duties, spends his time in seclusion and magical experimentation. He is particularly interested in discovering ways to tap into the elemental powers of the Ayodhya Liferock and extract the potent kernels of True earth that it holds.

As pale as a ghost, with milk-white hair and skin and translucent wings, Azim shuns the light of day. He prefers to remain indoors, and conducts most of his business by night. Some suggest that he keeps his quarters in Triumph cold more to drive away visitors than for his own comfort. Nearly all residents of Triumph fear the *ghareez* and deal with him as little as possible. No one willingly disturbs the mage's solitude save for General Nikar. Even the general is uneasy around Azim, though he never lets his true feelings show. He allows the Elementalist considerable latitude in his experimenting and research but demands obedience from him when important matters arise. Azim has little use for mili-

tary protocol, but he obeys Nikar's orders out of gratitude for the autonomy Nikar allows him.

The windling magician is the opposite of a typical windling in almost every way. He is dour and humorless, with a solitary and unpleasant disposition. In many ways, however, Azim is fairly pleasant for a *ghareez*, displaying little interest in interrogations or the subtleties of pain that characterize so many members of his race. Indeed, he has little use for other Namegivers one way or another. He reserves a particular dislike for other windlings, considering them fools and simpletons. He displays no interest in any of the pleasures of life apart from accumulating magical knowledge and performing his duty to the empire. Toward these ends, Azim has learned a great deal about Barsaivian legends and lore, and is hungry for any valuable kernels of information.

Though Azim is a highly capable magician, he displays what many Barsaivian Elementalists would consider a shocking lack of respect for the elemental forces with which he works. The *ghareez* cares nothing for the feelings or thoughts of the elemental spirits that he routinely enslaves, and the balance of the elements interests him only to the extent that he can exploit it for his own uses. Azim Keel is a Ninth Circle *ghareez* windling Elementalist.

AZIM KEEL

Attributes

DEX (16): 7 STR (7): 4 TOU (12): 5
PER (19): 8 WIL (19): 8 CHA (15): 6

Characteristics

Initiative: 7 Physical Defense: 12
Physical Armor: 6 Spell Defense: 12
Mystic Armor: 9 Social Defense: 8
Death: 74 Recovery Tests: 2
Unconsciousness: 56 Knockdown: 4
Wound Threshold: 9 Movement: 3/8*

Karma Points: 54/54

* Flying Movement Rate

Elementalist Talents (Knacks)

Air Speaking^D (9): 17
Astral Sight (9): 17
Armored Matrix (5): 5
Cold Purify^D (9): 17
Durability (4/3) (10): 10
Earth Skin^D (9): 14
Elemental Hold^D (9): 17
Elemental Tongues^D (9): 17
Enhanced Matrix (9): 9
Enhanced Matrix (9): 9
Fire Heal^D (9): 17 (Wound Heal)
Karma Ritual^D (9): 9
Metal Ward^D (4): 12
Read/Write Language (8): 16—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)
Read/Write Magic^D (9): 17
Spellcasting^{D*} (11): 19 (Anchored Spell)
Spell Matrix^D (9): 9
Spell Matrix (9): 9
Spell Matrix (9): 9
Spell Matrix (9): 9
Summon (Elemental Spirits)^D (9): 17 (Bind Spirit)
Temperature^D (9): 17 (Air Conditioning)
Thread Weaving (Elementalism)^{D**} (11): 19 (Create Spell Matrix Object, Create Thread Item, Talent Linking)
Willforce (9): 17

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

^I Italized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

* Modified by +2 Rank Bonus from Spellmaster's Wand

** Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Spellmaster's Wand

Skills

Barsaive History^K (5): 13
Conversation (4): 10
Elemental Sculpture^A (5): 11



Gem Carving^A (5): 11
 Legends and Heroes^K (4): 12
 Magical Lore^K (6): 14
 Read/Write Language (1): 9—(Theran)
 Speak Language (3): 11—(Dwarf/Throalic, Theran, Windling)

Throwing Weapons (5): 12

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Elementalism Spells

Air Armor, Air Blast^M, Blizzard Sphere^A, Cloud Banish, Crunch Climb, Drastic Temperature, Earth Blend, Earth Darts, Heat Food, Ice Mace and Chain, Ice Spear, Icy Surface, Perimeter Alarm, Porter^M, Puddle Deep^M, Purify Earth, Purify Water, Repair^M, Resist Cold, Resist Fire, Sterilize Object^M, Stone Cage^E, Storm Manacles^E, Uneven Ground^M

^M Denotes spell in spell matrix (note that Azim Keel has four Rank 9 spell matrices and two Rank 3 spell matrix objects available)

^E Denotes spell in enhanced matrix

^A Denotes spell in armored matrix

Armor

Gemwall (Rank 5; Phys 6; Myst 6; PhysDef +1; Bound Strength Rating 3 water spirit Named Voor'osh; see **Magical Treasures** p. 113)

Thread Items

Frost Pouch (Rank 5; 1 Strain Point; Throwing Weapons Attack Test vs. Physical Defense; Damage 15/Physical Armor or Freezing Frost (15) Effect Test vs. Spell Defense; Frozen for 5 rounds, Knocked Down except for Willpower (15) Tests to escape; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes) **Spellmaster's Wand** (wooden wand with blue sapphire gems at top; Rank 4; Spellcasting +2 Rank Bonus, Thread Weaving +1 Rank Bonus; Effect Tests +1 bonus), 2 × **Spell Matrix Torcs** (Rank 3 each), **Tower Stone** (Minor Pattern Item of Azim's Tower in Triumph; Rank 4; Traps in the tower get +4 to Disarm Difficulty)

Equipment

Carving Tools, Grimoire (Carved into sapphire stones strung together as beads), 2 × Healing Potions, Quiet Pouch, Sculpting Tools, Wealthy Traveler's Garb

Loot

55 gold pieces

Legend Award

Ninth Circle

Notes

As a windling, Azim possesses the Astral Sight, Flight, and Increased Physical Defense racial abilities.

Elementalist Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Spell Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception—only Tests

Fifth Circle: Fire and Ice

Sixth Circle: Karma on Willpower—only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on spell Effect Tests

Eighth Circle: +1 Spell Defense

Ninth Circle: Earth and Wind; Karma on Recovery Tests

Commentary

Azim always wears an elaborately decorated chest plate carved from a single piece of sapphire. The chest plate contains a Strength Rating 3 water spirit Named Voor'osh, which Azim has trapped within. Azim frequently uses the spirit's Share Knowledge ability to keep abreast of events on Lake Ban and the Serpent River, and he uses its Detect True Water power to lead him to sources of the True element in the lake. Azim can also use any of the spirit's other powers.

In combat, Azim commonly uses his frost pouch and the Spear power of his water spirit, followed by spells such as Blizzard Sphere and Stone Cage to entrap and disable opponents.

THE SOUTH REACH

The northern boundary of the Serpent's South Reach is Lake Pyros, whose shores of rich jungle soil are dotted with the homes and farms of settlers from all over Barsaive. As the Serpent flows west from Lake Pyros, it becomes a lazy, winding river, at times more than four miles wide. Here it passes through the southern edge of the Servos Jungle, a forbidding region sparsely populated by primitive t'skrang and human tribes. The riverbanks contain few civilized settlements here, save for the occasional K'tenshin plantation or trading post. After leaving the Servos, the river enters a 100-mile stretch where four of

the Serpent's largest tributaries—the Byrose, Servos, Iontos, and Tylon Rivers—enter the Great River. The waters of these rivers dramatically increase the speed of the Serpent's current and the river widens to more than six miles across. A few miles down the Byrose River lies the wealthy trading city of Travar, the largest Barsaivian citadel to withstand the Scourge. Near the confluence of the Serpent and Servos Rivers lies the headquarters of House K'tenshin, the *aropagoi* that dominates trade on the South Reach. The shores of the Tylon River contain the hunting grounds of the Dinganni people; the reputed headquarters of the renegade House T'kambras; and Kratas, the City of Thieves.

Shortly after it converges with the Tylon, the Serpent passes through the shadow of the eastern spur of the Twilight Peaks, which rises to the North. Here, the waters of the river lose their blue-green cast and take on the reddish brown color of the nearby Badlands. As the river continues, its waters heat up and the river becomes enshrouded in thick morning fogs that remain well past noon. Eventually, the river enters the Mist Swamps, where it divides into ever-smaller branches and its banks become a spongy morass.

Despite the forbidding terrain of the Badlands and the Servos Jungle and large numbers of House Henghyoke raiders, the South Reach remains a prosperous region. The powerful trading companies of Travar and crew covenants of House K'tenshin fuel robust trade along the southern part of the river, and the rich farmland surrounding Lake Pyros continues to draw settlers from across Barsaive.

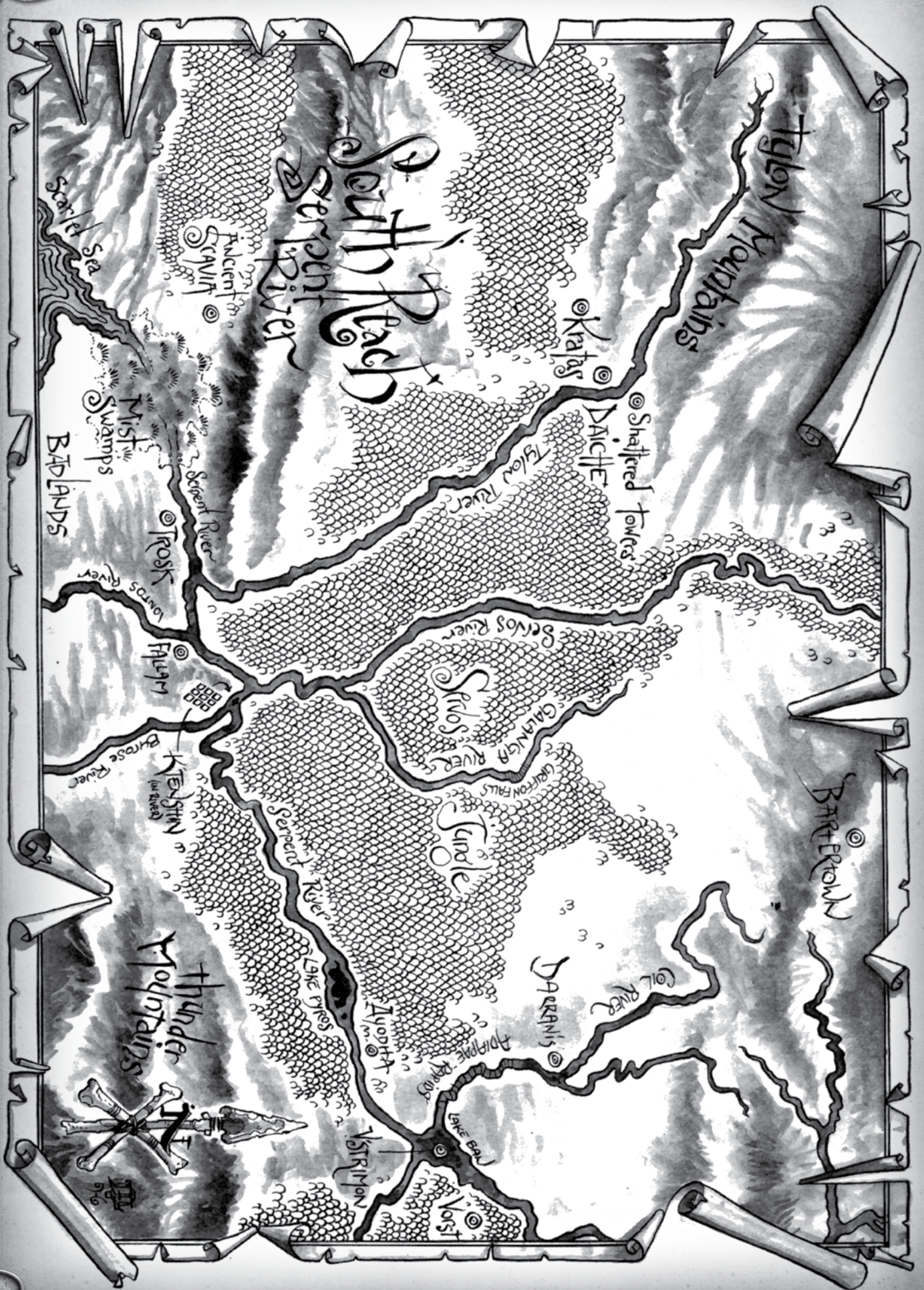
LAKE PYROS

As the Serpent River exits Lake Ban and flows toward Lake Pyros, it passes by eight t'skrang villages known as the Stolen *Nialls*. Before the Scourge, these villages fell under the control of House K'tenshin, but since the end of the Scourge they have pledged their allegiance to House V'strimon. The reasons for the change are clear: House K'tenshin treats its subsidiary villages with contempt, while House V'strimon treats its villages with respect. Changing allegiance has brought enormous prosperity to these villages, which now compete directly with House K'tenshin to supply lumber and wooden items to much of Barsaive. The trade covenants at two of the villages, P'santos and Delenn, have devised ingenious sawmills that use the force of water running down the village towers to spin their cutting wheels.

As the river flows west of Ayodhya, it enters a densely forested region that gradually gives way to impenetrable jungle. About a hundred miles southwest of Ayodhya, the Serpent empties into the third and smallest of the Serpent Lakes, Lake Pyros. "Pyros" means flame, a Name derived from the fierce light emitted by the thick layer of phosphorescent algae that covers the bottom of the lake. The terrain around the lake, which is 55 miles long and 25 miles wide, varies. The lake's eastern banks consist of firm ground and dense forest, while an impenetrable jungle and wetlands that extend many miles inland cover the western banks.

The land around the eastern end of Lake Pyros contains some of the most fertile soil in Barsaive. During the wet season, the lake rises 3 yards, then subsides to leave behind a rich layer of muck and mud. Farmers have a saying that "you can plant a lump of coal by the shores of Lake Pyros, and by autumn you'll have swords and armor sprouting up through the ground." Stories like these have sparked a land rush in the area, and waves of immigrants are competing fiercely for whatever farmland they can get.

The first post-Scourge settlers along Lake Pyros were elves who survived the Scourge outside the Blood Wood. When the Scourge lifted, they returned to the court of the Elven Queen, then fled in horror at what they found. These settlers came to the Servos in the hope of establishing a new elven community along the fringes of the jungle. They had hoped to keep their little portion of the Servos



as close to its natural state as possible, with wide swaths of forested land between their scattered settlements. As successive waves of immigrants arrived, however, the elves retreated further inland so that they could continue living in the untouched forest. The elven villages around Lake Pyros have since become a vital center of the living legend cult known as the Seekers of the Heart.

Among the second wave of settlers were large numbers of deserters and refugees from Overgovernor Pavelis' Grand Theran Armada, which disintegrated while marching toward Throal. Mostly humans and orks, these refugees were in no hurry to return to Vivane and labor once more for the Overlord of Sky Point. Upon discovering the beautiful land around Lake Pyros, they settled down, hung up their arms, and got down to farming. These immigrants carved out private homesteads, expanding their acreage with each passing year by clearing a few more trees.

The third wave of settlers included members of all the Namegiver races, lured by the promise of prosperity on the shores of the lake. This wave included the Throalic dwarfs who harvest the phosphorescent algae from the lake's bottom with ingenious mechanical suction devices that enable them to pull the glowing algae up to the lake's surface through tubes. They then separate the algae from the mud, package it and send it to the many dwarf communities all across Barsaive that cannot afford light quartzes. Along with the dwarfs came hunters, fishermen, lumberjacks, and farmers to reap the natural bounty of the land. During this wave, House K'tenshin also began to carve out plantations from the shores of the lake and extort taxes from nearby settlements. This third wave of immigrants has had the greatest impact on the area by far. They arrived in large numbers and built entire villages in the space of a year, peeling back the jungle from the shore and setting up fences and boundaries. At this time, the last of the area's original inhabitants—primitive t'skrang and human hunter-gathers—retreated to the swampy western shores of the lake.

Today, the haphazard development of the region and its rapidly growing population have led to tensions between the various immigrant and native groups. The shores of Lake Pyros have also become favored hunting grounds for the raiders of House Henghyoke. Although the different groups of settlers remain suspicious of one another, they regularly cooperate to defend themselves against Henghyoke pirates.

Numerous t'skrang village towers dot the shores of Lake Pyros. According to all accounts, however, every one of these villages was lost during the Scourge. The advent of the Henghyoke raiders led settlers to carefully explore the village towers for signs of habitation, but all of them are apparently abandoned.

Servalen

The original settlers of Servalen were human, elven, and windling, with a scattering of dwarfs and few of other races. Once the village became a going concern, scorcher tribes returning from raids near Death's Sea and in the southern mountains began setting up a permanent camp for their people. T'skrang also began to frequent the town as river trade picked up. Even back then, Servalen was a rough place, home to the lowliest scum of Barsaive (even rivaling Kratas, except for its size).

The Theran Army—together with its allies of t'skrang House K'tenshin—is now in control of the former rough town. The Therans have a tight grip on Servalen and have turned it into a slave market to serve Triumph's growing need for slaves. Most of the old taverns and brothels were closed down, as many former inhabitants left the town or got enslaved themselves.

While the original elder council is no more, the remaining permanent residents both love and hate Servalen's new rulers. Some see them as a connection to a new world, while others regard the Therans as a necessary evil they must put up with to help them sell

their goods and harvests. It is rumored that a number of farmers aid the rebel groups of adepts that hide in the Servos, although House K'tenshin has put a price on the head of any rebel and anyone caught aiding them.

As everywhere, there are opportunists among the villagers, who have sided with the Therans. Once all but ignored, the elf Valarin became quite fond of his growing influence as an enforcer of Theran policies. His enforcers, mostly mercenaries hired with slave trading coin, had a large part in his recent successes, much to the chagrin of the populace.

The streets of Servalen are filled with mercenaries looking for employment, riverboat crewmen on shore leave, explorers staging expeditions into the nearby jungle, and slavers bringing in fresh meat nearly every day. While most slaves are sold to the Therans directly, the market is open for everyone. Servalen, despite its frightening reputation, is still an important market for the nearby villages loyal to Thera and House K'tenshin, which trade for other goods and services.

Only a handful of the residents work actively against the Theran occupation, as most of the others are either too frightened or too greedy to change the status quo. On two occasions since the Therans arrival, a Liberator sparked a riot in the slave camps and was able to lead a couple of slaves into freedom. However, since the riots led to open bloodshed and public executions, more people died than were saved in the end. Most inhabitants hope that the Liberator doesn't return.



Rumor has it that both Liberator story interventions were staged by the Therans to inspire fear into the inhabitants and discourage other Liberators from trying the same. Might be the fault of those Theran windling twins responsible for interrogating captured freedom fighters and putting their dead bodies on public display...

—Gillian, Human Thief



House K'tenshin regularly sends heavily armed riverboats down the river to hunt down river pirates and bring in supplies for the Theran army. Telanis Unkuren, a veteran dwarf Warrior, is in command of the Theran forces stationed in Servalen. However, most of the day-to-day business is overseen by his right hand, an ambitious and cruel human Named Dorram (who was "promoted" to this position after an incident with the daughter of a Theran noble back home). Quite naturally, Dorram thinks of his job as a punishment and lets his anger overcome him on every occasion.

THE SERVOS AND GALANGA RIVERS

Just west of Lake Pyros, the Serpent River runs into the Servos Jungle, the second largest continuous woodland in Barsaive next to the Blood Wood. The word "servos" means "isolated," and the jungle is indeed a separate wilderness kingdom. Here, the river slows to a crawl. Sandbars and mud flats rise up from the bottom, seemingly intent on ensnaring hapless travelers, and the river's banks become treacherous jungle swamps that penetrate miles under the canopy of trees before giving way to dry ground. Hundreds of streams and rivers, some navigable only by canoe, flow out from the river to crisscross the jungle.

Within these swamps and along these jungle streams lie many long-forgotten t'skrang river villages, abandoned during the Scourge. Now these forbidding sites are home to some of the most cutthroat pirates on the Serpent River. Rumor has it that somewhere in this morass lurk the dreaded pirates of House Henghyoke.

Navigating the Serpent in this area is dangerous. Although the river spans four miles in places, the actual navigable channel for

riverboats is seldom more than a few hundred yards wide. Furthermore, this channel follows a crooked and ever-changing path, so it takes a skilled and attentive boat crew to make it from Lake Pyros to House K'tenshin without running aground at least once.

Those who wish to travel into the heart of the Servos Jungle must embark north on the Servos River. The Servos is nearly as wide as the Serpent, but its banks are firm and steep. The banks of the Servos and its tributaries are dotted with the villages of primitive t'skrang and human tribes that apparently survived the Scourge without the aid of the Therans. Originally, these tribes also inhabited settlements along the lower courses of the Servos and Galanga Rivers, but they abandoned these settlements as Thera and K'tenshin slavers gradually advanced up these rivers.

This migration into the upper reaches of the river system has led to inter-tribal tensions, which have been exacerbated by slavers who regularly hire the fiercer tribes as field agents. The slavers supply cheap labor to the growing number of farms and plantations that are chopping away at the tree-lined banks of the Servos Jungle.

Flora and Fauna of the Servos Jungle

The tribes of the Servos speak of the trees of the jungle as sister-trees, mother-trees, and grandmother-trees. The sister-trees are the undergrowth; the mother-trees form the dense canopy 20 to 30 yards up that darkens the jungle floor to near twilight; and the grandmother-trees are the tallest specimens that poke up through the canopy like tent poles. Nearly all the jungle tribes, the Cathan in particular, worship the grandmother-trees as intermediaries between themselves and the God of the Tree, whom Barsaivian scholars have tentatively identified as the Passion Jaspree. The Cathan believe that encroaching settlers, who are cutting down trees to uncover the land for planting, threaten the Tree God and must be punished for destroying the grandmother-trees. This belief lends a certain air of fanaticism to the growing tribal raids on pioneer settlements in the Servos.

The swamps along the Serpent contain low canopies of half-submerged mangrove and cypress trees. The primitive t'skrang of the swamps revere certain mangroves as elemental spirits, often making offerings and even ritual sacrifices to win their intervention and support. The roots of these trees have evolved both heat-sensing organs and powerful pinion jaws that devour offerings and give these rituals a dramatic flair. Reportedly, some jungle tribes sacrifice Namegivers to the mangroves.

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My first journey into the Servos was my last. We had been warned about the spiders and their vast webs, and the ambushing attacks of the inshalata, but nothing prepared us for what we encountered. Our Scout, a young elf, became caught, in a web ...

or so he cried out. As we rushed to free him, watching the canopy above us for the waiting spider, the very bushes themselves came to life! Within moments, our two fighters were down. I barely escaped the scraping, clawing vines myself. I tell you, the plants are just as bad as the creatures—even worse for the element of surprise!

—M'jontass, T'skrang Adventurer

▲ ▲ ▲

The variety of trees in the Servos is uncountable. Ramos of Travar, in his lexicon of the Cathan language, lists more than 500 different words for trees. The wood of some trees is as light as a feather, while the wood of others is as heavy as iron. The jungle t'skrang hollow out a tree called the *shivoam* to make their canoes. The Cathan use the bark of the *clematha* tree to create close-fitting suits of armor. The bark

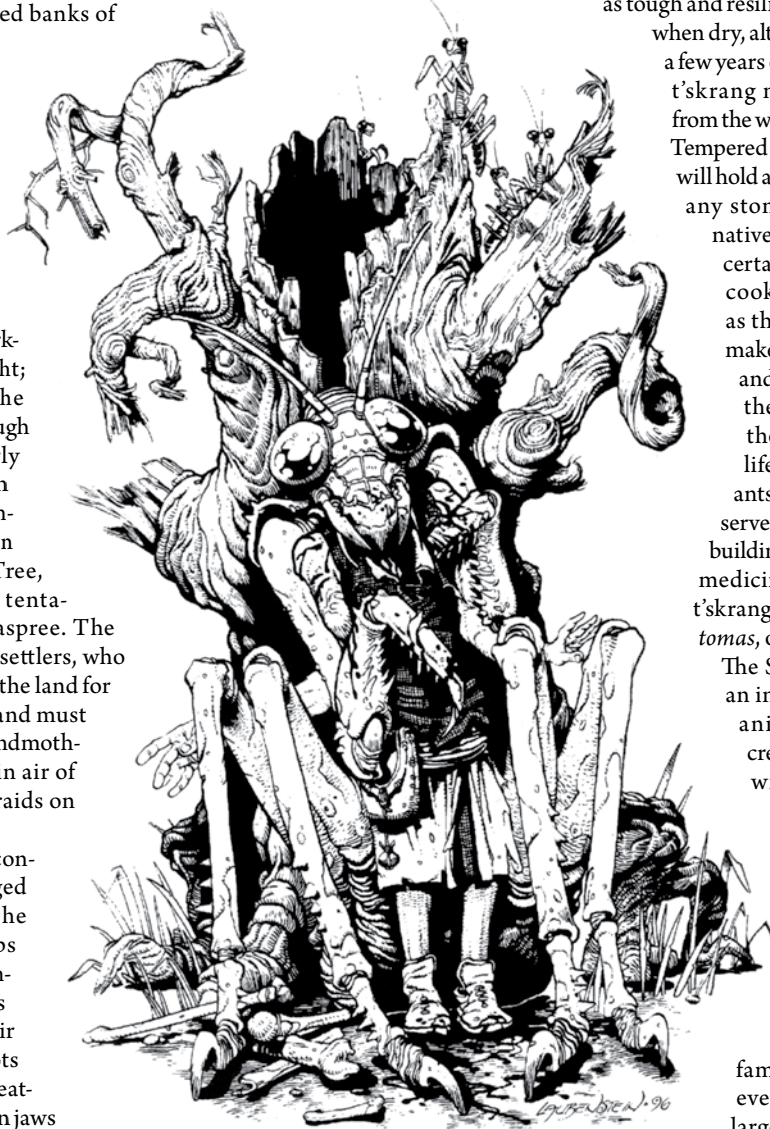
becomes as pliable as cloth when soaked in water, and as tough and resilient as dwarf chain mail when dry, although it wears out after a few years of heavy use. The jungle t'skrang make knives and axes from the wood of the *g'nomsha* tree. Tempered by fire, a *g'nomsha* blade will hold a much keener edge than any stone implement. Servos

natives also use the leaves of certain trees as crockery for cooking and serving food, as the source of extracts to make poisons and medicines, and as roofing material for their homes. The trees of the Servos truly provide life to the jungle's inhabitants. The fruits of the trees serve as food, the branches as building materials, the roots as medicines. In fact, the jungle t'skrang call themselves *chreos-tomas*, or "tree-herders."

The Servos is also home to an incredible menagerie of animals and monstrous creatures. The air vibrates with the calls and wing beats of hundreds of species of birds, whose plumes command handsome prices in Barsaive's markets. Apes and monkeys are the most prevalent animal family in the Servos, however, with the smallest no larger than a man's fist and the largest—the gorillas—powerful enough to take on a troll.

The jungle's animal population also includes big cats such as tigers, leopards, jaguars, and black pumas. Deer and gazelle are plentiful as well, along with many varieties of water buffalo in every color and pattern. A patient hunter may even be treated to an occasional glimpse of the Servos elephant, prized for its ivory tusks.

Lizards, however, dominate the waterways of the Servos. Servos crocodiles typically exceed 15 feet in length, and sightings of speci-



mens as large as 50 feet are not uncommon. The waterways swarm with snakes (see p. 199 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) of every size and color as well—constricting, poisonous, and a few relatively harmless varieties. The banks of the Servos' many rivers house colonies of duck-billed hadrosaurs, 15 to 20 feet tall, which graze among the trees that hang over the water. Behemoths (see p. 157 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*), massive creatures resembling a cross between a hippopotamus and an alligator, wallow in these rivers, their long necks sticking up six feet out of the water and their feet planted firmly in the river bed 10 or more yards below. Ramos of Travar has recorded one behemoth specimen 110 feet long from tail to head. Despite their formidable size, however, these plant-eating behemoths do not attack Namegivers or riverboats. Indeed, rumor has it that the Servos contains Beastmasters who have mastered the behemoths.

The monsters of the Servos are more rare, and far more dangerous, than legends paint them. Many of the Servos' predators were twisted by the Horrors during the Scourge. Certainly the crojen (see p. 164 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) are a constant threat to all living things in the jungle. Relentless hunters, these small jungle cats become frenzied at the smell of blood, making their attacks more fearsome than that of the largest tiger. The Cathan have devised cunning crojen snares, although they keep the secret of their snares to themselves. The tallest of the jungle trees are home to wyverns, who swoop down from the canopy to attack their victims. Although blood monkeys (see p. 157 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) are extremely rare in the Servos, the Servos blood bat swarms from the trees in the same manner as its terrifying cousins in the Blood Wood.

Three of the most dangerous Servos predators, however, are insects. The giant spider (see p. 174 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*), which can reach the size of a troll, builds its thin, near-invisible webs in the gaps between the jungle's mother-trees. The unwary traveler may easily get caught in the sticky web of a giant spider, destined to become a desiccated husk dangling from the spider's lair. The very appearance of the death moth (see p. 165 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) can paralyze an observer with fear. The underbelly of the moth is naturally shaded to resemble a skull, which can trick an observer into believing a disembodied head is flying toward him. The moth then attacks its frightened prey with a potent venom. The venom contains the creature's eggs, which incubate within the victim. The moth larvae then consume the victim's internal organs and emerge from his dead body. The inshalata (see p. 118 of the *Gamemaster's Companion*), or stalking mantis, as the Cathan call it, is a giant praying mantis that disguises itself by remaining perfectly still. Passersby typically mistake the mantis for a part of the jungle landscape, perhaps a vine or leafy tree. As the unlucky traveler passes, the mantis grabs him from behind and attempts to fasten its outer mandibles around the hapless prey. Thus fastened, the creature uses a pair of razor-sharp arms to slowly slice the victim apart, piece-by-piece, and consumes as much of its prey as possible.

As the Galanga River winds its way through the foothills of Throal, it tumbles 70 yards downward at a place called Griffin Falls. The falls are Named after the Servos' only colony of jungle griffins (see p. 180 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*). Like all of their kind, these griffins prefer to frighten off trespassers or hypnotize them and send them away from the griffins' nesting area. Certain tribal Shamans send their students to Griffin Falls to gather a fallen feather from a jungle griffin as a test of their aptitude. Such feathers are considered powerful Nethermantic totems.

Perhaps the most feared of the Servos hunters are the giant predatory t'skrang that the Cathan call the velos (see p. 204 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*). For years, scholars dismissed the Cathan tales of killer t'skrang with rows of sharp teeth and feet studded with razor-sharp claws. Now, however, most scholars accept the

existence of these carnivorous t'skrang, who prefer the taste of Namegiver flesh to any other meat. The velos walk upright, craft spears that they throw with considerable force and accuracy, and live in scattered villages across the jungle. Recently, a band of 40 Theran slavers discovered and attempted to raid a velos village. Only two slavers survived the encounter.

Settlements in the Servos

Aside from the isolated villages of the jungle tribes, the Servos contains several K'tenshin plantations and a few scattered independent t'skrang villages. Master farmers from House K'tenshin's Meru *niall* supervise the K'tenshin plantations, which lie along the banks of the Serpent and Servos Rivers. The Meru currently run 30 plantations in the area and have enlisted merchants from Travar in the construction of 20 or so more. The plantations supply much-needed rice, beans, and vegetables to communities along the Serpent's South Reach. Once cleared of trees, the land will grow almost any crop, including bananas, coconuts, corn, cotton, sugar cane, flax, spices, and tea. Additionally, the climate of the Servos allows for two growing seasons each year.

When choosing a plantation site, the Meru builders look for an easy approach from the water, a thick layer of good topsoil, and as few grandmother-trees as possible. Then they call in workers from the Henika *niall* to deforest 40 to 50 acres, pull the stumps, turn the earth, and build a central stockade. The plantation organizers then recruit craftsmen from river villages and the city of Travar to contribute members to form a self-sufficient community. The typical plantation seed colony numbers 20 to 50 individuals and usually includes a carpenter, a blacksmith, a stablemaster, a baker, a cook, a fisherman, and a healer. After the seed colony has been assembled, the first planting goes into the newly turned soil. The community then constructs homes, using wood from the plentiful jungle hardwood trees. At the first harvest, the slavers from House K'tenshin's Abanos *niall* appear with a contingent of slave labor to bring in the crop. The slaves remain after the harvest to work the plantation as needed.

The layout of a plantation has much to do with the lie of the land and the racial composition of the community. The Meru prefer to divide their fields with 10- to 15-yard swaths of small trees, which act as windbreaks and reduce soil erosion. Particular care is taken when constructing the docking facility on the water's edge. The river is generally very shallow along the jungle banks, and so the plantation docks may extend as far as 35 yards from the shore to keep approaching riverboats from running aground.

If the community is mostly t'skrang, it builds a central plantation house with rooms for every free citizen, communal kitchens, and dining rooms. If the community has more racial diversity, each family builds its own house around a central square. Typically, a small road paved with cut hardwood timber connects the settlement's docks to its homes. The stockade built in a community's first year becomes the slave compound. Each evening, when their work is done, the slaves are corralled into the compound for the night. The compound is guarded by slave foremen, who ensure against escapes. Additional foremen are required to supervise the work in the fields each day. A typical plantation keeps no more than two slaves for each free person in the community—any more is considered a security risk.

Admission to a plantation seed colony is a highly sought-after privilege on the South Reach of the Serpent. Such communities are run much like t'skrang trade covenants, with every member of the community sharing in the fruits of its labor. Although the first year requires much hard work, after the first harvest a plantation dweller can generally settle into a life of relative luxury, with slaves to attend his household and a generous stipend from the plantation's annual profits. Even in years of poor harvests, plantation

communities rarely go hungry. Of course, the entire plantation system depends on the seemingly inexhaustible supply of slave labor, and many individuals leave plantation life after experiencing the reality of a slave society and its manifold suffering.

The rivers of the Servos also contain numerous t'skrang village towers, but the domes of most of these villages flooded during the Scourge. Explorers report that the walls of these domes are perforated with thousands of tiny holes, and that the domes themselves do not contain the bodies or bones of their onetime inhabitants. Scholars believe a Horror found a way to breach the defenses of these village kaers during the Scourge.

A few isolated t'skrang villages that survived the Scourge are believed to remain in the Servos, most located far upstream on the minor tributaries of the Servos and Galanga rivers. These independent villages typically take extraordinary measures to conceal themselves from outsiders. Villagers usually dock their riverboats in hidden coves and lagoons and conceal all above-water activity, so that their villages resemble the area's numerous abandoned t'skrang settlements. They survive by raiding K'tenshin riverboats and plantations; according to rumor, these villagers imprison or execute any outsider who learns of their existence.

The Jungle Tribes

The only remaining indigenous inhabitants of the Servos Jungle are the human tribes known as the Cathan and several small t'skrang tribes. All of these Namegivers live in villages, which they build alongside the jungle's rivers and streams. All are hunter-gatherers who primarily subsist on fresh meat, fish, fruits, wild tubers, and nuts gathered from the jungle. A few Cathan villages cultivate tubers or beans to supplement their diets, but most of the jungle's people have never learned farming or animal husbandry. These Namegivers fashion tools of flint, wood, and bone. For shelter, they construct thatched huts. The Cathan generally build on dry land, while the Servos' t'skrang partially submerge their homes in the water. All use canoes to travel the jungle's waterways.

For centuries, the Servos' humans and t'skrang lived in apparent harmony. Both groups survived the Scourge by taking refuge in a maze of natural caverns, which the tribal Shamans sealed against the coming Horrors. (The entrances to these underground caverns still exist but the jungle people refuse to enter them, perhaps because they still contain Horror constructs.) Many scholars believe that the t'skrang somehow shared their ability to hibernate with the humans, for the Cathan often use the term *ixtixtaaqitl*, or "long sleep," to describe the Time of Hiding. During the long years in the dark, the Horrors breached the tribal Shamans' crude seals on several occasions, and the Cathan in particular suffered terribly from it. According to the legends of the jungle t'skrang, on several occasions Cathan led Horrors to t'skrang hiding places in exchange for their own lives. These stories explain the source of the current friction between the two groups.

Relations between the human and t'skrang tribes have steadily declined since slavers began to ply their trade in the jungle. To avoid becoming slaves themselves, many Cathan villagers serve as guides for Theran and K'tenshin slavers, and usually direct their employers to t'skrang villages. The jungle t'skrang consider such actions declarations of war and often gather war parties from neighboring villages to attack the villages of their Cathan betrayers. Although the jungle t'skrang outnumber the Cathan, the humans tend to be better warriors and so such conflicts usually degenerate into drawn-out feuds that last until the warriors of the opposing villages exhaust themselves.

The jungle people follow the Disciplines of the Archer, Scout, Warrior, Nethermancer, and Shaman (see p. 176 of the *Namegivers of Barsaive* book). The Cathan are particularly dangerous bowmen. Tribal magicians are most often Shaman adepts, and they gener-

ally pass on their knowledge to no more than two other individuals in their tribes. The village Shaman occupies a place of honor just below the village elder or *lahala*. Often these magicians have access to powerful Ghost Masters (see p. 10 of the *Player's Companion*) whom they can contact to help guide themselves and their tribesmen in their quest for knowledge and advancement.

For additional descriptions of the Cathan and t'skrang of the Servos Jungle, see the *Namegivers of Barsaive* book.

The Gray Ones

According to the legends of the Servos tribes, Horrors destroyed the jungle during the Scourge. Cathan stories, for example, say the Horrors "devoured the jungle like locusts." The basis of these legends is easy to surmise. Almost all Namegivers are familiar with the physical destruction the Horrors wrought on the lands of Barsaive, and it seems likely that the Horrors destroyed much of the Servos' plant and animal life during the Scourge. According to legends, the jungle people restored their habitat with the aid of strange visitors known as the Gray Ones.

In all the tales so far recorded, the Gray Ones appear at the edge of a village during the last hour before nightfall. They appear as a pair of Namegivers, always of the same race, one male and one female, dressed in plain gray cloaks. The visitors share stories with the villagers, instructing them in the ways of the mother-trees and the rejuvenation of the jungle. Every village that received the Gray Ones was said to be free of the threat of the Horrors for a year and a day. Soon the green returned to the land of the Servos just as the Gray Ones had prophesied, and the people built their homes under the eaves of the newly grown trees.

Most scholars scoff at the legends of the Gray Ones, pointing out that the Servos Jungle is much too large to have grown up from nothing within a scant few Namegiver generations. The tribes of the Servos, however, remain convinced that the tales are true.

THE TYLON RIVER

The Tylon River, which runs swiftly down from the Tylon Mountains, is the largest tributary in the Serpent's South Reach. The Upper Reach of the Tylon, which stretches from the river's source to the 130-yard falls at Daiche Canyon, flows through densely forested hillsides and verdant valleys that are considered some of the most beautiful wilderness in Barsaive. The Tylon's Lower Reach meanders through the rugged plains where the Dinganni wander. At the southern end of Daiche Canyon, the city of Kratas has built the colony called Daiche, which has become a locus of trade and controversy.

According to local legend, the Tylon River was controlled before the Scourge by the t'skrang House T'kambras, the House of Swift Waters. Eventually, the T'kambrian *aropagoi* came into conflict with House K'tenshin, as the latter *aropagoi* attempted to expand its influence by seizing control of trade on the Tylon. After House K'tenshin failed to persuade House T'kambras to allow its riverboats into the Tylon, House K'tenshin declared all-out war against the T'kambrians. For five years the warships of the *aropagoi* clashed. Finally, with the aid of its Theran allies, House K'tenshin prevailed. K'tenshin warships seized control of House T'kambras' home village, located at the southern end of Daiche Canyon about a mile downstream of the cataracts.

Enraged at the T'kambrian resistance, the *Shivalahala* K'tenshin resolved to make an example of House T'kambras that would strike fear into the hearts of all who thought to oppose her *aropagoi*. The K'tenshinians proceeded to sell every T'kambrian prisoner into Theran slavery. They seized the riverboats of T'kambras and its allied villages for their own war fleet and executed the *lahalas* of those *nialls*, effectively destroying the ancestral memories of House T'kambras and its allied villages. As a final act of disdain,

House K'tenshin used explosive charges of elemental air and fire to destroy the village towers of House T'kambras. To this day the place is called "Shattered Towers." It is said the *Shivalahala* T'kambras was a Troubadour of great power, and as she watched the murder and enslavement of her people and the destruction of her home, she sang her ghost song before she too died. Legend has it that the cataracts of Daiche Canyon repeat that song under the darkness of the new moon for any who have ears to listen.

Daiche

Daiche Canyon remained largely uninhabited, and the river rarely traveled, until the end of the Theran War. At that time, Garlthik One-Eye, who had roused the Therans from Kratas, decided that his city could no longer sustain itself simply on the loot recovered from the ancient citadel. Realizing that Kratas lay in the middle of trade routes connecting the lands around Vivane with Throal and the Serpent's Mid and South Reaches, Garlthik surmised that a nearby port on the Tylon River could enrich his city. After opening communications with the weakened House K'tenshin, Garlthik immediately sent one of his best lieutenants, the dwarf Sagramon Steeltoe, to supervise the construction of the colony town now called Daiche. Garlthik then encouraged his many friends among the merchants (fences all, of course) to join Sagramon in a "legitimate and profitable enterprise"—namely, sending all the stolen and looted goods accumulating in Kratas back into Barsaive's markets through Daiche.

Within a few short years Daiche had become a fabulous success. Although the town has fewer than a thousand inhabitants, it boasts architecture of stone and mortared brick, as well as impressive fortifications and ample housing. Each trading company in Kratas maintains its own warehouse in Daiche, and the town's docks are always bustling with riverboats. But the center of attention in town is the ever-expanding castle that Sagramon has built

for his ever-expanding family, which now boasts eight children and 14 grandchildren.

THE BYROSE RIVER

The northern stretch of the Byrose bustles with activity between Travar and the rest of the Serpent. Merchant ships, dwarf barges, *aropagoian* warships, and ferries flood its waters. The roads lining the river also are well worn from the transport of goods and livestock to the metropolis that is Travar. The river's banks are high enough to avoid flooding in all but the wettest years, and as a result farming villages have their fields reaching nearly to the edge of the water. Even from such vantage points, the opposing bank often shrinks to a line in the distance.

Hundreds of tiny settlements dot the 200-mile journey to Travar. All of the Namegiver races save obsidimen and windlings find members among these villages, to the point where it is difficult to count which race is dominant along the river. These settlements range from communal homes of extended families to central trading and meeting areas for a score of families. They are known for both their hospitality and their negativity, and are quite used to visitors from along the roads and from the busy waters, often enticing visitors in to hear the latest gossip and hawk some of their crops or wares. Despite the villages' obvious relation to Travar, the inhabitants are careful not to play favorites to ships from Throal, K'tenshin, or elsewhere on the Serpent. The farmers and their neighboring herders further inland are notorious for their excuses and complaints about their crops. In part this is due to the fierce competition and stingy markets in Travar, but lately murmurs of the Badlands encroaching upon the lands along the banks of the Byrose are being taken more seriously. Trading houses from Travar have begun to send adepts, especially Wizards and Elementalists, to look into these claims.



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Byrose's villages are interesting places. Sure, they seem open and care free, but I quickly came to notice how many of their young men would conveniently find work to do near the main gathering area in case of trouble. Once a drunken friend of mine made a pass at one of their young ladies and had a young man's blade to his throat before I could tell him to go walk it off. They watch out for their own they do. Just don't ask them about their crops or you'll never hear the end of it.

—Lognar Devia, Dwarf Barge Captain
▲ ▲ ▲

Whereas in the past all the river traffic had led to numerous skirmishes and the occasional collection of *bakshevas*, despite the Free Trade Compact, recently tensions have risen with the growing prominence of House K'tenshin and the Therans on the South Reach. Travar has even begun turning to airships to bypass the heavy taxes on the river and the stifling company of rival riverboats. Such a practice is considered a risky gambit by a vocal minority among the trading companies in Travar, but so far this has not dampened the fervor of its proponents.

Beyond Travar, the traffic lessens, but many villages maintain small barges and canoes to speed their trade with the big city. The closer one approaches to the river's source, the louder the thundering of the nearby Thunder Mountains echo in the background. Every farmer or herder you'll meet has his own tale of the mountains, if you can get him to talk that is. For the area's people are quiet folk, content to farm and herd away from crowded civilization. This hill country contains some patches of rich pastureland, drawing the intrepid few who are brave or desperate enough to try and make their own way in the world. The settlements here are not without their caution however, for these lands often see strange creatures wandering in from the Badlands and the Thunder Mountains and their late-night stories speak of careless villages which fell prey to Horrors for lack of vigilance. In addition, feuds have been known to erupt over choice pieces of land or access to good watering holes, for while rich in places, this area also has spots that are equally barren.

TRAVAR

Travar is one of Barsaive's largest cities. Located on the west side of the Byrose River, about 200 miles south of the Serpent, Travar retains all of its pre-Scourge splendor and grace. The city is famous for the impressive wealth of its citizens, the golden roofs of its towers and spires, and the bizarre spectacle of its annual political contest, known as the Founding.

Three magistrates share power in Travar. One magistrate oversees the court system, the second runs the civil services, and the third is free of civic duties and may pursue his own business affairs. At the end of each month, the three magistrates meet to establish new policies and laws based on unanimous consensus. Then they trade places. This arrangement allows each magistrate to serve the city and yet still attend to his personal affairs every third month. Each magistrate holds office for three years, and each year one magisterial post goes up for election. The election process, however, is unique.

The city of Travar retains a group of magicians, known as the Body of Five, at the public's expense. Each year, the Body of Five makes all preparations for the Founding. A spectacular tournament involving magic, wild beasts, puzzles, and traps, the Founding is usually held during the first two weeks of the autumn. Candidates for one of the magistrate positions must hire a champion or champions to compete in the tournament. The champion who wins the

Founding wins the seat of magistrate for his employer—and presumably a handsome reward as well. As a result, Travar is almost always filled with freelance warriors, a condition that saves the city the expense of maintaining a standing army.

The Travarian Magistrate currently consists of Lord Alderac Windspear, Xoros Honeyed-tongue, and Niss Reeves. A pragmatic human who has won his seat in the Magistrate last year, Lord Alderac Windspear is an adept—a Swordmaster who has combined his adventuring contacts with his fortune to gain his office. He is a natural mediator and shrewd negotiator. His title is not Travarian; his family claims descent from the nobles of Landis.

Xoros Honeyed-tongue, a surprisingly mellow ork, made his fortune producing arms. Controlling a large number of smithies, Xoros holds the charter for the largest fire cannon industry in the province. He won his seat in the Magistrate two years ago, and many of his more powerful clients have since left for Cara Fahd. While his position is safe for now, he is worried about next year's Founding.

The most powerful Travarian magistrate, however, is Niss Reeves, a troll Weaponsmith who has all but abandoned her Discipline to become one of the premiere jewelers in Barsaive. A gregarious troll by nature, she enjoys the job very much. Within the city she is known as "Sparkling Niss," for she has unusual elegance and charm for a troll. Wearing the finest gowns and a coy smile to match her sparkling eyes, she cuts an oddly elegant figure for a troll and uses her charm to get her way in political matters. Niss has won a magistrate position for four consecutive terms, a total of twelve years. This remarkable feat was made possible by her connections in the adept community from her adventuring days. Her Founding Champions are consistently a cut above others, mainly because adepts and magicians enjoy working with her. She supports free trade and a free Barsaive, and she has expressed publicly her loathing of the Therans. Despite these public proclamations, she has resisted the attempts of fellow magistrates to incorporate Throalic law into the code of Travar.

Travar's streets are home to several of the most successful trading companies in Barsaive. If something can be bought or sold, one can find it somewhere in Travar. This includes slaves, though the slave market remains outside the city walls, and the city tax on slaveholders makes slave ownership a luxury available to only the very wealthy. Despite the city's ambivalent attitude toward slavery, several crimes, including theft and adultery, carry the penalty of enslavement under Travar's legal code. However, almost all of Travar's industries use free labor to produce their goods. Many households buy individuals from the slave market, free them from bondage, and then bring them into the city, where they employ them as servants and pay them room and board.

Travar's air fleet consists of six drakkars and four galleys, although more vessels are slated to join. The airships provide the city's merchants with a welcome alternative to the K'tenshin riverboats that monopolize trade on the Byrose. The growing air fleet has kept freight costs competitive, prompting House K'tenshin to seek other ways to profit from its monopoly of the Byrose, such as its passenger service between Travar and the Floating City of House V'strimon in Lake Ban.

The city imports its food from hundreds of farming villages along both sides of the Byrose River. Regular ferry service is available to cross the river at the city itself, and good systems of roads line each riverbank. The soil of the Byrose valley produces excellent crops of cotton and grain, and the lowlands of the nearby Thunder Mountains provide pasture for sheep, cattle, and horses. In the past several years, however, the soil on the west bank of the river has grown depleted. Area landowners blame the depletion on poor farming techniques, but the tenant farmers whisper that the Badlands are reaching out toward the river.

Omasu

The wealthiest man in Travar is the obsidiman Troubadour Omasu, founder of the Overland Trading Company. Originally from the Liferock at Ayodhya, Omasu displays no political opinions whatsoever. His company trades all across Barsaive, from Vivane to Throal to Iopos, in every good and service imaginable. The Overland Trading Company now boasts a staff of more than 20 merchants, with caravans leaving Travar every two to three weeks. The company has forged an agreement with House K'tenshin to allow three company-owned galleys to travel the South Reach—something no other trading company has ever accomplished. Initially Omasu traveled widely and did his own trading, but in recent years he has divided his time between his expansive house inside the city walls and his rambling estate on the east side of the Byrose River across from Travar.

As ruthless in his secret rebel activities as he is in his business dealings, Omasu makes a useful ally or patron for a group of player characters. His skills as a Troubadour adept make him a charismatic and likable leader, and he generously rewards any adepts willing to smuggle information and supplies into and out of Vivane. Additionally, Omasu pays high prices for any information about the strengths and weaknesses of the Theran fortress and the fate of the obsidimen trapped within the Ayodhya Liferock.

Omasu is a Seventh Circle obsidiman Troubadour.

OMASU

Attributes

DEX (11): 5 STR (22): 9 TOU (16): 7
PER (17): 7 WIL (14): 6 CHA (17): 7

Characteristics

Initiative: 4 Physical Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 9 Spell Defense: 11
Mystic Armor: 6 Social Defense: 11
Death: 81 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 66 Knockdown: 9
Wound Threshold: 14 Movement: 5
Karma Points: 21/21

Troubadour Talents (Knacks)

Avoid Blow* (1): 6
Disguise Self^D (7): 14
Durability (6/5) (7): 7
Emotion Song (8): 15 (Telling The Tale)
Empathic Sense^D (7): 14
First Impression^D (8): 15
Haggle (9): 16 (Covet Item, Faulty Goods)
Impress^D (7): 14
Inspire Others^D (7): 14
Item History^D (7): 14
Karma Ritual^D (7): 7
Leadership^D (7): 14
Melee Weapons (7): 12
Mimic Voice^D (8): 15 (Mimic Music)
Performance (7): 14
Read/Write Language (7): 14—(Human, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Theran, Troll, T'skrang)
Resist Taunt^D (7): 13
Speak Language (7): 14—(Human, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Theran, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)
Steel Thought** (1): 7

Thread Weaving (Story Weaving)^D (7): 14

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

^I Talented Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

* Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Bracers

** Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Gold Amulet

Skills

Caravan Trade Routes^K (6): 13
Conversation (5): 12
Engaging Banter (4): 11



Etiquette (5): 12
Heartening Laugh (3): 10
Missile Weapons (4): 9
Liferock Rebellion Group^K (4): 11
Lip Reading (3): 10
Musician (Harp)^A (4): 11
Obsidiman Culture^K (4): 11
Overland Trading Company Finances^K (6): 13
Read/Write Language (1): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic)
Research (4): 11
Rhetoric (3): 10
Serpent River Trade Routes^K (3): 10
Singing^A (6): 13
Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Obsidiman)
Streetwise (4): 11
Storytelling^A (5): 12
Taunt (4): 11
Throwing Weapons (4): 9
Travar City^K (4): 11
Vivane Resistance Group^K (3): 10
^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Fernweave (Phys 2; Myst 3), Buckler (Phys 1; Deflect 1/0; Shatter 17),
Espagras-Scale Cloak (Phys 3; Myst 1; Init 0/1)

Weapons

Troll Sword (Forged +3; Damage 18), 2 × Troll Daggers (Forged +2; Damage 14; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), 2 × Troll Spears (Forged +3; Damage 17; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), Medium Crossbow (Forged +3; Damage 18; Range 40–80 yards/20–40 hexes), Quiver (w/15 medium crossbow bolts; Forged +1)

Thread Items

Protective Gold Amulet with Amber Gem (Rank 4; PhysDef +1; SpellDef +2; Steel Thought +1 Rank Bonus), Protective Bracers (Rank 4; PhysDef +2; SocDef +1; Avoid Blow +1 Rank Bonus)

Equipment

3 × Booster Potions, Climbing Kit, Cloaksense Brooch, Harp, Quiet Pouch, Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

8 gold rings with different colored embedded gems (worth 1,600 silver pieces), 460 silver pieces

Legend Award

Seventh Circle

Notes

As an obsidiman, Omasu possesses the Increased Wound Threshold and Natural Armor racial abilities.

Troubadour Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Social Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Charisma—only Tests

Fifth Circle: One Last Word

Sixth Circle: Karma on Perception—only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on companion's social Action Test

Commentary

Omasu is the head of the Overland Trading Company. Apart from being a wealthy and influential obsidiman merchant, he is one of the most powerful people in Barsaive. Since he is also a member of the Brotherhood of the Ayodhya Liferock, on which the Therans landed the behemoth, Triumph, Omasu has formed an underground movement to fight the Therans, known as the Liferock Rebellion.

Omasu uses his own influence and resources to aid House V'strimon and House T'kambras, the anti-Theran *aropagoi* of the Serpent River, the Kingdom of Throal, and other anti-Theran factions by pressuring ship-building companies to speed production on galleys and galleons for Throal's navy, arranging for overland shipments of supplies and goods to anti-Theran forces, and even hiring ork raiders to disrupt Theran caravans and slaving operations.

In return, these factions provide the Liferock rebels with safe haven, transportation, and other support. Player characters can easily become involved with the Liferock Rebellion and its continuing fight against the Therans in a number of ways. For example, they may be hired for missions (by Caedrus, for example; see p. 67 of *Ardanyan's Revenge*), or, depending on their ideals and beliefs, join the Rebellion on their own initiative.

THE IONTOS RIVER

Once a prosperous branch of the Serpent river system, the Iontos now quietly flows from its source in the Dragon Mountains. Rumors are the river begins amidst a lush forest full of dragons, or at least dragon-like creatures, though few claim to have ever returned from the place. While the river swells to a few miles across long before it reaches the Serpent, it sees little traffic these days. The Badlands have claimed it in most people's minds and indeed it seems to shrink in its banks more and more each year. This is especially evident where the River of Bones, a dank, metallic tributary spawned within the Badlands themselves, joins it, turning the dark blue waters of the Iontos red and brackish until the taint dissipates in the larger river. The Scavians are among the few who still regularly ply the Iontos' waters, for they traded extensively with the many wealthy villages that once maintained ports on its shores. Rumors even circulate that they occasionally trade with a few mysterious ships from further up the river, but the Scavians return such suggestions with fiery stares.

With some frequency, groups of adventurers use the river as a launching point into the Badlands. Some even go hunting for remnants of a number of Theran villages that used to line the river, which traded with the surrounding cities and House K'tenshin before the Scourge. Those few who have returned from such quests have come up empty handed and disenchanting. Such journeys on the Iontos pose hazards as new sandbars and hidden rocks come closer to the surface, and only the Scavians seem to be able to keep track of the changes. There are those who have thought to gain from others' misfortune on the river, but for some mysterious reason the grounded ships are not so easily found.



I set out once on such a fool's errand! Looking for lost magical items and orichalcum at an ancient Theran settlement called Vahnna. No sooner had we landed than we were set upon by packs of vicious Horrors I came to know later as Gnashers. In our flight further up the Iontos we came across the ruins of an ancient t'skrang river village. Odran, our Thief, decided to go exploring to make our trip worth it at least. I still cannot bear to speak of what happened, but suffice it to say that I'd never again venture to those ruined towers or even tell someone how to find them—not for all the orichalcum in Barsaive.

—Rowan Daggertree, Retired Human Adventurer



Farram

The liveliest part of the Iontos is actually where it meets the Serpent itself. Here the small town of Farram boasts a disproportionate amount of trade due to its positioning near the confluence of the Iontos, the Tylon, and the Serpent Rivers. Due to trade with Daiche and Travar, almost any goods imaginable can be found in the small settlement. Founded by a small group of retiring Throalic merchants not long after the Scourge ended, it testifies to the old dwarf axiom: "Location is everything; goods, while vitally important, come second." While most of these founders had passed away before Farram's current bustle, its focus has always been on trade and hospitality. The large number of inns of varying qualities and corresponding prices further highlights this history.

The Scavians (see **On the Scavians**, p. 85) have been rumored to meet with the rebels of House T'kambras at Farram. The townspeople suspect these dealings are the reason a number of t'skrang traders took up residence in town rather suddenly; whispers of their possible connections to the Naxos *niall* have even reached Travar. The locals worry about the danger this might bring to their small settlement, but so far have been happy enough with the extra business. One dwarf in particular, a retired Weaponsmith Named Hancar, is quite pleased with his fortunes of late, as his inn, the Friendly Forge, has seen more patrons than it previously had in years.



My fellow townspeople ignore me, and I must admit: with good reason much of the time. But this time is different! Caravans, I tell you! Coming up from the South, they are meeting warships on the river. It will be the end of us, I tell you, the end! No, I didn't see them meet any ships actually. But I did see the caravans, loaded to the gills with all manner of provisions and weapons ... and all the guards! How do you explain them? No, you must believe me this time!

—Darlon, Rumormonger and Village Idiot



APPROACHING THE MIST SWAMPS

The last 100 miles of water between the Serpent's confluence with the Iontos River and the edge of the Mist Swamps represent the last navigable, and perhaps most desolate, stretch of the river. The easternmost ridge of the Twilight Peaks extends along the Serpent's north banks, and on the south bank the hideous Badlands creep right up to the water's edge. The waters of the Great River change from blue-green to the reddish-brown of the Badlands in this region.

At one time the stronghold of Theran influence on the Serpent, this stretch of the river once contained seven river villages. The mines in the Twilight Peaks were rich with ores, the soil was fertile and easily worked, and the ancient Kingdom of the Scavians to the West provided ample supplies of elemental fire and air. With Theran aid, the settlements in the region constructed lavish kaers.

When the Horrors entered Barsaive, however, these lands were the first to fall. Now the area is desolate, with only abandoned kaers and mineshafts left to testify to its long-lost prosperity.

Only the very foolish and the very powerful take up residence along this stretch of the river. A single K'tenshin riverboat patrols the area for escaped slaves attempting to flee into the Badlands. Slaves who survive a foray into the Badlands usually make their way back to the river as soon as they realize the hopelessness of crossing the wastes.

Portage

Only two Serpent River settlements of any consequence lie between the Tylon River and the Mist Swamps. The first town of note is Named Portage, and is located only a few miles from the junction of the Tylon and the Serpent. Portage is the trailhead of one of the best caravan routes between the South Reach and Vivane. The route follows a Theran road built before the Scourge, skirts the northern edge of the Twilight Peaks, and joins a trail from Kratas somewhere near the boundary of the ancient kingdom of Ustrect. Caravans can hire Dinganni guides to help them make the passage safely. In recent years, however, this southern route has fallen into disuse because of increasing ork attacks on caravans. (Rumors say that Garlthik has bribed a number of ork raiders to move away from the Kratas route and south toward the Portage road.)

Trosk

The second settlement is the small town of Trosk, located on the ruins of a pre-Scourge port city. The inhabitants of Trosk are all questors of Jaspre and their servants. The Troskians believe they have a sacred duty to find a way to stop the growth of the Badlands, though no one can tell how much success they are having.

Tales abound of magicians who have built secret strongholds in the Badlands, but only one is known to have done so. A t'skrang Elementalist Named Sevastos has built a house in the ruined tower of what was once the nearest t'skrang river village to the Mist Swamps. He calls his tower "The Last Homely House in Barsaive," and he has filled it with all manner of magical oddities. Although he lives in virtual isolation, Sevastos is more than happy to entertain guests, and he can be a valuable source of information for travelers entering the Mist Swamps.

On the Scavians

The Scavians are descendants of the ancient city-state of Scavia, which used to be within what are now the Mist Swamps, and mined elemental fire on the Scarlet Sea. Unfortunately, their Kaer was breached during the Scourge, and they suffered greatly. Among other things, they lost the secrets of building barges that could sail the molten lava seas.

Plying the Tylon River in huge, stone-bottomed barges, the Scavians make their living from fishing and trading along the river. These barges, more than forty in number, double as villages for the Scavians, each holding up to a hundred Namegivers. While the barges are covered with rickety shacks and lean-tos, they are sturdily built and are well armed with fire cannons. Further, most of the flamboyantly dressed Scavians are well trained in the use of the crossbow and other missile weapons. They frequently butt heads with the t'skrang, especially those of House K'tenshin. For more information on the Scavians, see p. 47 of *Namegivers of Barsaive*.

The capital of ancient Scavia is uninhabited today and only adventurers, explorers, and the desperate wander its ruins. Even though the treasures of the Scavians were transported into their kaer at Dead Man's Gullet, many adventurers search for riches that might otherwise have been forgotten. The remote location of these ruins makes them an attractive place for Namegivers who need to hide or who have business that calls for secrecy.

Recently, the Order of the Scavian Guard made several raids on the ramshackle tents found between the ruins, in an attempt to take the ruins back under control. However, their efforts weren't met with success, because the residents either fled before the Order arrived or hid too well.

The Mist Swamps

None can truly say where the Mist Swamps begin. As the Serpent passes by Sevastos' abode, the fog on the river grows increasingly thick. The river begins to divide into myriad branches, which in turn divide into smaller branches. The riverbanks grow increasingly spongy, until water and earth merge into one continuous bog. The ever-present fog, heated by the fires of Death's Sea to the West, reduces visibility to a few feet.

Very few explorers have ever ventured into the Mist Swamps and returned, and so little is known for certain about this harsh environment. Some explorers, however, claim they have glimpsed the dark spires and menacing walls of the Castle of Assassins through the mists. The castle is reputedly the training ground for the secret society known as the Hand of Corruption. This dreaded cult, whose self-appointed task is to cleanse the world of all Namegivers, is among the most loathed and feared in Barsaive.



ADVENTURE HOOK



Kela Vorga, a female Scavian Warrior adept and Questor of Lochost, is strongly opposed to Scavian culture and considers the strict roles attributed to gender among the Scavians as tyranny. She has won over some of her people, but the leaders of the Scavians are strongly opposed to her, and shun both her and her followers, fearing that she is diluting their culture, already in jeopardy because of many younger Scavians marrying outside the tribe, and losses to the t'skrang. The most strongly opposed to her is Yagal Trona, leader of the Scavian Guard—elite warriors descended from the former Imperial Guard of Scavia, that defended the Scavian kaer at Dead Man's Gullet during the Scourge. Each village barge hosts a few members of the Guard, all of whom meet at least once a year to adopt new members, and make other decisions that affect the Scavians as a whole.

To demonstrate to the rest of the Scavians that she is not trying to destroy their way of life, Kela Vorga is venturing into the Mist Swamps to recover as much from the ruins of ancient Scavia as possible, hoping to find more detailed information on the construction techniques for the lava sea barges. She hires the player characters to accompany her on this dangerous mission, as her followers cannot leave their barges.

In a savvy political move, she also attempts to find any of the trappings of the Scavian's old king. Should she find his crown, scepter, or throne, she presents these to Yagal Trona. Should Yagal accept them and crown himself the new king, he cannot but accept her legitimacy as well.

In addition to the regular dangers of the Mist Swamps and the Death's Sea, the Scavian kaer may still be Horror-infested.

ADVENTURES ON THE SERPENT

Now lad, the Serpent ain't the place for real adventures. Just a bunch of barges and boring sailing is all. If you want real adventure, why not head northeast...?

• BRAINBITER, TROLL INNKEEPER •

This chapter advises gamemasters on how to use the Serpent River in their **Earthdawn** adventures and campaigns. Using the presented material as a setting or backdrop for adventures and campaigns can be challenging, but this section will help gamemasters take the fullest advantage of the opportunities the Serpent River can provide.

Experienced **Earthdawn** gamemasters know the Serpent River as an ever-present place in their adventures, as the river runs through all of Barsaive. It's a place of trade and home to the majority of Barsaive's population. The Serpent River is where anyone goes if he wants to travel the province, and player characters in many current campaigns are likely to have some time aboard a riverboat. As this book shows, however, countless possibilities for adventure exist along the Serpent's shores.

USING CHARACTERS TO CREATE ADVENTURES

Any story, whether a novel or a movie or even part of a roleplaying session, is about characters. The most important characters in gaming are the player characters, of course, but an interesting supporting cast can make or break an adventure. This book is packed with brief character sketches in the source material and in adventure ideas. Whenever you are at a loss for a plot development or the premise for an adventure, refer to the **Character Index** on p. 118. This table lists all of the characters in this book, including a brief description of the character and page references for finding additional material.

The **Character Index** serves as a helpful reminder of the dozens and dozens of gamemaster characters mentioned in this book. This table can also serve as an instant reference tool if you are in the middle of an adventure and need a gamemaster character with whom the player characters can interact. Depending on the situation, you can find someone the player characters already know or bring a new character on stage.

The **Character Index** also comes in handy if you are about to run a session and need a premise to get started. Pick a few characters from the table at random, then figure out what kind of story might involve all of them. This kind of lateral thinking can kick-start your imagination, breaking you out of habitual patterns. Think of it as the storytelling equivalent of connect-the-dots.

You can also use lower-level gamemaster characters to represent the powerful people listed on the table. For example, if you

choose the *shivalahala* of an *aropagoi* to be part of your story but do not want your player characters consorting directly with the Serpent River's movers and shakers, you can use one of her lieutenants instead.

ADVENTURE FRAMEWORKS

The following adventures are presented in an adventure framework format. Adventure frameworks serve as blueprints that outline the basic events of a story line, which the gamemaster can flesh out according to his own tastes. The framework is a middle step between the brief adventure ideas presented elsewhere in this book and fully dramatized adventures like *Ardanyan's Revenge*. If you like lots of dialogue and narration prepared in advance, you can create your own detailed notes to supplement the adventure framework. If you prefer to run your game by the seat of your pants, simply glance at these outlines, get the adventurers into trouble, and enjoy the fun.

ADVENTURE FRAMEWORK FORMAT

No two gamemasters design adventures in the same way. Some prefer to plan for every possibility they can foresee in advance, leaving as little as possible to chance. Others prefer a looser style, where they plan the most significant events in the adventure and improvise the rest. To aid gamemasters in preparing adventures, we have devised the adventure framework format. Gamemasters can use this format to plan out the events of an adventure while maintaining as much flexibility as they like. The four parts of the adventure framework are the **Setup**, **Events**, **Climax**, and **Sequels**.

Setup

The **Setup** describes how the adventure begins and how the characters become involved in the story. This section may also include events that have led to the adventure and background on other ideas touched on in it. This section is often the longest and most detailed in the framework.

Events

Each **Event** describes encounters and events that occur during the course of the adventure. These may include situations that pose problems for the characters, actions by the adventure's antagonists, creature encounters, or simply unexpected occurrences. Events are the obstacles or problems the player characters must overcome to complete the adventure successfully.

Climax

The **Climax** is the conclusion or resolution of the adventure. It describes the most likely resolution based on actions that the gamemaster expects the players to take, and so it may differ considerably from the way the adventure actually ends. Because player groups often take unexpected actions, we suggest that the gamemaster plan for more than one possible climax.

Sequels

Sequels are stories that might happen after or as a result of the adventure. Sequels may be adventures that feature the same gamemaster characters or include a magical item discovered in the first adventure and help to create a sense of continuity in a campaign.

See **Adventures and Campaigns**, starting on p.99 of the *Game-master's Guide*, for more information about creating **Earthdawn** campaigns and maintaining campaign continuity.

THE HEART OF TRIUMPH

The characters disguise themselves as slaves and infiltrate the heart of the Theran fortress in an attempt to contact the obsidimen trapped within the Ayodhya Liferock. The characters hope the obsidimen can provide valuable information about the fortress and its defenses.

SETUP

The adepts are contacted by agents of the Liferock Rebellion and meet with Omasu (see p.83). The obsidiman merchant wants the adepts to act as his agents for a particularly dangerous mission. According to the plan, the characters will pose as slaves and be taken to the fortress of Triumph. Once inside the fortress, they will infiltrate the slave pits and contact the obsidimen within the Ayodhya Liferock that lies buried under the citadel.

Omasu teaches the characters a song that will allow them to awaken the obsidimen and call them to the surface. The characters are to gain any information the trapped obsidimen can provide about the state of the Liferock and the Theran fortress, then escape the fortress city.

In exchange for this service, Omasu will pay the characters a total of 5,000 silver pieces and let them select one of the thread items he owns. Omasu isn't likely to budge from his terms, but if the characters insist on haggling he may increase his offer to 6,000 silver pieces.

EVENT ONE

An agent loyal to the Liferock Rebellion arranges to slip the characters into a K'tenshin slave shipment from the towns alongside Lake Pyros. The characters receive cover identities and stories but are told to rely on them as little as possible to avoid being caught. The characters are taken upriver to the shores of Lake Ban and then to Triumph, where they are sent into the slave pits of the massive fortress.

EVENT TWO

The characters are assigned to the mines under the watchful eye of the Theran slavemaster, Mabon Ardos. The adepts work in the mines ceaselessly during their shift, and are then brought to the slave quarters to rest and eat before the next shift begins. The work is grueling and puts considerable strain even on the healthiest characters.

The overseers cannot watch all of the slaves constantly, which provides the characters with brief unsupervised periods. Additionally, the characters might be able to slip away from the slave quarters during sleeping hours.

During their time in the mines, the characters witness some of their fellow slaves being worked to death or simply killed outright by overseers as examples to the other slaves. Adepts who try to interfere may attract undue attention, especially if they use any of their magical talents. Therefore, they must decide if they will act in the short term or patiently carry out their mission.

Mabon Ardos is a Sixth Circle elf Beastmaster and questor of Dis. The other Theran slavers are human non-adepts.

MABON ARDOS

Attributes

DEX (16): 7 STR (16): 7 TOU (15): 6
PER (15): 6 WIL (18): 7 CHA (9): 4

Characteristics

Initiative: 6 Physical Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 5 Spell Defense: 9
Mystic Armor: 3 Social Defense: 8
Death: 80 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 66 Knockdown: 7*
Wound Threshold: 10 Movement: 7
Karma Points: 24/24

* Mabon knows the Wound Balance skill

Beastmaster Talents

Animal Bond^D (6): 10
Animal Training^D (6): 10
Avoid Blow (6): 13
Claw Shape^D (7): 14
Creature Analysis^D (6): 12
Dominate Beast^D (6): 13
Durability (7/6) (6): 6
Frighten Animals (5): 9
Heal Animal Companion^D (6): 12
Karma Ritual^D (6): 6



Questor of Dis (7): 7
 —Confusion, Enslave, Living Death (7): 14
 Search (6): 12
 Silent Walk (6): 13
 Thread Weaving (Beast Weaving)^D (6): 12
 Tracking (6): 12
 Unarmed Combat^D (7): 14
^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)
Italicized Talents Require Karma. (Except when also a Discipline Talent)
 * Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Brooch

Skills

Detect Weapon (3): 9
 Disarm (3): 10
 Interrogation^K (3): 9
 Melee Weapons (3): 10
 Read/Write Language (2): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic, Theran)
 Slave Trade Routes^K (3): 9
 Speak Language (3): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, *Sperethiel*, Theran)
 Streetwise (3): 9
 Tattooing^A (3): 7
 Throwing Weapons (3): 10
 Torture^K (3): 9
 Wound Balance (3): 10

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Armor

Hardened Leather Armor (Phys 5; Init 1)

Weapons

Whip (Forged +2; Damage 12; Entangle 9), **Dagger** (Forged +1; Damage 10; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), **Bola** (Damage 10; Range 12–24 yards/6–12 hexes; Entangle 9), **Net** (Size 6; Range 6–12 yards/3–6 hexes; Entangle 12)

Thread Items

Protective Brooch (Rank 4; SocDef +2; SpellDef +1; Resist Taunt +1 Rank Bonus)

Equipment

Bandana, Light Chain (3 yards), Peasant's Garb, Rope (6 yards), Tattooing Tools, Rat Animal Companion

Legend Award

Seventh Circle

Notes

As an elf, Mabon possesses the Low-Light Vision racial ability. Mabon has 2,500 Devotion Points to Dis.

Beastmaster Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Physical Defense
Fourth Circle: Karma on Charisma-only Tests
Fifth Circle: Primal Urges
Sixth Circle: Karma on Willpower-only Tests

THERAN SLAVERS

Attributes

DEX (14): 6 STR (16): 7 TOU (17): 7
 PER (14): 6 WIL (17): 7 CHA (8): 4

Characteristics

Initiative: 6 **Physical Defense:** 8
Physical Armor: 0 **Spell Defense:** 8
Mystic Armor: 3 **Social Defense:** 5
Death: 40 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Unconsciousness: 32 **Knockdown:** 7*
Wound Threshold: 11 **Movement:** 6

* Has the Wound Balance skill

Skills

Avoid Blow (3): 9
 Detect Weapon (3): 9
 Disarm (3): 9
 Interrogation^K (2): 8
 Melee Weapons (5): 11
 Parry (3): 9
 Read/Write Language (2): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic, Theran)
 Riposte (3): 9
 Search (3): 9
 Silent Walk (3): 9
 Slave Trade Routes^K (3): 9

Speak Language (3): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human, Theran)
 Streetwise (2): 8
 Surprise Strike (3): 10
 Tattooing^A (2): 6
 Throwing Weapons (5): 11
 Torture^K (3): 9
 Tracking (3): 9
 Unarmed Combat (6): 12
 Wound Balance (3): 10
^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Weapons

Whip (Damage 10; Entangle 9), **Dagger** (Damage 9; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes), **Bola** (Damage 10; Range 12–24 yards/6–12 hexes; Entangle 9), **Net** (Size 6; Range 6–12 yards/3–6 hexes; Entangle 12)

Equipment

Bandana, Light Chain (3 yards), Peasant's Garb, Rope (6 yards), Tattooing Tools

Legend Award

Third Circle

EVENT THREE

Once the characters figure out a way past the guards and overseers to reach the Liferock, they can attempt to use Omasu's song to call forth the sleeping obsidimen and communicate with them. When the characters do so, the faces of two obsidimen emerge slowly from the Liferock.

The rockmen are weary and worn from the torture their Liferock is undergoing, and their dreaming has been disturbed and painful. However, the obsidimen are able to tell the adepts that Theran magicians are tapping into the elemental power of the Liferock to power the fortress city's magical defenses and traps. They also tell the characters that the invaders have removed the True air from the behemoth and replaced it with True earth in an effort to root the citadel to the hill and increase its size and fortifications.

CLIMAX

Once the characters have learned what they can from the obsidimen, they still have to engineer their escape. Nearly any escape plan will be dangerous and virtually impossible to accomplish without attracting the attention of the Theran slavers. The characters might be able to foment a slave uprising to serve as a distraction, but many of the slaves will die in the process and the characters will still have to slip past the Theran guards and soldiers.

Efforts to stir up a rebellion in the slave pits may also draw the attention of the Passion Lochost, who may choose to aid the adepts in the effort (granting them the Inspire Rebellion ability or adding steps to their Charisma Tests, for example). Lochost may even appear as a child wearing broken chains to aid and encourage the characters. Lochost's intervention, in turn, may draw the attention of Dis, who may act through the Theran slave master Mabon Ardos. The interventions of the two Passions may result in a conflict between them that will be talked about for some time to come.

Additionally, the characters might be able to seize one of the Theran vedettes and escape from Triumph by air, resulting in a chase and aerial battle as they flee from the fortress. In any case, an open rebellion and escape should touch off major battles within Triumph and possibly provide the opportunity for the player characters to confront one or more of the major Theran characters in the fortress.

SEQUELS

Successfully completing their mission can earn the adepts Omasu's gratitude and further work for the Liferock Rebellion. Characters might become involved in helping guide rescued slaves to safe havens around Barsaive where they can further aid

the Rebellion. The capture of an intact Theran stone airship will undoubtedly interest Throalic leaders, who would want the ship so their Elementalists could examine its construction and design. Other potential sequel developments include avenging or rescuing befriended slaves who remain in Theran bondage or fulfilling the last requests of characters who die during the breakout attempt.

The characters' actions may earn them favor from Lochost (leading a slave rebellion constitutes a Zealous Act of Devotion to Lochost—see p.168 of the *Player's Companion*). They may also draw the attention of prominent Liberators seeking allies in their cause against the Therans. Of course, their actions may anger Dis, who might attempt to thwart the characters at some future date.

GONE FISHING

Throal and House V'strimon learn that Theran forces at Triumph are attempting to salvage the vedettes that crashed in Lake Ban when the *shivalahala* and her Elementalists disabled them during the first Theran War (see p.30). The player characters are asked to locate the ships before the Theran forces do so, thus allowing House V'strimon to salvage the airships for the Kingdom of Throal.

SETUP

A t'skrang fisherman comes to the *Shivalahala* V'strimon after witnessing a late-night foray by Theran forces on Lake Ban. He says that the Therans appeared to be dredging the lake bottom. Realizing that the Therans are attempting to locate the vedettes, the *shivalahala* asks the characters to accompany the fisherman out on his boat the next night to examine the spot where the fisherman saw the Therans. She also provides the characters with their choice of magical potions or swimming charms (see p.107 of the *Goods and Services* chapter), which will enable them to breathe underwater for several hours.

EVENT ONE

A sliver of moon illuminates the calm and quiet surface of the lake as a humble t'skrang fisherman appears at the dock. The characters climb aboard his boat, the *Net of Reeds*, and the group makes its way to the spot where the Therans were seen. As they float across the surface of the lake, the fisherman gives one of the adepts a reed bracelet of the style worn by the t'skrang of House V'strimon and tells the adepts it can bring them luck if tossed into the lake. The characters down their potions or activate their charms and dive into the dark waters.

Deep beneath the surface of the lake they see the dark hulk of one of the Theran airships, entangled in a mass of reeds. Light crystals carried by the characters cast a watery glow over the hull of the ship and illuminate the bones of the Theran sailors and slaves trapped aboard.

Unfortunately for the characters, the hull of the ship is lying in a large bed of tentacular kelp (see p.104 of the *Creatures* chapter). The kelp resembles normal kelp, but it is covered with tiny suction cups on one side. When touched, the suction cups seize a target and inject a paralyzing venom.

EVENT TWO

After examining the ship, the characters make their way back to the surface. There, they discover a Theran vedette hovering overhead. The fishing boat is nowhere in sight. The Therans lower ropes to the characters and demand they climb aboard. If the characters attempt to escape, the Therans send a water elemental to capture the characters and bring them aboard the ship.

Once aboard the vedette, Drak Windsearcher, who is personally commanding the expedition, interrogates the characters. He asks them what they saw on the lake bottom. With or without the player characters' aid, the Therans quickly locate the downed ship. The Elementalist aboard Windsearcher's vedette uses magic to raise the ship to the surface of the lake, though it remains unable to fly.

STRENGTH RATING 4 WATER SPIRIT

Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 4 TOU: 4
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 5

Characteristics

Initiative: 8 Physical Defense: 12
Actions: 2 Spell Defense: 13
Attack (4): 10 Social Defense: 10
Damage: Physical Armor: 4
Unarmed 4 Mystic Armor: 4
Death: 56 Recovery Tests: 2
Unconsciousness: 43 Knockdown: NA
Wound Threshold: 7 Movement: 6/7*
Karma Points: 8/8 Karma Step: 7

* Swimming Movement Rate when physically Manifested

Powers

Aid Summoner (4), Astral Sight ^T (4): 9, Detect True Element (4), Durability (4), Engulf (4): 9, Find (4): 9, Manifest (4), Manipulate Element (4): 9, Search ^T (4): 9, Share Knowledge (4), Spear (4): 8, Spellcasting (4): 9

* Talent as power

Legend Award

Fourth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Rules

The spirit's Physical Defense is used in astral space as well as when physically manifested.

Manifestation Restriction: Water elementals can only manifest from a source of water. The size of the water source has no bearing on the Strength Rating of the water elemental that may manifest from it. Even a drop of water is sufficient to spawn the mightiest of water spirits.

Vulnerability to Air: Lower the result level required to inflict an Armor-Defeating Hit on a water spirit or elemental by one level (from Excellent to Good, for example) if the attack was made with an air-based weapon or spell.

CLIMAX

From out of nowhere, the *Net of Reeds* appears and collides with the low-flying Theran vedette. The crash sends crew members falling to the deck and gives the characters an opportunity to escape. The t'skrang fishing boat looks too badly damaged to outrun Windsearcher's ship, but the characters can try to get away on the newly raised vedette. They can use the Air Sailing or Pilot Boat talents (or Willpower in the absence of either talent) to pilot the salvaged vedette along the lake's surface. Meanwhile, the Therans quickly regroup and pursue the characters, attempting to capture them before they can reach safety behind the *refs* of the Floating City. This pursuit can lead to a running battle between the two ships. Though the vedette has no functional weapons, the characters can use their own spells and talents to repel the Therans.

If the character carrying the fisherman's lucky reed bracelet casts it into the lake, a stand of strong, tough reeds bursts from the surface of the water and entangles the pursuing Theran vedette, buying extra time for the characters to reach the Floating City. Only upon their return to House V'strimon do the characters discover that the real captain of the *Net of Reeds* is still in the city and missed the rendezvous. The characters have, in fact, encountered the spirit of the Old Man of the Nets, who seeks to help his people against the Therans.

If the adepts manage to get the Theran ship to the Floating City, the t'skrang Elementalists are unable to restore its flight capabilities, but they can stabilize it enough to traverse the river safely. The



characters are then charged with the task of conveying the ship to the Kingdom of Throal and preventing any Theran attempts to recapture it from them. House V'strimon arranges an escort of two warships for the journey. Because of the vedette's poor condition, the trip takes two days, during which the characters face a number of challenges from the Therans as they attempt to prevent the ship from falling into Throalic hands. (General Nikar sends the Elite, p.69, to lead the Theran effort.)

The characters may also encounter the Old Man of the Nets in a different guise when the wily spirit requires their help again.

SPIES UP A CREEK

A member of the Syrtisian spy network enlists the characters to deliver a message to an agent in Axalekso. They are caught and mysteriously carried aboard an Ishkaratan warship. Their contact has followed them, however, and ends up with them on a mission sneaking up the Mothingale River to sabotage relations between the Syrtisians and the Elven Court.

SETUP

An important message is to be delivered to an elven woman Named Talara, who is a key contact on Ishkaratan territory for the Syrtisian spy network. She is, in actuality, Ar'yana Marrek, an accomplished human Illusionist and daughter of one of the rulers of the City of Marrek. Only the *shivalahala* and the Marrekans know her true identity and the extent of their recent alliance. Ar'yana is in the midst of uncovering a plot by the Ishkaratans to send a rowboat with crewmen posing as Syrtisian spies past Kaer Eidolon and as far up the Mothingale River as possible. The Ishkaratans' hope is that relations with the Elven Court will deteriorate, allowing them to capitalize on the unrest and extend their forces into the Mid Reach. Unfortunately, Ar'yana's cover as Talara has been compromised and the Ishkaratans are watching her, waiting for her next contact with any suspicious visitors.

EVENT ONE

An official under the command of Admiral T'kraidis seeks out the characters. He asks them to deliver a message on behalf of

House Syrtis to a fair-haired elven woman in the town of Axalekso. He provides the characters with details of the meeting place—an inn called the Swinging Sailor—and her Name: Talara. Obviously, secrecy and discretion are required and the reward is consummate. The Admiral offers a good sum of silver to the group as upfront payment, with the promise of considerably more should the characters return swiftly with the woman's reply. Should the group travel by river, the characters find their ship accosted and taxed by an Ishkaratan ship while on their way to Lake Vors. The characters themselves are directly threatened and charged a tax as well-to-do adventurers, and warned that they will be watched in Ishkaratan territory.

EVENT TWO

Once the characters arrive in Axalekso, it becomes apparent that they are being tailed. The characters should take the opportunity to explore the town, while trying to avoid their observers. Despite the characters' best efforts, however, Ishkaratan troops burst into their meeting with Talara. Following the resulting tussle, the characters and Talara find themselves bound and gagged, after which they notice one of the troops excuses himself hastily. The prisoners are subsequently escorted to a military post near the docks to be interrogated, and lose track of Talara in transport. As their examiner is preparing to do his worst, an Ishkaratan warship captain enters and has the characters hooded. They are taken below decks on a riverboat and feel it immediately disembark.

EVENT THREE

The captain briefly confronts the characters about the woman and how she might have escaped, but soon realizes they know little of her. The characters are left in the dark, weaponless, and with a few meager rolls and bowls of stale water. Before long another t'skrang enters, seeming to be berating and further questioning them, but drops obvious hints regarding their message to the elven woman in Axalekso. At an inopportune time, the captain returns and is surprised at the presence of one of his crewmen here. Depending on the characters' reactions, they may give away their contact, Talara herself, who is now in the guise of an Ishkaratan boatman.

AR'YANA "TALARA" MARREK

Attributes

DEX (15): 6 STR (12): 5 TOU (15): 6
PER (17): 7 WIL (17): 7 CHA (15): 6

Characteristics

Initiative: 5 Physical Defense: 10
Physical Armor: 9 Spell Defense: 11
Mystic Armor: 7 Social Defense: 9
Death: 70 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 54 Knockdown: 5*
Wound Threshold: 10 Movement: 6

Karma Points: 40/40

* Ar'yana knows the Wound Balance talent

Illusionist Talents (Knacks)

Avoid Blow^{V*} (5): 11
Dead Fall^D (8): 15
Disguise Self^D (9): 16 (Angelic Appearance)
Durability (4/3) (8): 8
Engaging Banter^D (8): 14
Enhanced Matrix (8): 8
Enhanced Matrix (8): 8
False Sight^D (8): 8
Fast Hand^D (8): 14
Karma Ritual^D (8): 8
Melee Weapons^V (4): 10
Mimic Voice^V (4): 10
Read/Write Language (8): 15—(Human/Scavian, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Theran, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)
Read/Write Magic^D (8): 15
Slough Blame^D (8): 14
Speak Language^D (8): 15—(Human/Scavian, Obsidiman, Or'zet, Sperethiel, Theran, Troll, T'skrang, Windling)
Spellcasting^D (8): 15
Spell Matrix^D (8): 8
Spell Matrix (8): 8
Spell Matrix (8): 8
Spell Matrix (8): 8
Thread Weaving (Illusionism)^D (9): 16 (Create Thread Item)
True Sight^D (8): 8
Versatility (4): 4
Willforce (8): 15
Wound Balance^V (4): 9

^D Discipline Talent (The adept may spend Karma on this Talent)

^V *Italicized Talents Require Karma.* (Except when also a Discipline Talent)

^V Learned through the Versatility talent

* Modified by +1 Rank Bonus from Protective Boots

Skills

Blood Wood History^K (4): 11
Cast Net (4): 10 (see *Namegivers of Barsaive* p.218)
Marrek Town^K (4): 11
Mapmaking^A (4): 11
Navigation (4): 11
Pilot Boat (4): 11
Read River (4): 11
Read/Write Language (1): 8—(Dwarf/Throalic)
Robe Embroidery^A (4): 10
Speak Language (2): 9—(Dwarf/Throalic, Human)
Streetwise (4): 11
Swimming (4): 9
T'skrang Politics^K (4): 11

^A Artisan Skill; ^K Knowledge Skill

Illusionsism Spells

Astral Shadow, Bellow of the Thundras, Best Face, Catseyes^M, Conceal Tracks, Displace Image, Enter and Exit, Ephemeral Bolt^M, Form Exchange^E, Improved Alarm, Innocent Activity, Light, Nobody Here, Rope Guide, Silent Stampede, Switch^E, Tailor, True Ephemeral Bolt^M, Unseen Voices, You Got Me^M

^M Denotes spell in spell matrix

^E Denotes spell in enhanced matrix

Armor

Thread Padded Leather Armor (Rank 4; Phys 6; Myst 3),
Espagra—Scale Cloak (Phys 3; Myst 1; Init 0/1)

Weapons

Broadsword (Damage 10), Casting Net (Entangle 10),
Dagger (Damage 7; Range 10–20 yards/5–10 hexes)

Thread Items

Charismatic Brooch (Rank 4; Charisma—only Tests +4 bonus),
Protective Boots (Rank 4; PhysDef +2; SocDef +1; Avoid Blow +1 Rank Bonus)

Equipment

Adventurer's Kit, Cloaksense Brooch, Climbing Kit, Craftsman Tools, Embroidered Robes, Embroidery Tools, Grimoire, Mapmaking Tools, Navigation Charts in Map/Scroll Case, Quiet Pouch, Navigation Charts (in map/scroll case), Rope (6 yards), Wealthy Traveler's Garb, Writing Kit

Loot

340 silver pieces

Legend Award

Eighth Circle

Notes

As a human, Ar'yana has the Versatility racial ability. Ar'yana has used the Versatility talent to learn the Avoid Blow, Melee Weapons, Mimic Voice, and Wound Balance talents.

Illusionist Abilities

Second Circle: +1 Spell Defense

Fourth Circle: Karma on Perception—only Tests

Fifth Circle: Glamour

Sixth Circle: Karma on Willpower—only Tests

Seventh Circle: Karma on spell Effect Tests

Eighth Circle: +1 Spell Defense

Commentary

Ar'yana "Talara" Marrek is an Eighth Circle human Illusionist.

EVENT FOUR

The characters are brought up to the deck at twilight and the captain informs them that they have been poisoned with slow-acting venom that will kill them within the week if they do not cooperate. The characters are required simply to row a large rowboat under the direction of three Ishkaratan boatmen for a few days and then the antidote will be provided to them, and they will be free to go their way. The poison actually gives the characters little more than a fever to scare them into obedience. If Talara was revealed she also is sent with the characters as a captive rower, otherwise they notice the t'skrang who berated them is one of the three assigned to direct them. The characters are sent out to the East after being tied to their benches on the boat, and hug the southern bank until they turn and head north up the Mothingale under cover of darkness.

CLIMAX

After a few hard days of rowing and gruff responses from their escorts, the characters reach an obelisk covered with pictographs. Before long, they are attacked by blood warders with bows from the banks of the river. This attack should precipitate a fight for the characters' freedom with Talara's/Ar'yana's aid. Ar'yana reveals herself if unknown, leaving the characters to evade the blood warders and travel to Kaer Eidolon. Subduing the two Ishkaratans is a priority, for all aboard the rowboat think the potions they hold are truly the antidote to the poison. Along the river, the warders continue accosting the characters all the way to Kaer Eidolon, where Ar'yana hopes to convince the Syrtisian authorities of her and the characters' allegiance to House Syrtis, and prevent this Ishkaratan ploy from hurting the alliance with the elves. Latent tensions may yet erupt at Kaer Eidolon itself if the characters do not tread carefully.

SEQUELS

Through this adventure the characters have gained the attention of Ar'yana Marrek and may be called upon if the Marrek family seeks aid. In addition, depending on the outcome, Admiral T'kraidon may be indebted to the characters and hire them for more work in the future. Lastly, some of the blood elves at Kaer Eidolon could approach the characters and involve them in the elves' illicit trade with the outside world.

CREATURES

Then there was that time we got attacked by blood bats. Pesky things chased us from our camp toward the river. Twenty of them took down Rogaas, but the rest of us made it to the bank of the Serpent just fine. Well, we would have been fine if we hadn't disturbed that giant crocodile. Just two bites and we lost both Firgin and S'race. I didn't know I could swim so fast!

• DEEN QUARAN, RETIRED EXPLORER •

The Serpent River is home to a wide variety of unique plant and animal species. This section describes a number of plants and animals commonly encountered in the jungles of Barsaive and along the shores of the Serpent River (many mentioned in earlier chapters of this book), and includes game statistics and other information for these different species.

For explanations of the statistics used in this chapter, see p.145 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*.

NEW CREATURE POWERS

This section lists new powers available to the creatures introduced in this chapter. They follow the rules and guidelines presented under **Creature Powers** in the *Gamemaster's Guide*, p. 149.

BOOMING SCREECH

Step Number: Rank+CHA

Action: Standard

Type: Magical

The creature makes a Booming Screech Test and compares the result against the Spell Defense of each creature within 40 yards/20 hexes. An Average or Good Result Stuns the victim for one round (see p.228 of the *Player's Guide*), and causes temporary deafness for a number of rounds equal to the creature's Booming Screech Rank—the victim incurs a –3 penalty to all hearing-based Action Tests. An Excellent Result Stuns the victim for two rounds, and deafens him for Booming Screech Rank minutes; an Extraordinary Result Stuns the victim for three rounds, and deafens him for Booming Screech Rank hours. The sound from a creature's screech carries clearly up to 200 yards, but can be heard as far as 400 yards away.

BEFUDDLE

Step Number: Rank+WIL

Action: Standard

Type: Magical

The Horror makes a Befuddle Test versus one target's Spell Defense. On an Average Result, the target is Harried (*Player's Guide* p.227) for two rounds. On a Good or better Result, the target is Harried and also becomes confused and unable to take any move, simple, or standard actions unless the target is able to make a successful Willpower Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the Horror's Befuddle Step number. The range of this power is the Horror's line of sight.

HAIL

Step Number: Rank+WIL

Action: Free

Type: Magical

Water–Cold. The Horror makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the Horror makes a Hail Test to determine how much damage is inflicted. Physical Armor protects against this damage. The power's range is the Horror's Rank x 4 yards (Rank x 2 hexes).

MUSK SPRAY

Step Number: Rank+WIL

Action: Free

Type: Mundane

The creature can spray a musk with a distance of up to Rank x 2 yards (Rank x 1 hexes). The smell causes revulsion and nausea. The creature makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If successful, the creature makes a Musk Spray Test to determine the strength of the musk. The target must make a Willpower Test against this test result. Failure means the target is Harried (*Player's Guide* p.227) and can take no move, simple, or standard actions besides vomiting until a successful Willpower Test is made against the test result. The scent of the creature's musk remains on the target for the creature's Musk Spray Rank in days.

PANIC

Step Number: Rank+CHA

Action: Standard

Type: Magical

The Horror makes a Panic Test versus one target's Spell Defense. On an Average Result, the target is Harried (*Player's Guide* p.227) for two rounds. On a Good or better Result, the target is Harried and must flee the area unless it is able to make a successful Willpower Test against a Difficulty Number equal to the Horror's Panic Step number. The range of this power is the Horror's line of sight.

ZAP

Step Number: Rank+WIL

Action: Free

Type: Magical

Air–Electric. A target struck by the Charge attack of the creature may also be subjected to a discharge from one of its two eye-horns. The creature makes a Spellcasting Test against the target's Spell Defense. If the test succeeds, the target is zapped by an

electrical discharge from the horn; the creature makes a Zap Test to determine how much damage is inflicted. Non-metallic Physical Armor protects against this damage. The creature can only use Zap twice: once for each eye-horn. The creature can recharge one horn per hour by resting and sacrificing a Recovery Test, but only if the creature has no Current Damage or Wounds.

CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

The following creatures inhabit various parts of the Serpent River and surrounding areas. Like several plant species, some of these creatures are treated as poisons or traps for game purposes.

AZONTU

Attributes		
DEX: 7	STR: 2	TOU: 2
PER: 8	WIL: 6	CHA: 3
Characteristics		
Initiative: 8	Physical Defense: 11	
Actions: 1 (see text)	Spell Defense: 10	
Attack (1): 8	Social Defense: 4	
Damage:	Physical Armor: 0	
Bite (1): 3	Mystic Armor: 1	
Spine (4): 6 (poison; see text)		
Death: 19	Recovery Tests: 0.5	
Unconsciousness: 10	Knockdown: 3	
Wound Threshold: 3	Movement: 7	

Powers

Dead Fall ⁵ (2): 8, Poison [SD 6; Debilitation]

⁵ General skill

Loot

20–30 spines worth a total of 2–3 silver pieces.

Legend Award

Second Circle

Commentary

The azontu is an excellent example of how the animal life of Barsaive adapted to survive the Scourge. Descended from the common field mouse, the azontu is small enough to fit into the palm of a hand. Holding it would be an uncomfortable experience, however, as the mouse is shrouded in a blanket of spines. These spines each have a wicked barb on the end and detach easily from the animal when tugged sharply. When a larger animal attempts to bite the azontu, it instead gets a mouthful of spines that cannot be removed without either tearing the flesh or using a sharp knife to carefully cut them out.

The azontu likes to forage in dense undergrowth and is often found along the edges of trails through woods and jungles. Mounts or Namegivers stepping too close to the edges of trails put themselves at risk of taking one or more spines in the ankle, should they encounter an azontu. Figuring out what has caused the damage may be difficult, as the mouse usually makes itself scarce after the encounter. Captured azontus will sometimes feign death, however, hoping they will be left alone. Being lamed by a spine will certainly slow down a Namegiver's travels; removing spines is difficult to do without causing further injury, but if they are not removed promptly, infection may set in, resulting in fever, dizziness, nausea, and weakness of the muscles.

The Cathan and other primitive peoples of the jungles and southern plains find the azontu quite useful. Its spines make excellent needles for leatherwork, and can also be used as stitching to hold items together. For the latter use, spines are run through the layers being stitched, then the barbs are clipped off and the ends smeared with glue to hold the spines in place.

Rules

While the azontu can use its teeth to deliver a painful bite, the mouse's spines are both its greatest defense and offense.

Wicked Spines: Anyone who picks up an azontu without wearing adequate hand protection, or a mount or other creature that steps on one, risks getting pierced by Step 4 spines. The gamemaster makes a separate Attack Test for each spine. Unless the victim is aware of the azontu, these attacks are made as if the victim were Blindsided (see p.226 of the *Player's Guide*). Taking one or more spines in the leg or foot reduces the victim's Movement Rate by 2. Taking one or more spines in the arm or hand causes the character to be Harried when performing any actions using that limb (see p.227 of the *Player's Guide*). Removing each spine requires a sharp knife and a



successful Physician (7) or Dexterity (12) Test. An Average Result removes the spine, but causes Step 4 damage to the victim; a Good or better Result removes the spine with no additional damage. A Poor Result, or simply tearing the spine out, removes it, but inflicts Step 8 damage to the victim. No armor protects against this damage. Failure to remove a spine within an hour requires the victim to make a Toughness (7) Test to resist a Step 6 debilitation poison, representing the high probability of infection (see p.123 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*).

BLOOD BAT

Attributes		
DEX: 7	STR: 2	TOU: 2
PER: 5	WIL: 3	CHA: 2
Characteristics		
Initiative: 7	Physical Defense: 11	
Actions: 1	Spell Defense: 7	
Attack (1): 8	Social Defense: 3	
Damage:	Physical Armor: 0	
Bite (1): 3	Mystic Armor: 0	
Death: 20	Recovery Tests: 0.5	
Unconsciousness: 11	Knockdown: 2	
Wound Threshold: 4	Movement: 2/8*	

* Flying Movement Rate

Powers

Enhanced Senses [Listen] (2): 7, Locate Target (2): 7

Legend Award

First Circle

Commentary

From their perches high in the jungle canopy, Servos blood bats swarm from the trees in a similar manner to their terrifying cousins in the Blood Wood, the blood monkeys. Normally inactive during the day, unless provoked, the bats spend the warmer hours hanging in colonies of up to 100 animals high in the treetops, where they are safe from ground-roaming predators. In the evenings, however, the bats seek prey on which to feed. True to their Name, blood bats prefer the warm blood that courses through the veins of others. Normally they derive nourishment from the herbivores that roam the jungle floor—tapirs, boars, and other mammals—but they will also feed on monkeys and even larger animals, like panthers and tigers—even Namegivers. Blood bats attack their prey with sharp incisors, sucking out blood until they are dislodged or become sated. Unless quickly killed or driven off—blood bats have a fear of

fire, and even a torch-wielding Namegiver can keep them at bay for a short time—more bats from the same or other colonies will quickly join in to feed, usually within minutes. Like normal bats, blood bats are blind and “see” by bouncing high-frequency sounds off objects or prey. This sonar acts as a mundane version of the Locate Target power. Smaller than other types of bats, blood bats lack the Blood Veins power. Instead, they usually lick or sip blood from the cuts they inflict with their sharp little teeth, although every now and then a bat will bite too deep and become attached to its victim.

Rules

Individually, a single blood bat is not a tough opponent to dispatch, especially for an armed Namegiver. Even when blood bats do manage to successfully use their bite attack, the damage they inflict is minor, unless they cause a Wound (see below). However, because they attack in numbers, their opponents are usually quickly Harried (see p.227 of the *Player's Guide*), making it easier for the bats to bite them. The collateral effect of blood loss to their victim soon causes unconsciousness—and not long after that, death. A typical bat is no more than a foot long, and up to 18 bats can attack a Namegiver at a time. **Sucking Grip:** In their feeding frenzy, some bats will occasionally bite so deep that their fangs get locked into their victim. This happens when a bat inflicts a Wound. The bat's reflex action causes it to suck blood aggressively from its victim as it tries to free itself. This inflicts 2 Damage Points per round to the victim. No armor protects against this damage. Killing the bat loosens the grip sufficiently for it to drop off. Otherwise, the bat will manage to pull itself free in Step 4 rounds.

DIVA BIRD

Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 2 TOU: 3
PER: 6 WIL: 4 CHA: 5

Characteristics

Initiative: 8 **Physical Defense:** 11
Actions: 1 **Spell Defense:** 9
Attack (1): 8 **Social Defense:** 7
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 0
 Bite (2): 4 **Mystic Armor:** 2
Death: 24 **Recovery Tests:** 1
Unconsciousness: 15 **Knockdown:** 2
Wound Threshold: 5 **Movement:** 2/9*

* Flying Movement Rate

Powers

Booming Screech (8): 13, Camouflage (4): 8

Legend Award

Second Circle

Commentary

The bird known as leavy'g'deeva, “Large Song of the Morning”, is also called the diva bird, after the term applied to large, loud singers in the music halls of Throal. While the Name may not fit this bird physically, what the diva bird lacks in stature, it more than makes up with enthusiasm. Growing to only two-thirds of an elven hand span in length, the diva bird is medium brown in color, plumed with brilliant red feathers on its head, leaf green feathers on its wings, and a deep brown tail. When motionless, it can easily blend into nearby vegetation, appearing to be a flower and a cluster of leaves on a short branch. Its bright red bill is long and sharply hooked at the end; this is a meat eater. The diva bird hunts for its meals, but will eat fresh carrion. It has a unique method of providing itself with fresh meat.

In the early morning, the diva bird looks for grazing animals that have wandered off by themselves on awakening. The bird notes the presence and location of any nearby predators, and perches on the side of the herbivore furthest away from the predator. It then makes a booming noise that has been compared to “a troop of crystal raiders pounding their shields and screaming for battle while their galley tumbles down a mountain, breaking all the glassware aboard and enraging the brithan in the cargo hold.” The sheer volume of the sound normally stuns the intended victim, and every predator in the Servos seems to recognize the call of the diva bird as an announcement of easy prey. Even if the herbivore is not stunned, and flees the sound, it runs straight into the waiting claws of the predator, who it will usually fail to hear approaching. Thus, for a few minutes' work spying out the terrain, and just a single cry, the diva bird may eat its fill from the kill of another animal. The effect of the diva's call is temporary under normal conditions; otherwise, every living thing in the Servos would soon go deaf. Fortunately, these birds lay only one to three eggs in a clutch. Many of the larger animals in the jungle find the diva to be a tasty snack, which further keeps their numbers down.

Rules

The diva bird has a sharp bill, which can deliver a nasty bite. It also possesses the Booming Screech power (see p.92).



GELTECKIN

Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 3 TOU: 5
PER: 4 WIL: 5 CHA: 2

Characteristics

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 9
Actions: 2 **Spell Defense:** 5
Attack (3): 10 **Social Defense:** 3
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 2
 Bite (6): 9 **Mystic Armor:** 1
 2 × Tentacles (3): 6 (poison)
Death: 34 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Unconsciousness: 26 **Knockdown:** 6
Wound Threshold: 9 **Movement:** 5*

* This value is also the creature's Flying Movement rate.

Powers

Camouflage (4): 9, Poison [SD 7; Paralysis], Silent Walk⁵ (3): 10

⁵ General skill

Legend Award

Second Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Commentary

Inhabiting the jungles of southern Barsaive and the Mist Swamps, the gelteckin is a terrible hazard to travelers. It poses less of a threat to the natives of these areas. Resembling a jellyfish, the gelteckin's body is round, and built much like a sack turned upside down, with dozens of threadlike tentacles dangling from the lower edge all around. In the center of the underside is a beak resembling that of a parrot. Colored a pale green, with brown streaks and dark green patches, the gelteckin blends in well among the foliage of the trees where it floats quietly, waiting for prey. The creature produces a lighter-than-air gas within its body, which it secretes into several bladders. This gas holds the gelteckin aloft where it drifts like a cloud, at the mercy of the winds, although it can use its tentacles to clutch at nearby branches and tree trunks, pulling itself deftly around the jungle foliage. If enough bladders are punctured, the creature cannot remain in the air and will collapse to the ground. A grounded gelteckin is far from harmless, however. It can still move around the ground on its tentacles when downed. Also, care should be taken in piercing the bladders, as the gas is highly flammable. Elementalists would no doubt have a use for something that catches alight so readily, but other Namegivers should be wary of the beast's explosive nature. Because of the creature's mode of flight, it has a terrific fear of open flames. As such, it will not approach a village with cooking fires lit, or a campsite with a fire going. Cathan hunting parties carry unlit torches magically prepared to blaze up at a spoken command to ward off the creatures. The slightest flicker of fire appears to be enough to ward off the creature, although with its coloration and absolute quiet when moving, its approach is hard to detect.

Rules

Glands along the edge of the beast secrete a virulent toxin that trickles down the gelteckin's tentacles and paralyzes the beast's prey. Additionally, the tentacles deliver a stinging electrical jolt of obviously magical origin on contact. Once the prey is paralyzed into immobility, the gelteckin vents enough levitating gas to descend onto the helpless victim and feed. Each Wound done to a gelteckin punctures a bladder, which leaks gas into the immediate vicinity. Any open flame source or spark will set fire to the gas, causing the gelteckin to explode like a fireball, doing Step 13 damage to everything in a 4-yard/2-hex radius. Physical Armor protects against this damage. After three Wounds, the gelteckin no longer has enough intact bladders to remain aloft, and sinks or drops to the ground at a rate of 2 yards/1 hex per round.

GIANT CAVE CRICKETS

Attributes

DEX: 11 STR: 5 TOU: 5
PER: 4 WIL: 3 CHA: 4

Characteristics

Initiative: 10 (13) Physical Defense: 14
Actions: 2 Spell Defense: 5
Attack (2): 13 Social Defense: 5
Damage: Physical Armor: 6
Bite (2): 7 Mystic Armor: 0
Death: 56 Recovery Tests: 2
Unconsciousness: 44 Knockdown: 7
Wound Threshold: 8 Movement: 8

Powers

Durability (4), Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 6, Surprise Attack (3)

Legend Award

Fourth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Commentary

These insects are the size of large dogs, stone gray with pure white eyes. Savagely hungry, they will fight to the death in hopes of a meal.

Rules

Totally blind, giant cave crickets rely on sound and scent to locate their prey, and chitter constantly during combat.

Light Immunity: Light-based attacks will not affect them.

GIANT CROCODILE

Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 13 TOU: 12
PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 3

Characteristics

Initiative: 7 (9) Physical Defense: 8
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 8

Attack (6): 13

Social Defense: 9

Damage:

Physical Armor: 9

Bite (6): 19

Mystic Armor: 2

Death: 98

Recovery Tests: 6

Unconsciousness: 85

Knockdown: 14

Wound Threshold: 18

Movement: 6/8*

* Swimming Movement Rate

PowersDurability (6), Surprise Attack (2), Swimming^S (2): 15^S General skill**Loot**

Skin worth 10d12 silver pieces.

Legend Award

Fifth Circle

Commentary

The alligators of the Servos are large, aggressive predators, challenged by few creatures. The giant crocodile not only challenges alligators, it regularly preys on them, although it prefers other meat, such as the flesh of the hadrosaurs that frequent the jungle's waterways. Approximately 14 to 15 feet in length, with a thick, scaly hide, and rows of sharp teeth set firmly in its blunt-nosed face, the giant crocodile is feared by almost every creature in the Servos. Like alligators, giant crocodiles lie submerged and barely visible in the water. Willful and cunning reptiles, giant crocodiles are afraid of nothing, and will attack any creature that comes within reach.

The statistics above are for an "average" 15-foot-long crocodile. Many have been known to grow as long as 50 feet in length (the gamemaster is encouraged to modify these statistics for a nastier encounter, using the guidelines presented in the Creatures chapter on p.110 of the *Gamemaster's Companion*).

Rules

Sight-based Perception Tests made to detect a partially submerged giant crocodile require a Good Result. Even if detected, a giant crocodile's initial attack is extremely sudden; the giant crocodile gains a +2 bonus to its first Initiative Test. The crocodile's favored attack strategy is to capture prey using a Bite and Hold attack (p.147, *Gamemaster's Guide*) against a (usually) Surprised victim, dragging it underwater to drown.

Aquatic: A giant crocodile can hold its breath for a number of minutes equal to its Toughness Step before drowning.

HADROSAUR

Attributes

DEX: 6 STR: 15 TOU: 13
PER: 4 WIL: 8 CHA: 4

Characteristics

Initiative: 5 Physical Defense: 6
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 10
Attack (3): 9 Social Defense: 10
Damage: Physical Armor: 6
Bite (5): 20 Mystic Armor: 9
Death: 94 Recovery Tests: 6
Unconsciousness: 82 Knockdown: 19
Wound Threshold: 19 Movement: 5/7*

* Swimming Movement Rate

PowersDurability (5), Enhanced Senses [Listen, Smell] (2): 6, Swimming^S (5): 20^S General skill**Legend Award**

Fifth Circle

Commentary

The banks of the Servos' many rivers house colonies of duck-billed hadrosaurs, 15 to 20 feet tall, which graze among the trees that hang over the water. Hadrosaurs graze in packs of three to five animals. A hadrosaur's long neck allows it to reach plants up to 10 feet in height or distance away from the river. The reptile's mouth features front teeth that are made for clipping leaves and twigs, and back teeth that are used for chewing and grinding food. These are ideal for first procuring food and then, after fleeing the largest river predators, including the giant Servos crocodiles, chewing food later in safety. The large hadrosaur is surprisingly agile in the water, using its webbed duck-like feet to run in the shallows and swim in the deeper sections of the river. Its large reptilian body mass contributes to its buoyancy in the water.

Usually gentle, hadrosaurs will react angrily if attacked, reaching their long necks out and biting their attackers or fleeing if they cannot reach or if their attackers are larger than them. The hadrosaur is highly sought by river Cavalrymen due to its maneuverability in the water and great strength.

Rules

The hadrosaur is a strange creature that is difficult to train due to its bizarre mix of bird-like and reptilian traits and unusual morphology. Any characters using talents or abilities to train a hadrosaur must achieve one Result Level higher than normal. For example, the Animal Training talent normally requires an Average Result to work against a target creature. Using Animal Training against a hadrosaur, however, requires a Good Result.

HUNGERFISH

Traveling in schools of 100 or more, the creatures known as hungerfish are a well-known danger in t'skrang kitchens. On the outside, hungerfish resemble plain silver fish with small fins. On the inside, they have no organs. Harmless enough to swimmers and fishermen, hungerfish are only a threat to those who eat them. Within an hour of eating a hungerfish, a victim's appetite comes back. He will then start eating as much as he can, whenever he can. In advanced stages of this unnatural hunger, a victim may turn to cannibalism to satisfy his appetite or, in the absence of normal food, may eat leaves, grass, or even dirt. The effect lasts approximately one day per fish consumed. Once a victim recovers, he can return to his daily routine none the worse for the experience (provided, of course, that he did not consume a neighbor or a loved one in the meantime). According to rumors, certain trisnari, or restaurants, along the river add minuscule portions of hungerfish to their entrees to inspire their customers to eat more (and thus pay more) than they otherwise might.

Hungerfish Poison

Type: Special

Spell Defense: 7

Onset Time: Instant

Spell Number: 8

Duration: 1 day

Make an Effect Test once per day for each fish a character has eaten. The test result represents the degree of gluttony and bloat—the effect creates in the character.

JACOTI

Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 14 TOU: 15
PER: 5 WIL: 8 CHA: 3

Characteristics

Initiative: 7 **Physical Defense:** 10
Actions: 2 **Spell Defense:** 7
Attack (5): 12 **Social Defense:** 10
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 12
Bite (2): 16; Tail (4): 18 **Mystic Armor:** 4
Death: 86 **Recovery Tests:** 7
Unconsciousness: 77 **Knockdown:** 15
Wound Threshold: 21 **Movement:** 8

Powers

Charge (4), Durability (2), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 7

Legend Award

Fifth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

ALBINO JACOTI

Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 12 TOU: 13
PER: 7 WIL: 10 CHA: 5

Characteristics

Initiative: 9 **Physical Defense:** 10
Actions: 2 **Spell Defense:** 10
Attack (6): 14 **Social Defense:** 8
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 10
Bite (2): 14; Tail (4): 16 **Mystic Armor:** 7
Death: 76 **Recovery Tests:** 6
Unconsciousness: 67 **Knockdown:** 13
Wound Threshold: 19 **Movement:** 8

Powers

Charge (4), Durability (2), Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 9, Spellcasting (5): 12, Thread Weaving [Elementalism]^T (5): 12, Zap (2): 12

^T Talent as power

Spells

Fog Cloud (Smoke Cloud), Uneven Ground

Loot

Three horns, worth 100 silver pieces each (worth Legend Points).

Legend Award

Sixth Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Commentary

Standing seven feet tall at the shoulder and weighing over 2,000 pounds, an adult jacoti is a force to be wary of. Its deep green hide is rough in texture, and thickens into armor-like plates over most of its vulnerable areas. Its neck is protected by a bony plate that sweeps up and back from the head. At the end of its massive, reptilian tail is a large bony knob that strikes with all the impact of a mace. Projecting from the top of its snout and from over each eye are horns; not compressed hair like the horn of a rhinoceros, but true horns, with needle-sharp points.

The jacoti's teeth consist primarily of molars, for grinding its leafy diet, and shovel-shaped incisors, which are best suited to separating plants from their roots. While not suited to the tearing of flesh like the teeth of carnivores, the jacoti can still deliver a fearsome bite to anyone who approaches too closely.

Jacoti enter their mating season approximately every six months. During this time, the females are anxious to produce offspring, but will not accept any male that they have not seen prove himself in combat. Thus, for two weeks out of every six months, every male jacoti of breeding age is spoiling for a fight, preferably in front of a female.

Travelers would do well to learn to tell the gender of a jacoti from a distance, and to avoid the vicinity of the females no matter how arduous the alternate route.

In combat, the jacoti attacks by charging with head lowered, aiming its horns at the widest part of its target. Once it has closed, it rakes with its horns and uses its tail club to tear and pound its enemy into submission. Jacoti are fierce and stubborn, and will not give up a fight unless mortally wounded. Even then, they do not flee abjectly, but make a fighting withdrawal, continuing to threaten their foes until no longer in range.

Females normally bear a single young. Twin births are highly uncommon, and multiple births have never been observed. Birth weight averages 200 pounds. The young are able to defend themselves within a day or so of birth; the mother will stay with her young until they achieve half their adult growth, usually a period of 10 to 12 months. Females do not enter the mating cycle again for two years after giving birth.

Jacoti bulls are highly territorial. They each stake out an area a half-day's walk in all directions, and do not tolerate other bulls in their domains. They tend to react to thundra beasts as they would to other jacoti, dominating the females with ritual aggressive behavior and attacking the males. The only time bulls are normally found within each other's territory is during the mating season. Young bulls must carve out their own territories in a series of fights, or wander far afield from their birth areas to find unclaimed land. Older bulls have been known to attack anything approaching their size, becoming more defensive of their domains as they age.

One out of every 100 jacoti is born an albino. These white jacoti are smaller and less physically powerful, but are blessed by Jaspre with powerful magic to make up for their size and coloration. Albino jacoti have been observed causing minor earth tremors by pawing the ground and enshrouding themselves with mist and fog to render combat a chancy business. As well, the horns over the eyes store magical energies. If an albino strikes with both of these horns, the energies are discharged into the target, causing grievous wounds. Magicians prize these horns and pay a high price for them. So, too, do the hunters, often paying the final price once they locate an albino jacoti and try to relieve it of its horns. While there may be predators in the Servos Jungle, both four- and two-footed, that represent a grave danger to travelers, the charge of the jacoti remains the most fearsome onslaught likely to be faced in this part of Barsaive.

Rules

The albino jacoti can store magical energies in their two eye-horns that can be discharged into those struck by their Charge attack. They also have the Zap power (see p.92).

JIDWAR

Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 2 TOU: 2
PER: 4 WIL: 6 CHA: 2

Characteristics

Initiative: 8 **Physical Defense:** 12
Actions: 1 **Spell Defense:** 5
Attack (3): 11 **Social Defense:** 3
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 0
One Target (10): 12 **Mystic Armor:** 2
Two Targets (7): 9; Three Targets (4): 6
Unconsciousness: 20 **Recovery Tests:** 1
Wound Threshold: NA **Knockdown:** NA

Movement: 5*

* This is the creature's Swimming Movement Rate and Muddy Ground Movement Rate

Powers

Swimming^S (2): 4

^S General skill

Legend Award

First Circle

Commentary

The jidwar is a small beetle, approximately the length of a finger, with a dark brown shell. Instead of legs, the jidwar is equipped with flippers like an aquatic turtle, giving it great mobility in water and a passable rate of progress across mud or marshy ground. Its mandibles are large, extending nearly a third of its body length, and razor sharp. Making its home in the swamps and marshes of southern Barsaive, the jidwar feeds on anything that happens its way. If there were only one in a given pool, perhaps its voracious eating habits would not be such a problem, but jidwars are encountered in swarms of 30 to 100 insects. They attack by swarming, reacting instantly to any disturbance in the water. A horse putting a foot down wrong and getting its hoof mired in the bottom muck can have its leg stripped to bone before the rider can dismount and free the animal. Fortunately, while the jidwar is prolific, it has great difficulty traversing land and, despite its aquatic nature, remains an air breather. The combination of the two restricts jidwars to connecting bodies of water, and renders them vulnerable to oil poured carefully across their habitat. It is not necessary to set the oil aflame, but only to wait for a short while, as the oil prevents the insects from breathing. They drown quickly, and the area may then be crossed in relative safety. As well, if no food wanders into the jidwars' pool for a time, they will turn on each other, keeping their numbers down. The simple expedient of tossing a small bit of wood into suspicious waters will reveal the insects, as they mistake the wood for something edible, and will churn the water to foam around the twig for a few seconds before realizing that it is not food.

Rules

The game statistics above represent a swarm of 30 or so jidwars. The gamemaster should adjust these statistics for larger swarms.

Impaired Movement: The jidwar beetle swarm's Movement Rate is reduced to 0 on dry ground.

Oil Vulnerability: A jidwar beetle swarm doused by a flask of oil dies in two rounds.

Swarm Attack: The jidwar beetle swarm takes up a 1 hex radius, with a center origin hex and all surrounding hexes (for a total of 7 hexes covered). A jidwar beetle swarm that uses its Standard Action may make an attack against up to three targets in the swarm's area. The attack result is compared against the Physical Defenses of all targets. The Damage Step used is based on the number of targets in the swarm's area.

Swarm Vulnerability: A jidwar beetle swarm takes double damage after subtracting armor from area of effect attacks that cover their entire area. Unfortunately, they also usually affect any victims in the swarm area as well.

Unconsciousness: A jidwar swarm reduced to its Unconsciousness Rating disperses.

Adventure Hook

The group is hired to retrieve the cargo of an airship that went down in the swamps. The crash of the ship stirred up the local life forms, especially the jidwars. The abrupt arrival of so much food (in the form of the crew, all killed in the crash) has resulted in a population explosion, and swarms of jidwars have taken up residence in the waters surrounding the wreck. The merchant hiring the characters has put a deadline on the cargo retrieval, as his market will not wait forever. The airship is wooden, and thus flammable, so speeding up the common method of dealing with jidwars by setting oil on fire will not have desirable results. Waiting for the jidwars to turn on each other is also not an option, as that will take too long.

KYRGREN**Attributes**

DEX: 4 STR: 5 TOU: 6
PER: 4 WIL: 6 CHA: 4

Characteristics

Initiative: 5 Physical Defense: 6
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 6
Attack (5): 9 Social Defense: 8
Damage: Physical Armor: 0
Bite (3): 8 Mystic Armor: 2
Death: 36 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 28 Knockdown: 5
Wound Threshold: 10 Movement: 2*/7**

* Ground and Swimming Movement Rate

** Flying Movement Rate

Legend Award

First Circle

Commentary

The kygren is one of the largest of the fish-eating birds that inhabit the banks of the Serpent River. Its brilliant white plumage is set off by black feathers at the tips of its wings and black edging on its tail. Unfortunately, as far as appearance goes, its plumage is its best asset. The kygren's head is narrow, coming nearly to a point at the apex, and its beak is enormously long. The lower beak is but a frame for a pouch of skin that can distend to hold many small fish or one very large one.

As a flier, the bird is at best passable. It frequently misjudges distances from its wingtips to the water or other obstructions, such as boats or other kygren, and the resulting collisions

can be quite spectacular. On occasion, a kygren will become so intent on tracking the fish it sees just under the surface that it will fail to notice what is in its path until far too late. Kygren have been known to break windows and ports, punch holes in sails, entangle themselves severely in rigging, and knock sailors overboard.

On land or in the water, the birds are no more dexterous than in the air. Bad landings with much tumbling and shedding of feathers are the rule rather than the exception. Taking off requires a short run. On land, this is simple enough, needing only a stretch of ground a few paces long with no obstructions—trees, shrubs, rocks, other kygren. On water, this results in a comical display as a kygren tries to pick up enough speed to rise out of the water, and then maintain its balance running across the top of the water until it reaches sufficient speed to become airborne. On occasion, the kygren will strike a wavelet or dip a wingtip into the water, lose its balance and tumble beak over tail-feathers.

Such an inept bird would normally not survive well, but given the vast amount of fish in the Serpent, finding food is not difficult. The kygren's size leaves it few natural enemies, its primary predators being the ughant and a few species of lizard that find its eggs a tasty meal. Kygren mate only for the season, but only with birds of their own generation, never with those of previous or later years. How they tell the age of prospective mates is unknown. Both birds will attack viciously to defend the nest.

Rules

In a fight, the kygren will stab with its beak if on land or water, rising up on its legs with much flapping of wings to balance itself before the strike. If airborne, the kygren prefers a Swooping attack (see p.149 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) with a strike from its beak.

**KYRELL****Attributes**

DEX: 3 STR: 3 TOU: 4
PER: 4 WIL: 4 CHA: 4

Characteristics

Initiative: 3 Physical Defense: 6
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 6
Attack (10): 13 Social Defense: 9
Damage: Physical Armor: 0
Bite (3): 6 (poison) Mystic Armor: 0
Death: 28 Recovery Tests: 2
Unconsciousness: 19 Knockdown: Immune
Wound Threshold: 7 Movement: 4

Powers

Camouflage (2): 6, Climbing S (2): 5, Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 6, Heat Sight, Poison [SD 13; Death], Silent Walk^s (2): 5

^s General skill

Legend Award

Fourth Circle

Commentary

The kyrell is one of the deadliest serpents in the Servos jungle. Its poison can kill a troll in seconds, and its appearance is deceptively innocuous. Attaining a maximum size of two feet in length and a girth no greater than a human's last finger, its smallness leads Namegivers to underestimate its lethality. The distinctive pattern of red and yellow bands on a black background make the kyrell stand out in grasses or under rocks, but among the flowering plants of the Servos it is easy to miss. Like all snakes, the kyrell is fond of dark, damp places. It reproduces by laying eggs, and the female broods on the nest until hatching, striking instantly at anything coming within reach. Baby kyrells are hatched with full venom sacs, and can slay a human newborn from the egg. Travelers in the region of the Servos should take note of the native habits of turning over rocks and breaking up brush-piles from a distance, usually with a long stick, and of shaking out clothing and boots in the morning before putting them on. Picking up these habits could save a life.

Rules

The kyrell can only use its Camouflage power near flowering plants of a similar color.

PENCARRIG

Attributes

DEX: 6 STR: 5 TOU: 5
PER: 6 WIL: 6 CHA: 4

Characteristics

Initiative: 8	Physical Defense: 8
Actions: 1	Spell Defense: 9
Attack (2): 8	Social Defense: 5
Damage:	Physical Armor: 0
Bite (4): 9	Mystic Armor: 4
Death: 56	Recovery Tests: 2
Unconsciousness: 44	Knockdown: 5
Wound Threshold: 8	Movement: 2/9*

* Flying Movement Rate

Powers

Durability (4), Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 8, Entrancement (10): 14

Loot

Tail feathers worth D6 × 10 silver pieces (worth Legend Points).

Legend Award

Fourth Circle

Commentary

Before the Scourge, the marshes on the northwest fringe of the Mist Swamps were inhabited by a variety of water birds, including the pencarrig. Its long legs and widely splayed feet gave it excellent mobility over the uncertain ground, while its binocular eyesight and long, sharply pointed bill made it an effective predator. Its primary diet consisted of frogs, fish, and the occasional lizard. It had the notable habit of spearing its victims with its bill, then tossing its prey into the air and catching the falling meal in its open beak.

Now, after the Scourge, the bird and the marsh are still present, but neither is the same. The Mist Swamps are inhabited by fell creatures warped by the passing of the Scourge, the very ground rendered unhealthy. The pencarrig likewise has been tainted by the Horrors, quite possibly deliberately. While the bird's anatomy remains more or less the same, its plumage, formerly a brilliant white tinged with blue at the edges of wings and tail, is now a dusky gray, the highlights turned the reddish-brown of dried blood.

Its feeding habits, also, have changed. While the pencarrig still hunts amphibians and fish, and still maintains the odd habit of tossing its meals into the air, it hunts larger game now. When Namegivers are passing nearby, the bird hides itself in the dense marsh grass and makes a sound like an anguished moan. This sound plucks at the heartstrings of anyone with even a thought for their fellow Namegivers, urging them to find the injured person and assist them. The bird uses the moaning to lure people into marshy ground, where they become trapped. The pencarrig then feeds on the body after the Namegivers die. Occasionally, the bird will attack trapped animals and smaller Namegivers, striking for the eyes and throat, doing horrific damage with a beak capable of stabbing through a frog in one stroke.

Only those of strong will, or carrying magical protections, can resist the moaning cry of the pencarrig. There are tales of the birds cooperating, working together to lure in groups of people to a watery grave. Fortunately, the bird does not migrate, and so is not found outside the southern swamps.

Rules

The pencarrig has special Entrancement rules (see p.151 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*), as follows.

Entrancement: Namegivers who fail a Willpower Test against the pencarrig's Entrancement Test result, must follow the sound it makes. The bird will lead anyone following it into the swamps, hoping to get them mired. A character following the bird may make a Willpower Test against the Entrancement result each round to break the enchantment. He may also make a Perception (6) Test each round to avoid getting mired. If this test fails, the character steps in the wrong place and becomes mired. Characters mired in swamp are Harried (see p.227 of the *Player's Guide*), and may not use any talent or maneuver that requires leg movement, such as Air Dance or the Giving Ground combat option (see p.223 of the *Player's Guide*). The pencarrig may attack at that point, striking first to blind, then to kill. Escaping the mire requires a successful Dexterity or Strength (13) Test, adjusted by the Initiative Penalty of any armor that the character is wearing.

Adventure Hook

Evidence is brought to light that a Major pattern item for a Horror was lost in the Mist Swamps shortly after the Scourge. The Horror is still at large. The route to the last known location of the item leads past a pencarrig nesting ground. Getting past the birds will be difficult, especially if the group has not heard of the birds. The moaning cries could easily be mistaken for cries for help from a previous expedition that the adventurers were told of—an expedition that never returned.



RIVERSTALKER

Attributes		
DEX: 8	STR: 8	TOU: 5
PER: 6	WIL: 4	CHA: 3
Characteristics		
Initiative: 8 (10)	Physical Defense: 10	
Actions: 2 (see Rules)	Spell Defense: 9	
Attack (2): 10	Social Defense: 9	
Damage:	Physical Armor: 2	
Bite (3): 11	Mystic Armor: 2	
2 × Claws (1): 9		
Death: 40	Recovery Tests: 2	
Unconsciousness: 31	Knockdown: 9	
Wound Threshold: 9	Movement: 8*	

* Swimming Movement Rate

Powers
Durability (1), Surprise Attack (2), Swimming ^S (2): 10

^S General skill

Loot
Two sets of gills, worth 25-100 silver pieces per set (see text; worth Legend Points).

Legend Award
Second Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Commentary
A riverstalker is a cat-like creature, looking similar in shape to a panther, jaguar, or other large hunting cat, but with a mostly hairless body, rudimentary gills on the sides of the neck, and noticeably webbed feet. Riverstalkers are covered in a grayish-black skin, which lightens significantly in color when submerged. Although newborn cubs are born with fur over their entire bodies, resembling any other large kitten, tufted ears and tail, and sometimes shaggy fur around the forelegs are the only vestiges of fur remaining on an adult riverstalker's body.
Typically collecting trinkets to decorate its underwater nest, a riverstalker usually attacks only for food, defense, or if it spots something particularly shiny or colorful. Riverstalkers typically hunt in packs—called “prowls”—of two to six animals, and prefer to attack by surprise, stalking their prey beneath the river's surface before leaping out to make the kill. Dawn and dusk are the times that riverstalkers favor for hunting, with daylight hours used primarily for sleep.
A riverstalker has two sets of gills that are prized as elements in magic and research related to underwater breathing. Removing the gills requires a successful Dexterity (10) or an appropriate Artisan Skill (6) Test. Depending on their condition, the gills can be sold for 25-100 silver pieces per set (counts as treasure worth Legend Points).

Rules
When attacking from underwater, a riverstalker gains a bonus of +2 to Initiative Tests. This ability can only be used when attacking from surprise. In any combat round, a riverstalker may attack using both of its front paws, raking its claws across its target (see p.148 of the <i>Gamemaster's Guide</i>), or make a single bite attack (see p.147 of the <i>Gamemaster's Guide</i>). After a successful bite attack, often a riverstalker will keep hold of its target and attempt to drag the victim underwater.

SPOOGRA

Attributes		
DEX: 8	STR: 3	TOU: 3
PER: 4	WIL: 3	CHA: 4
Characteristics		
Initiative: 12	Physical Defense: 12	
Actions: 1	Spell Defense: 5	
Attack (2): 10	Social Defense: 10	
Damage:	Physical Armor: 0	
Bite (1): 4	Mystic Armor: 0	
Death: 23	Recovery Tests: 1	
Unconsciousness: 14	Knockdown: 4	
Wound Threshold: 5	Movement: 7	

Powers
Climbing ^S (2): 10, Enhanced Senses [Smell] (2): 6

^S General skill

Legend Award
First Circle

Commentary
The Servos Jungle is home to a wider variety of small lizards than are found anywhere else in the province. The heat and humidity, together with the vast population of insects, have encouraged a burgeoning of the form and diversification into the hundreds.

While this plentitude can keep a naturalist contentedly busy for months, perhaps even years, to the common Namegiver it is no more than an annoyance. Possibly the most annoying in everyday life of all these lizards is the spoogra. Tiny and bright orange, never growing to over three inches in length, spoostras infest every area where Namegivers live in or near the Servos. They have a love of salt, which leads them into many places where they are not wanted. Food must be locked up in stout wooden or metal boxes, especially travel rations, which are normally dried and salted. The pests will chew on anything salt-bearing, which puts armor straps, shoes, and dirty laundry in peril, as well as saddles and tack, documents written in saline ink, and even containers that might have something salty in them. The little beasts will chew their way into a bag on the off chance that it contains something tasty. Dealing directly with spoostras is not terribly difficult: just toss them out of the way. Their bite is no more than an annoyance to even the frailest of Namegivers. Killing them is another problem entirely. Spoostras are quick enough that even the deftest Swordmaster will have difficulty striking one. They ignore most poisons, but are partial to cyanide salts for obvious reasons. So far, no one has devised a perfect solution to the problem the spoostras pose. The best offense seems to be a good defense, in this case: lock up everything that the lizards might find attractive, in containers that they cannot easily gnaw their way into, and hope that they do not slip past the barricades. Certainly, Jaspre knew what he was doing when he created the spooogra. If only he would tell the world his reasons...

STORM SPIRIT

Attributes		
DEX: 14	STR: 12	TOU: 16
PER: 14	WIL: 13	CHA: 17
Characteristics		
Initiative: 16	Physical Defense: 23	
Actions: 4	Spell Defense: 18	
Attack: NA	Social Defense: 22	
Damage:	Physical Armor: 12	
NA	Mystic Armor: 8	
Death: 148	Recovery Tests: 8	
Unconsciousness: NA	Knockdown: Immune	
Wound Threshold: 22	Movement: 6/7*	
Karma Points: 30/30	Karma Step: 10	

* Flying Movement Rate when manifested

Powers
Astral Sight (6): 20, Befuddle (7): 20, Durability (9), Forge Horror Construct [Stormwraith] (6): 20, Hail (3): 16, Lightning (5): 18, Manifest (9), Panic (3): 20, Spellcasting (3): 17

Legend Award
Ninth Circle (Group)

Commentary
While the climate throughout most of Barsaive is generally calm with little variance, in the mountains severe storms can and do frequently occur. High winds and driving rain are accompanied by the stabbing forks of lightning and the crash of thunder, often loud enough to set off rockslides on steep slopes. Travel during such climatic outbursts is difficult enough already, but the presence of the entity called the storm spirit can make being out in such weather doubly dangerous.
A terrifically dangerous entity, the storm spirit is actually a type of Horror, rather than an elemental spirit. The storm spirit manifests within mountain storms of already forbidding savagery. Once present, the spirit whips the storm into a frenzy, raising winds that can sweep horses, and even thundra beasts, off their feet. Hail falls like sling bullets, denting metal armor and injuring unprotected flesh. Lightning strikes with uncanny aim.
Therein lies the true danger of the storm spirit. In the midst of all of the storm's fury, a reaction of fear and confusion is to be expected. The storm spirit enhances these feelings, raising fear to stark, unreasoning terror. In the grip of panic, Namegivers and their mounts make serious, often deadly mistakes, plunging to their deaths in crevasses and over cliffs. Powerful magics are needed to protect oneself from a Horror of this type.

Rules
The storm spirit can attack up to three different targets with its 3 actions, with no penalty to its Spellcasting Step.
Befuddle: The storm spirit can only use this power after a target has been struck by its Hail or Lightning powers.
Forge Horror Construct: A storm spirit can create stormwraiths (<i>Gamemaster's Guide</i> p.285) by corrupting elemental air within a storm. A maximum of three stormwraiths can be created per storm.
Hail: The storm spirit can use its Hail power two times per round.
Lightning: The storm spirit can use its Lightning power once per round.
Panic: The storm spirit can only use this power after a target has been struck by its Hail or Lightning powers.

TABRI

Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 7 TOU: 7
PER: 5 WIL: 4 CHA: 3

Characteristics

Initiative: 10 **Physical Defense:** 10
Actions: 2 **Spell Defense:** 7
Attack (2): 10 **Social Defense:** 4
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 2
Bite (1): 8; Claws (4): 11 **Mystic Armor:** 0
Death: 40 **Recovery Tests:** 3
Unconsciousness: 32 **Knockdown:** 7
Wound Threshold: 11 **Movement:** 6

Powers

Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 7

Legend Award

First Circle (1 per 2 PC)

Commentary

The tabri are large flightless birds that travel in flocks or herds, much like the grazing mammals that are also found on the plains. Long of leg and neck, their skin is a medium gray, while their plumage is a medium brown. Males have fan-shaped tails whose feathers are tipped with white, which they display during courtship behavior. The tabri move in small groups led by a dominant male, easily spotted as the largest bird in the flock.

The tabri are polygamous. The males fight viciously during mating season to gain control of coveys of females. New coveys are formed each season, the coveys breaking up after the females are fertilized. Within a herd, several coveys can coexist, although not peacefully during the rut, as the males will contest with each other to gain control of their rivals' females. Equipped with talons on the middle toe of each foot the size and sharpness of a dagger, the males' courtship fights frequently draw blood and sometimes kill. These same talons can do serious damage to Namegivers and their mounts if battle is joined.

Fortunately, like most herding animals on the plains, flight is the primary mode of defense. Tabri only attack if flight is not an option, as when defending a nest or their young. While their eggs are edible, and reportedly something of a delicacy, obtaining them is a very risky proposition. If an aggressive response is seen, serious consideration should be given to backing away, unless the Namegiver in question is willing to tangle with an animal that kicks with the strength of a horse, is armed with the equivalent of a pair of daggers, and moves quickly and with surprising agility. The nomadic peoples of the plains hunt tabri with spears and bows, only when found in large groups and never during the mating season.

Adventure Hook

A merchant in Throal has found a market for tabri eggs. She provides the group with several cold chests—large boxes with elemental air woven into them, that keep their interiors cold but above freezing—and wants them returned full of eggs. Raiding the nests wholesale will put the group at odds with the Dinganni and other plains nomads, who count on there being a large hatching each year. Taking the eggs will greatly reduce the size of next year's flocks, something the characters perhaps might not have considered, or thought irrelevant when they accepted the contract.

TIGATHNA

Attributes

DEX: 7 STR: 4 TOU: 5
PER: 3 WIL: 6 CHA: 3

Characteristics

Initiative: 7 (9) **Physical Defense:** 11
Actions: 1 **Spell Defense:** 5
Attack (6): 13 **Social Defense:** 6
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 2
Bite (5): 9 **Mystic Armor:** 2
Death: 34 **Recovery Tests:** 2
Unconsciousness: 26 **Knockdown:** 6
Wound Threshold: 9 **Movement:** 7/3*

* Burrowing Movement Rate.

Powers

Camouflage (2): 8, Climbing^s (4): 11, Surprise Attack (2)

^s General skill

Legend Award

Second Circle

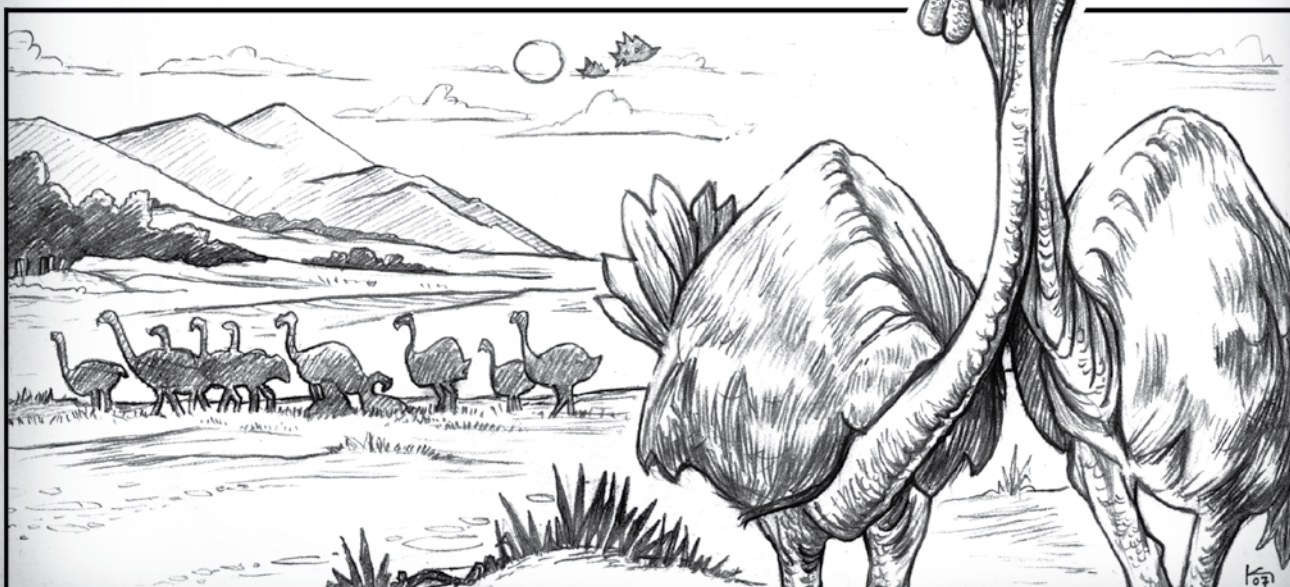
Commentary

The natives of the Servos refer to this beast as lektas'tigathna, literally the "surprising ankle biter". The tigathna reaches a maximum size of three elven hand spans in diameter, and appears to be a harmless ball of fur. However, hidden underneath the fur are six quite powerful, if short, legs, and a mouth nearly half the length of the creature, filled with teeth sharper than a well-forged blade.

Wont to dig a burrow alongside a game run, the tigathna will lie at the top of its burrow and hold itself motionless, its green-tinged brown fur giving it the appearance of a moss-covered stone. When a game animal passes by, the tigathna pops up out of its burrow and clamps its teeth on its victim's leg, usually severing the tendons on the first bite. Thus crippled, the victim has little defense against further slashing attacks, which usually target the throat. Frequently, tigathna will work together in packs of three or four to bring down a large animal, and divide the spoils among themselves. Even predatory animals are vulnerable to the pop-up attack; tigathna rarely check to see what is passing, only noting whether or not it is within striking distance.

Tigathna are mammals, and have litters of two to five kits once per year. They mate only for the season. Males are highly conscious of status within a pack, and frequently quarrel to establish their places. Females do not normally take part in pack status, but there are rare exceptions. Packs tend to be loose in structure, coming together as needed and separating again after a successful hunt. Thus, before a group hunt can be undertaken, the status order of the newly brought-together pack must be established. Listening for the snarling of a tigathna pack can give warning of a group hunt.

At least partly because of tigathna, the natives distrust the game trails, preferring to travel through





the upper branches of the trees. When walking on the ground, they poke at anything suspicious with the butts of their spears, constantly looking for unpleasant surprises.

Rules

Once a tigathna has latched onto an opponent, it must make a Willpower Test against its Death Rating minus Current Damage to let go before the opponent falls. If the victim falls down, or someone else attacks the tigathna, it may change its attack strategy as it sees fit. Thus, if a tigathna bites your ankle, if you fall down intentionally, it will probably let go. However, its next move is probably to go for your throat...

TONDUY

Attributes

DEX: 10 STR: 6 TOU: 6
PER: 7 WIL: 8 CHA: 6

Characteristics

Initiative: 12 Physical Defense: 13
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 9
Attack (2): 12 Social Defense: 8
Damage: Physical Armor: 0
Bite (3): 9 Mystic Armor: 4
Death: 36 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 28 Knockdown: 8
Wound Threshold: 10 Movement: 8

Powers

Climbing^S (2): 12, Great Leap^S (2): 12, Enhanced Senses [Sight, Smell] (2): 9

^S General skill

Legend Award

Second Circle

Commentary

A large animal, approximately the size of a small hunting cat, the tonduy is built lean and long. Its muzzle is roundly pointed like a rodent's, its eyes set forward for binocular vision. Some experimentation has proven that the animal can see colors. A long, bushy tail gives the tonduy excellent balance for scampering along narrow tree limbs or leaping from tree to tree.

The tonduy's forelimbs are highly developed, being smaller than the hind limbs and having grasping paws nearly as dexterous as a Namegiver's hands. Indeed, the animal has proven itself capable of amazing feats of ingenuity. In an environment rich in food sources, the tonduy has become choosy, picking its diet with the manner of a rich merchant browsing the selections his cook has prepared. Tonduyes have been known to use sticks to dig termites out of their mounds, stones to crack nuts, and bits of animal bone to dig for roots on their occasional trips to the jungle floor. By no means are the tonduyes Namegivers in their own right, but they are quite clever and capable of using primitive tools. Their diet is highly varied. Tonduyes will raid birds' nests for eggs and stalk lizards for meat. Nuts, berries, and roots are all included in the tonduyes' diet. Tonduyes' smoke-gray fur blends in well with the shadows under the leaves, making them difficult to spot. Like many arboreal rodents, however, they let trespassers know their displeasure with showers of twigs, stones, nutshells, and whatever else comes to paw at the moment. Tonduyes tend to live in large groups, being generally unhappy on

their own. They can be encountered in the singular, but never far from the main group. Like blood monkeys, they will rush to each other's aid when a distress cry is heard. Windlings should avoid these creatures at any cost. Tonduyes are fascinated with butterflies and other brightly colored fluttering things. They don't eat them, but will play with them, sometimes destructively. A windling coming too close to a tonduy could find himself an involuntary toy, possibly resulting in serious injury. Tonduyes can learn simple behaviors by observation and imitation: drinking from a cup, opening doors, untying knots, etc. Namegivers other than windlings may find their gear in danger when traveling through the Servos. The usual expedient of securing things in a canvas bag tied to a tree with stout rope and complex knots may not protect them from the tonduy, especially if it sees you tie the knots.

Rules

Tonduyes can make a Perception Test against the Social Defense of any Namegiver to copy simple behaviors, such as drinking from a cup or opening a simple catch. Once successful in imitation, no roll is required to repeat the behavior.

TURFCUTTER BEETLE

Attributes

DEX: 9 STR: 10 TOU: 10
PER: 5 WIL: 5 CHA: 3

Characteristics

Initiative: 9 (17) Physical Defense: 12
Actions: 1 Spell Defense: 7
Attack (9): 18 Social Defense: 4
Damage: Physical Armor: 8
Bite (6): 16 Mystic Armor: 2
Death: 58 Recovery Tests: 5
Unconsciousness: 50 Knockdown: 12
Wound Threshold: 15 Movement: 7

Powers

Camouflage (8): 13, Climbing^S (8): 17, Durability (1), Surprise Attack (8)

^S General skill

Legend Award

Fourth Circle

Commentary

Not all threats are immediately visible. Even out on the southwestern plains, where there is very little cover but long grass and the occasional gentle rise of the land, danger can lie hidden. Such is the turfcutter beetle, a hazard that rarely fails to take its victims by surprise. The adult turfcutter grows to a length equal to that of a large dog. Such a large creature requires a good deal of sustenance. The turfcutter has a means of hunting that is not normally seen in anything this large, likely evidence of interference by a Horror. The beetle uses its long, curved mandibles to slice a disc out of the sod, cutting through the thick mat of prairie grass roots. It then hollows out a cavity in the soil large enough for it to crouch in, and pulls the sod over itself, creating a trapdoor. When anything large enough to make a mouthful wanders by, the beetle pops up from its hiding place and seizes its prey, usually slicing it into multiple pieces with the first stroke of its scythe-like mandibles. The beetle does not hesitate in attacking very large animals. I have seen a

turfcutter lunge from its hollow and neatly remove the leg from a tabri, then slice off the bird's long neck as it fell. Strong bone will stop the beetles' jaws, but a horse attacked will normally be hamstrung, so the fact that the leg is not severed is moot. Fortunately, the beetles only spawn once a year, in the middle of the rainy season, and only after a series of courtship battles in which the males compete savagely for the few available females. Turfcutter grubs, the size of rats and dark brown with lighter brown banding, make a feast for the region's birds, further reducing the number of young beetles. The odds of encountering a turfcutter beetle are thus very slender, yet still great enough that travel across the plains can become a nervous business.

Adventure Hook

A Horror has been encouraging the breeding of turfcutter beetles, causing severe trouble for the plains nomads. The adventurers are contacted and offered a generous reward, including tribal friendship, if they can eliminate the Horror and reduce the beetles to their normal population. Getting to the Horror will be half the fun, as the beetle population density increases near the Horror's lair. The entrance cavern has been transformed into a beetle hatchery, and is swarming with grubs and adult beetles.

UFGHANT

Attributes

DEX: 8 STR: 10 TOU: 10
PER: 5 WIL: 6 CHA: 4

Characteristics

Initiative: 8 (12) **Physical Defense:** 10
Actions: 2 (see Rules) **Spell Defense:** 6
Attack (S): 13 **Social Defense:** 14
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 5 (see Rules)
Bite (1): 11 (poison) **Mystic Armor:** 2
Death: 63 **Recovery Tests:** 4
Unconsciousness: 54 **Knockdown:** 11
Wound Threshold: 14 **Movement:** 8*

* Swimming Movement Rate

Powers

Durability (2), Poison [SD 10; Paralyzing], Spellcasting (5):
10, Surprise Attack (4), Swimming^S (5): 15, Venom (5): 11
^S General skill

Loot

Venom or poison sacs (see Commentary; worth Legend Points).

Legend Award

Fifth Circle

BULL UFGHANT

Attributes

DEX: 10 STR: 12 TOU: 12
PER: 6 WIL: 7 CHA: 5

Characteristics

Initiative: 10 (14) **Physical Defense:** 13
Actions: 2 (see Rules) **Spell Defense:** 7
Attack (S): 15 **Social Defense:** 15
Damage: **Physical Armor:** 7 (see Rules)
Bite (2): 14 (poison) **Mystic Armor:** 3
Death: 77 **Recovery Tests:** 5
Unconsciousness: 66 **Knockdown:** 13
Wound Threshold: 17 **Movement:** 8*

* Swimming Movement Rate

Powers

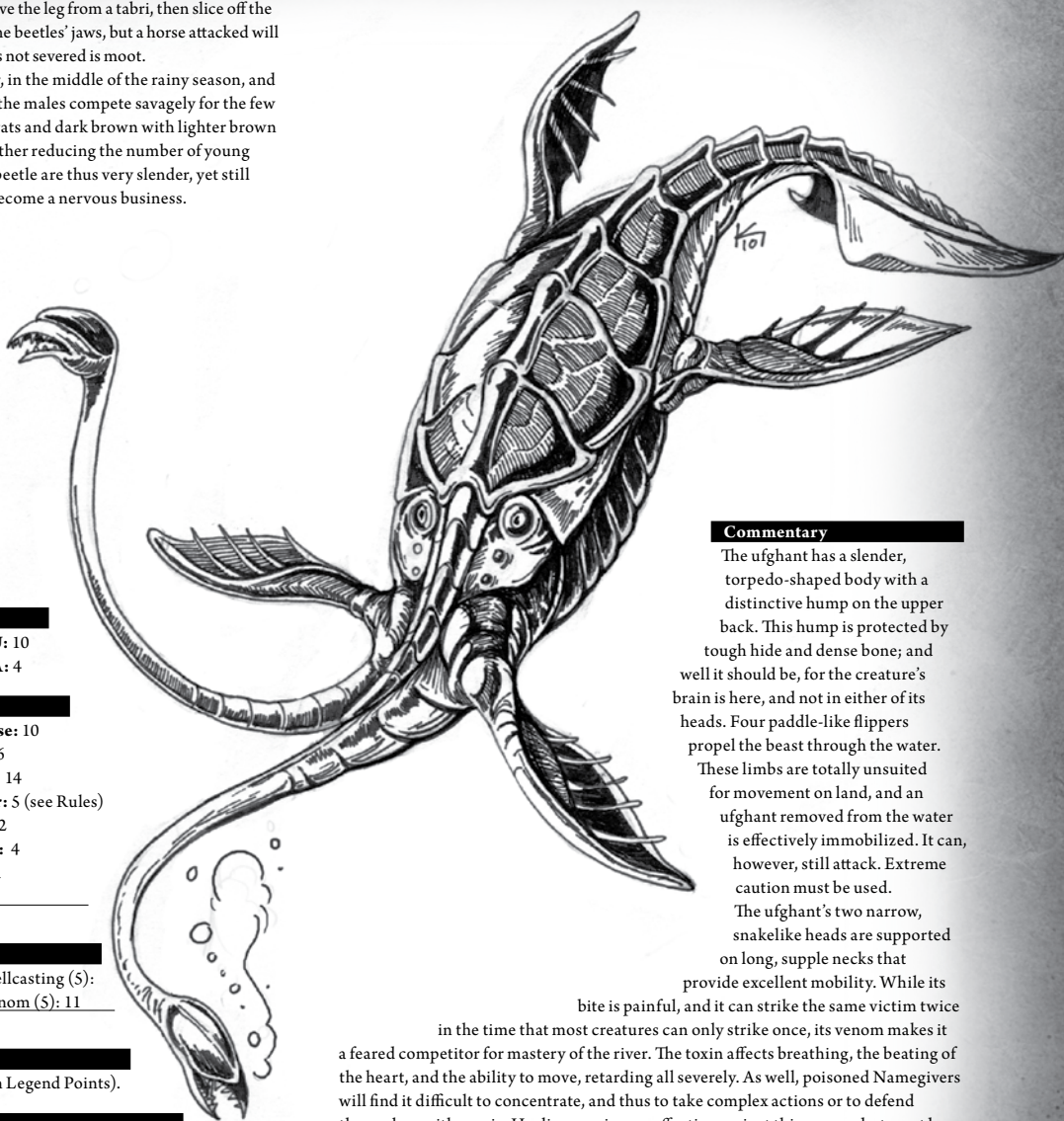
Durability (3), Poison [SD 10; Paralyzing], Spellcasting (6): 12, Surprise Attack (4),
Swimming^S (6): 18, Venom (5): 12
^S General skill

Loot

Venom or poison sacs (see Commentary; worth Legend Points).

Legend Award

Sixth Circle (Leader)



Commentary

The ufghant has a slender, torpedo-shaped body with a distinctive hump on the upper back. This hump is protected by tough hide and dense bone; and well it should be, for the creature's brain is here, and not in either of its heads. Four paddle-like flippers propel the beast through the water. These limbs are totally unsuited for movement on land, and an ufghant removed from the water is effectively immobilized. It can, however, still attack. Extreme caution must be used. The ufghant's two narrow, snakelike heads are supported on long, supple necks that provide excellent mobility. While its bite is painful, and it can strike the same victim twice

in the time that most creatures can only strike once, its venom makes it a feared competitor for mastery of the river. The toxin affects breathing, the beating of the heart, and the ability to move, retarding all severely. As well, poisoned Namegivers will find it difficult to concentrate, and thus to take complex actions or to defend themselves with magic. Healing magics are effective against this venom, but must be applied swiftly.

The ufghant's venom may be delivered by bite or by projection; the creature can spit a stream of venom a good 6 yards with reasonable accuracy. The venom is a contact poison, and remains viable for up to an hour. If the ufghant can see its target with both heads, it can deliver a devastating crossfire of uncanny accuracy. It is this crossfire that the ufghant uses against its preferred prey: the large, fish-eating birds that nest on the banks of the Serpent. The ufghant will lie just below the surface, with only the tops of its heads exposed, and drift, waiting for a bird to pass within range. Then, quick as a snake, its heads rise up, and the bird is caught at the crossing point of the ufghant's venom streams and drops into the water, to become dinner.

Ufghanti have been known to attack riverboats in packs of up to 20, driven by an older bull. T'skrang boats are favored because of the crew's habit of swinging out over the water, thus making good targets of themselves. The attack is led by the younger ufghanti, partially out of fear of the bull. If the bull can be killed—no easy proposition, as he will stay at the rear of the attack and lie low in the water—the attack will disorganize and usually break off in the face of stiff opposition.

Ufghant venom is a primary ingredient in poultices used against poisons, and brings a high price: up to 300 silver pieces for a small jar of preserved venom, and up to 1,000 silver pieces for the preserved intact poison sacs of an ufghant (counts as treasure worth Legend Points). Unfortunately, ufghant poison sacs are very delicate and therefore extremely difficult to remove, and their venom loses potency within an hour of exposure to air.

Rules

The brain hump is treated as having +4 Physical Armor. Called Shots (see p.222 of the *Player's Guide*) to the hump are thus exceedingly difficult to achieve. Because it has two heads, ufghants can bite twice each round.

Venom: An ufghant or bull ufghant can only use its venom power once per round by sacrificing both its bite attacks. The venom's range is 10 yards/5 hexes.

VOFOQ

Attributes

DEX: 6	STR: 2	TOU: 3
PER: 6	WIL: 6	CHA: 5

Characteristics

Initiative: 9	Physical Defense: 10
Actions: 1	Spell Defense: 8
Attack (3): 9	Social Defense: 7
Damage:	Physical Armor: 0
Bite (4): 6	Mystic Armor: 1
Death: 24	Recovery Tests: 1
Unconsciousness: 15	Knockdown: 3
Wound Threshold: 5	Movement: 7

Powers

Climbing ^S (3): 9, Musk Spray (3): 9, Spellcasting (8): 14

^S General skill

Legend Award

Second Circle

Commentary

Not all of the unusual animals of Barsaive are found out in the wilds. Some have adapted quite well to life among the Namegiver population, moving into the towns and cities and finding their niche in the urban setting. People familiar with pests like the rat and the spoogra may be happy to know that when such animals are present, sooner or later a predator will appear. In the southwestern regions of the province, Namegivers have come to know the vofoq as a sometimes uncomfortable but nonetheless useful neighbor.

A small mammal with a lean build, the vofoq has a pointed muzzle with long whiskers. Its eyes are set wide and well forward in its skull, under large, rounded ears. Its forepaws are small and dexterous; the rear paws being larger and longer at the end of strongly muscled legs. Its plushy furred tail is usually carried erect, but is held straight out when the animal is stalking its prey. The vofoq's fur is light gray with dark gray banding across the shoulders and haunches, dark rings down the tail, a black mask across its face, and dark fur surrounding its eyes and extending up its ears.

During the day, the vofoq sleeps, its preferred home being a burrow under the foundation of a building, or a nest in straw or other loose vegetation. At twilight, it comes out to hunt, its principle diet being small rodents and the occasional lizard or large insect. Dwellers in the cities of the southwest have grown accustomed to seeing the vofoq prowling about in the shadows, stalking and pouncing, and welcome its presence for its abilities at pest control, despite its one odious habit.

The vofoq secretes a foul, sticky liquid from glands under its tail, which it can squirt with terrific accuracy when irritated or marking its territory. The odor of vofoq musk is unmistakable and detectable from a good distance, making it easy to know when one is in the claimed hunting territory of one of the animals. The musk does not wash off with even the strongest of lye soaps, the oily liquid sinking quickly into skin, leather or cloth, and the smell taking days to dissipate. Even if it refrains from using its musk, a vofoq's bite can be quite painful. Given a choice between an infestation of rats and spoostras or the scent of vofoq musk in the background, most Namegivers opt for the lesser of the two evils and learn to live with the vofoq.

Rules

As noted above, the vofoq squirts a foul musk to deter opponents (see the **Musk Spray** power on p. 92).

Adventure Hook

The group is on its way to deliver a shipment of fabric for a merchant when a vofoq makes its nest in the cargo. Removing the animal before it shreds the fabric too badly, without resulting in the vofoq fouling the cargo or the adventurers, will be quite a challenge. For an additional complication, the vofoq in question is female, pregnant and about to have kits.

VULJECN

Attributes

DEX: 9	STR: 3	TOU: 3
PER: 3	WIL: 3	CHA: 2

Characteristics

Initiative: 9 (12)	Physical Defense: 14
Actions: 1	Spell Defense: 4
Attack (2): 11 (see Rules)	Social Defense: 3
Damage:	Physical Armor: 0
Bite (2): 5 (see Rules)	Mystic Armor: 0
Death: 47	Recovery Tests: 1
Unconsciousness: 34	Knockdown: 3
Wound Threshold: 5	Movement: 2/9*

* Flying Movement Rate

Powers

Durability (4), Enhanced Senses [Sight] (2): 5, Surprise Attack (3)

Legend Award

Third Circle

Commentary

The vuljecn is a small bird approximately the size of a troll's hand. Its body is compact and muscular, but streamlined, allowing it to reach terrific speeds in a dive. It inhabits the Servos jungle and the cooler regions of the Mist Swamps, and has been seen aboard and from riverboats plying the southern and western reaches of the Serpent. Prior to the Scourge, the vuljecn was probably a seed eater, using its bill to crack open pods and nuts. Now, however, it serves a much more dangerous purpose.

The vuljecn has developed a taste for meat, and specifically for the flesh of Namegivers. Surely this is the work of a Horror, as no animal naturally preys predominantly on Namegivers. Covered in light brown plumage with hints of darker brown at wingtips and tail tip, the bird blends in well with the foliage, holding itself motionless in the treetops as it searches for food with remarkably keen eyesight. When the bird spots a Namegiver, or any large warm-blooded beast, it drops from its perch, folds its wings tightly, and dives on its prey. Reaching amazing speed in the descent from treetop to ground, it aims itself like an arrow, using its long, sharply pointed beak to spear its victim. Generally aiming for an eye, the vuljecn can do horrific damage in its first attack, frequently striking through the eye and into the brain, causing death instantly.

Lacking a distinct call, and remaining still and silent while watching for prey, the vuljecn is difficult to detect before it makes its attack. Fortunately, it doesn't always make its strike, as large changes of course become impossible during its dive. If the intended victim moves sharply to one side right before the attack, the bird will normally miss. Also, if it fails to kill its prey with the first strike, it leaves itself highly vulnerable to a return stroke from paw or blade.

The Cathan tend to walk with a staggering pace, lurching frequently to one side or the other, in order to ward off attacks by vuljecn. They also post guards within traveling groups to keep watch above, and warn the group if any of these birds drop out of the trees.

Rules

Vuljecn have special rules for their diving attack.

Dive Attack: The velocity of the vuljecn's Dive Attack adds a +7 bonus to its Attack and Damage. The swooping attack combat option (*Player's Guide* p.234) cannot be used with a Dive Attack. This attack cannot be performed in consecutive rounds.

PLANT LIFE

The following plants grow in various regions up and down the length of the Serpent River. For game purposes, many of these plants work best treated as creatures, while some work best treated as traps. For an explanation of trap statistics, see the *Adventuring* chapter on p.110 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*.

Characters with the Wilderness Survival skill or Knowledge skills in areas such as Botany or Nature Lore can identify these plants by using an appropriate skill to make a successful test against a Difficulty Number of 8 or 9. Where appropriate, the specific Difficulty Number for identifying a plant appears in the plant's description.

BLOOD ALGAE

Thin layers of green to blue-green algae cover the surface of countless stagnant lagoons along the length of the Serpent. Generally, such algae is harmless. Certain lagoons in the upper reaches of the Serpent, however, contain layers of blood algae, a type of Horror construct. When floating on the surface of water, blood algae resembles harmless dark green algae. If brushed aside, however, blood algae leaves a thin, oily, rust-colored sheen that glistens briefly and then fades. Any Namegiver or creature that drinks from or bathes in a pool covered with blood algae becomes infected with blood algae spore. Additionally, any water drawn from such a pool contains blood algae spore that remains potent for one day after being removed from its source.

The first sign of infection from blood algae is an unquenchable thirst. An infected character will drink water by the gallon, yet still complain of thirst. Next, the infected character's skin takes on a ruddy cast that resembles mild sunburn. As the infection causes the character's blood to thin, any cuts or bruises the character has

suddenly become much more severe. Later, blood begins to leak steadily from the character's ears, nose, and mouth. The character loses his power to speak and reason, and begins to experience convulsions. In its final stages, the infection liquefies every bone and organ in the character's body. The character's skin breaks into countless small wounds that leak green-tinged blood. This bleeding may last up to 10 minutes, during which time the character's entire body deflates like a balloon with a hole in it.

Type: Debilitating
Spell Defense: 10
Onset Time: Instant
Step Number: 7
Duration: 1 day

If a character ingests or is exposed to blood algae, make a Step 7 Effect Test to determine how much damage is inflicted. No armor protects against this damage. Any damage caused by blood algae can be healed only by a questor of Garlen or with healing salve brewed from the freshly picked petals of the mahogany trinrose (see p.22 of the *Gamemaster's Companion*). All other forms of healing—magical or otherwise—are completely ineffective.

Questors of Raggok are said to harvest blood algae during the lunar eclipse and distill its essence into a poison. The resulting poison is a special kind of Damage Poison with a Spell Defense of 10 and a Step Number of 8. Any target wounded by a weapon coated with this poison suffers 2 Damage Points per round until he can staunch the bleeding with a healing aid or bandages.

RAZORGRASS

Razorgrass grows in clumps in the lowland marshes that line the banks of the Serpent. Like many of the tall marshland grasses, razorgrass is normally indistinguishable from other grass species to all but experienced basket makers and skilled botanists. In fact, many Namegivers pass through razorgrass colonies without ever realizing the danger, because the grass exposes its razor-edged inner leaf only when strong winds cross its surface. However, characters caught in razorgrass seldom survive the experience unscathed.

The scholar, Shev Allondargha, deduced that a razorgrass colony develops the species' characteristic red plume only after blood has fallen on its roots. River folk prize such plumes for the bright red dye that can be extracted from them. Red razorgrass plumes are worth 80 silver pieces per pound.

Detection: 11 **Disarm:** NA **Initiative:** 10

Trigger: Strong winds plus close contact

Effect: The leaves cut into the target, inflicting Step 20 damage per round of exposure. Physical Armor protects against this damage.

TANGLEWEED

Numerous varieties of tangleweed grow both above and below the surface of the Serpent's waters. The most common variety grows in 10-foot-thick clumps in the river's shallows. The vines of tangleweed plants entangle anything—including Namegivers—that comes into contact with them. The vines' grip may seem quite gentle to a char-

acter caught in a tangleweed, but any struggling simply causes the vines to tighten their grip until they literally tear their victim to pieces. And if a victim's struggles break a tangleweed vine, two vines take its place. As a result, escaping from a tangleweed's embrace is difficult even for a victim with the strength of a troll.

The safest method of escaping tangleweed is to remain perfectly still and wait for night to fall. At night, tangleweeds slowly release any victims they hold and retreat under the surface of the river.

Any character who becomes entangled by tangleweed is automatically grappled. Make a Step 7 Strength Test for the vines to determine the Entangling Difficulty (p.229, *Player's Guide*). Whenever additional vines grapple the victim, make a new Strength Test with a +1 bonus for each additional vine. To cut through tangleweed vines, a character must make a successful Strength or Attack Test against the plant's Physical Defense of 6. Each vine has an Armor Rating (Physical and Mystic) of 0 and a Death Rating of 10. When a tangleweed vine takes 10 points of damage, it is cut or torn in half and the Strength Step of the entire plant is reduced by -1. This respite is temporary; if the character does not free himself of all of the vines entangling him within 3 rounds,

two more vines will take the place of each vine that he cuts free. Regardless, a single character can never be grappled by more than 6 vines at a time.

Detection: 8 **Disarm:** NA **Initiative:** 10

Trigger: Encountered randomly on river

Effect: Grapples the victim with a Strength Step of 7. Each additional vine adds +1 to the Strength Step; each vine cut or removed reduces the plant's Strength Step by -1.

TENTACULAR KELP

Tentacular kelp grows from the bottom of the Serpent River, usually in the deeper parts of the river. Typically, tentacular kelp grows alongside harmless kelp plants in large groves near the center of the river. One side of tentacular kelp leaves is covered with adhesive suction cups. Whenever a creature brushes against a leaf, these suction cups grab the creature and a tiny spine in the center of each cup injects the victim with paralyzing venom. T'skrang villages that cultivate harmless kelp species are very careful to weed the tentacular variety out of their kelp groves, but the river is dotted with the t'slashina of villages abandoned during the Scourge. Those t'slashina often contain groves of exceptionally large and hungry tentacular kelp plants.

In game terms, tentacular kelp acts more like a trap than a creature. Tentacular kelp cannot be disarmed, and so no disarm difficulty is listed in the following game statistics. Characters may remove tentacular kelp leaves or cut leaves without making tests.

Detection: 8 **Disarm:** NA **Initiative:** 10

Trigger: Touch

Effect: Target is struck by kelp leaf, which injects the victim with a Paralysis poison.



Kelp Leaf Poison**Type:** Paralysis**Onset Time:** Instant**Duration:** Effect Test hours**Spell Defense:** 8**Step Number:** 10**THUNDER TREE**

Scattered throughout the jungle, but thankfully rare, is a variety of tree the natives call shi'raksen, the thunder tree. It is easily recognized by bark and foliage. The bark of the trunk is a dark gray in hue, smooth and ringed horizontally with ridges approximately the width of an elf's finger, spaced a bit less than two elven hand spans apart. The leaves are pinnate and serrate, growing in clusters of six and groupings of five clusters, and reaching a maximum length about half again that of an elf's middle finger. Blooming occurs year-round, with the flowers sprouting from the center of the leaf groupings. The blooms themselves have five outer petals and four inner, of deep rose and pale blue respectively, with a deep calyx of a golden hue. The stamens have golden stems and are tipped with bright blue. Once fertilized, the flower closes and begins to harden into a seed pod.

It is the fruit of this tree that makes it worth noting, as a travel hazard and a biological curiosity. The pod grows to about the size of an elf's fist, and has a shiny, very dense skin of a deep blue color. Inside, the seeds are embedded in pulp of surpassing sweetness. Some natives use the unripe seeds to brew wine of amazing potency. When the seeds ripen, however, the pod's connection to the branch shrivels. The pulp inside quickly decays and ferments, producing a large quantity of gas. The skin is so dense that most of the gas is trapped inside the pod. Eventually, the process of decay begins to attack the skin itself from the inside, making it thinner and thinner. Some of the pods will burst simply from the pressure contained inside, as it passes the ability of the skins to contain it. This normally happens with the pods near the top of the tree; warmed by sunlight, the pressure builds rapidly during the day, and in the late afternoon, the pods begin to explode with reports like small fire cannons.

The pods in the lower branches, however, do not receive enough sunlight to warm them to bursting. The usual circumstance is that they fall from the tree, as the stems wither, and explode upon striking the ground, scattering their seeds. These falling pods pose some hazard to Namegivers, for the escaping gas flings the seeds with such force that they can do injury to those nearby. If close enough, an exploding pod can drive its seeds through leather armor, possibly even through metal if a seed were to find a seam or other weak point. Natives have been known to use these pods as weapons, harvesting them before they are fully ripe and carrying them with extreme caution. Hurling or dropping a pod near an enemy is sufficient to cause great injury, considering the natives have little concept of armor.

Travelers in the Servos are warned to avoid passing near to these trees, especially if they are riding large animals, as the vibrations in the ground from their passing can shake down a pod or two, certainly sufficient to spook the riding beasts and possibly cause grievous injury. As well, one should be cautious about engaging the natives in combat; if battle becomes unavoidable, watch for a native attempting to throw an object at the party. The hurled object could be merely a stone or throwing axe, or it could be one of the thunder tree's explosive pods.

Rules

An exploding pod inflicts Step 6 damage, and attacks with either the skill/talent of the wielder, or with Step 8 if falling from a tree. Physical Armor protects against this damage. Harvesting a ripe pod requires a successful Dexterity (5) Test to avoid a premature explosion. Harvesting unripe pods does not require a Test, but a successful Botany (6) Test is required to distinguish ripe pods from unripe. Carrying ripe pods into combat requires a successful Dexterity (5) Test each round to avoid jostling the pods and setting them off by accident.



GOODS AND SERVICES

Outsiders think of Throal as one big underground city, while we Throalites know that each of its Halls and Inner Cities has its own character. The Serpent River and its tributaries are much the same. Each community has different wares to offer, and is itself in need of different goods.

• BEGINNING OF CHAPTER 3 OF THE YOUNG MERCHANT'S MANUAL, 1496TH •

This chapter describes new goods and services that characters might encounter while adventuring—or spending some free time shopping—on or near the Serpent River and its tributaries.

ALTERNATIVE CRAFTING MATERIALS

The following materials supplement those presented in the **Alternative Crafting Materials** section on p. 237 of the *Namegivers of Barsaive* book. The materials presented here follow the rules provided in *Namegivers of Barsaive*.

CLEMATHA BARK

Clematha bark is a subset of the wood alternative material that provides special modifiers when used to create armor. The Cathan tribes of the Servos use the bark of the *clematha* tree to craft very resilient suits or armor. When using *clematha* bark to craft wooden armor, the suit produced has an Armor Rating equal to its metal counterparts. However, if the armor gets wet, it softens, and its Physical Armor is reduced by –3 until it dries out. This reduction only applies when reducing damage, for all other intents and purposes, the original Armor Rating applies. Cathans and many other jungle-dwellers know the *clematha*'s weakness, and characters with the appropriate Knowledge skills or Disciplines can make a Knowledge Test against a Difficulty Number determined by the gamemaster to learn this information.

Clematha is prized among Woodsmiths for the bright color it shows when properly treated, a trait uncommon to other wooden armors. At the gamemaster's discretion, an Extraordinary Craft Armor Test result might result in a suit of armor as bleached as bone, with the wearer receiving the social advantages of bone armor where appropriate (but never those of both wood and bone at the same time, and never towards someone who pays the armor close or educated attention).

G'NOMSHA WOOD

G'nomsha is a subset of the wood alternative material that provides special

modifiers when used to create weapons. The wood of the *g'nomsha* tree is capable of holding a sharp edge if treated properly. The t'skrang of the Servos Jungle make various weapons from this wood. In recent years, *g'nomsha* has seen a rise in popularity among certain circles of Woodsmiths. It has become a sport for them to venture into the Servos to find *g'nomsha* wood, from which they craft, present, and compare weapons. Because of the increasing number of visitors to the jungle, the t'skrang of the Servos are no longer friendly to those laying hands on a *g'nomsha* tree without asking permission. In turn, this simply encourages the Woodsmiths by making their expeditions more challenging. The jungle t'skrang are not as unfriendly towards those who ask politely or offer to share a tree with them.

G'nomsha weapons do not have a reduced Damage Step. However, they retain the other disadvantages of wooden weapons and are harder and more expensive to obtain.

SHIVOAM WOOD

Shivoam wood is a subset of the wood alternative material that provides special modifiers when used to create armor or weapons. The wood of the *shivoam* tree is extremely light. Jungle t'skrang use it to craft canoes (see p. 117 of the **Riverboats** chapter). *Shivoam* wood is not commonly used to create weapons, but some jungle t'skrang do so, in the absence of better materials.

Weapons made from *shivoam* wood are lighter and thus easier to wield, but cause less damage due to lack of impact. Armor made from *shivoam* wood fares slightly better than weapons, as the lightness reduces Initiative Penalties, but at the same time the lack of density of the material provides less protection against forceful blows.

ARMOR CONVERSION TABLE

Armor	Physical	Mystic	Init	Cost	Weight	Availability*
<i>Clematha</i> Bark	—/(–3)**	—	—	200%	100%	+2 Ratings
<i>Shivoam</i> Wood	–2	—	–1	200%	75%	+1 Rating

* The maximum Availability Rating is Very Rare, the minimum Everyday.

** The –3 modifier only applies while the suit is wet.

WEAPON CONVERSION TABLE

Weapon	Damage Step	STR Min.	Size	Cost	Weight	Availability*
<i>G'nomsha</i> Wood	—	–1	—	150%	75%	+2 Ratings
<i>Shivoam</i> Wood	–2	–3	—	100%	75%	+1 Rating

* The maximum Availability Rating is Very Rare, the minimum Everyday.

At the gamemasters discretion, the jungle t'skrang might regard the *shivoom* as a holy tree, unsuitable to be used by any outsiders. This might negate the social advantages of normal wooden armor, or even worsen the t'skrangs' Attitudes.

MAGICAL EQUIPMENT

The following section provides new magical equipment in the form of blood charms and common magic items, similar to those found in the *Player's Guide*. Unless otherwise noted, these items follow the same rules as presented in the **Goods and Services** chapter of the *Player's Guide*, p. 247.

BLOOD CHARMS

Blood charms are magical items that draw on the magical power within the wearer's blood. See p. 257 of the *Player's Guide* for details on how charms work.

Cropdiver Charm

Cropdiver charms are common magical tools in t'skrang villages. T'skrang often use cropdiver charms when tending the underwater crops grown in their *t'slashinas*. In fact, many *nialls* routinely implant such charms in hatchlings.

When one of these blue-crystal charms is placed inside a character's mouth, it allows the wearer to stay underwater for an extended period. Normally, a character can remain underwater for a short time only before he starts to drown (see **Drowning** on p. 109 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*). For 2 Strain, a cropdiver charm allows a character to stay underwater for a number of minutes equal to his Toughness value (instead of just Toughness value rounds). T'skrang characters extend the time they can use their rudimentary gills to breathe underwater by the same amount. Once the time runs out, the diver must return to the surface before he can use the charm again.

By embedding a cropdiver charm as a blood charm in the cheek, palate, or neck, a character receives greater benefit from the charm. Embedding a charm causes 2 Blood Magic Damage to the character, but increases the time he can remain underwater to a number of hours equal to his Toughness Step (including t'skrang). The character takes 2 Strain each time he uses it and has to return to the surface afterwards, as described above.

Platinum Torc of House Henghyoke

The platinum torcs worn by the *aropagoinya* of House Henghyoke are exceptionally powerful blood charms that rob their wearers of the ability to speak or be understood by any means, including magic (although rumor has it the *lahalas* of House Henghyoke can communicate with the wearers of these charms). Any character wearing a torc becomes vulnerable to all Beastmaster talents as if he were a beast himself, but he also gains some beast-like qualities. The wearer gains the Enhanced Senses (see p. 151 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) and Regeneration (see p. 153 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) creature powers at Rank 2. He also ignores Action Test penalties from the first 3 Wounds he receives, instead of just the first Wound. Implanting this charm causes the wearer 3 Blood Magic Damage.

BLOOD CHARM TABLE

Charm	DR	EDN	Cost	Weight	Availability
Cropdiver Charm	1	16	500	1	Unusual
Platinum Torc*	0	NA	NA	1	NA
Swimming Charm	0	14	350	1	Unusual

* This item is not normally for sale anywhere, nor are the means of its creation known outside of house Henghyoke.



Removing a torc inflicts Step 28 Permanent Damage to the wearer, permanently reducing his Death and Unconsciousness Ratings by the result. No armor protects against this damage. Removing a torc also permanently reduces the wearer's Perception and Willpower values by -5 each; this affects the character's Step Numbers and characteristics. After the torc has been removed, the character makes a Willpower Test against the torc's Spell Defense of 16. If the test fails, the character becomes insane; his mind becomes altered to the state of a savage beast.

Swimming Charm

A swimming charm enhances a character's ability to swim. These blood charms are usually embedded on the character's back, causing 3 Blood Magic Damage. The character gains a +3 bonus to his Swimming Tests. For 2 Strain, a character can also increase his swimming speed, doubling his swimming movement for one minute.

While t'skrang usually swim well enough to not need this charm, those who have to swim quickly or for long periods of time without rest often use them. Some riverboat crewmen have swimming charms implanted in case they fall overboard. Using this charm they can often catch up with their ships.

COMMON MAGIC ITEMS

The following common magic items perform specific functions. No special abilities or thread magic are required to use them, although some have restrictions on use or are difficult to obtain. See p. 261 of the *Player's Guide* for more information.

Ashes from Kralipur

Ashes from Kralipur are commonly found among the t'skrang of House Syrtis. These ashes function as talismans against Horrors. To produce the sovereign charm, a traveler must walk the Pilgrimage Route from Ayodhya up to Kralipur (see **The Pilgrimage Route**, p.56). At Kralipur, the pilgrim must purchase a small scroll of paper made from the reeds of the Floating City and write a prayer on that scroll



dedicated to the Dragon of the Sun. The pilgrim must then hold the paper in the Sacred Flame until it has completely turned to ash. The Sacred Flame draws on the life force of the pilgrim, causing him 2 Permanent Damage Points that can never be healed. The character must keep the ashes in some sort of container until he uses them. The ashes work only for the character who made the pilgrimage, and characters can only benefit from one dose of ashes at a time.

Should the character encounter a Horror, he may use the ashes against it. To use the ashes, the character smears them on his forehead. Until his encounter with the Horror ends, the character gains a +3 bonus to his Physical, Spell, and Social Defenses, and a +3 bonus to any tests he makes against the Horror.

Once a character has used his dose of ashes, he can return to Kralipur and repeat the ritual, receiving a new dose upon completion. Performing the ritual again does not cause him any further Permanent Damage, but if he did not defeat the Horror during his encounter with it, he receives 1 Blood Magic Damage that can only be healed after this new dose of ashes is used.

Blood Pool Sand

Bright red in color, blood pool sand is retrieved from the Pool of Floranus on the Pilgrimage Route (see The Pilgrimage Route, p.56), and usually stored in a small pouch. This item only bestows its benefits to the person who collected it while walking the Pilgrimage Route. If placed under one's head while sleeping, the sand protects the sleeper's dreams; the sleeper's worst nightmares are soothed, while lesser nightmares are never dreamed at all.

Although this effect is not widely known, the sand also protects the sleeper against attempts by others to enter or change his dreams. If such an attempt is made, the sleeper adds a +4 bonus to any tests he makes to resist it. If he normally cannot resist the attempt, he becomes entitled to an attempt, using his Willpower step with a +4 bonus. The Difficulty Number to resist is the Test Result for the ability that allowed entering the dream, usually the result of a Spellcasting or Power Test. Regardless of the number of attempts resisted, he awakes in the morning with -1 Recovery Tests for the day.

Syrtis' Medallion

Pilgrims receive a Syrtis' medallion after completing the Pilgrimage Route, before meeting the Shivalahala Syrtis. Unlike other items obtained on the Pilgrimage Route, this silver medallion bestows some of its benefits to anyone who bears it, as not all of its effects are magical. When in conversation with a person who deems the Pilgrimage or one of its sites sacred, the bearer gains a +2 bonus to a single Interaction Test, except Intimidation Tests, against that person. This bonus can only be applied once against each character. Should the target discover the bearer did not complete the Pilgrimage—and he will likely ask questions about this common spiritual experience—his Attitude toward the bearer worsens by 2 degrees (see p. 92 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*).

A bearer who genuinely completed the Pilgrimage can use his medallion to gain a +3 bonus to any Toughness-based Test that is a last chance to save his life, such as a Life Check Test, a Recovery Test made from having a last chance salve applied, or the final Toughness Test to resist a deadly poison. If the bearer is unconscious at the time, the medallion automatically bestows this benefit. The medallion crumbles to dust when used in this way. It is said that anyone who sells Syrtis' medallion will suffer great misfortune should he attempt the Pilgrimage Route again.

Waterproof Parchment

Parchment and books that are usable in wet conditions are sought after by explorers and scholars alike and have become common in trade towns along the length of the Serpent River. It is rumored that the Great Library of Throal is considering equipping all expeditions with waterproof parchment. The pages are enchanted with Elemental water and are water-repellent, but can only be written on with enchanted ink.

COMMON MAGIC ITEMS TABLE

Item	EDN	Cost	Weight	Availability
Ashes from Kralipur*	NA	300	1	Very Rare
Blood Pool Sand*	NA	250	1	Very Rare
Syrtis' Medaillon*	NA	200	1	Rare
Waterproof Parchment				
Parchment (1 sheet)	14	3	Neg.	Rare
Enchanted Ink (vial)	14	40	1	Very Rare

* This item does not provide some or all of its benefits to a buyer (see the items' descriptions), but Cost and Availability entries are provided because not everybody in Barsaive actually knows. Additionally, these items cannot be produced through regular Enchanting.

PROVENDER

The diverse cultures along the Serpent River enjoy many unique foods and beverages. The following types of food and drink expand the types of provender described in the **Goods and Services** chapter on p. 269 of the *Player's Guide*.

Unless specified, prices for food are for a single serving for one human-sized Namegiver.

Fish-on-a-Reed

House V'strimon is the sole provider of this delicacy. Fish preserved in different spices is wrapped in a reed and roasted over a small flame. Different types of fish and spices create a broad range of flavors, thus making fish-on-a-reed a popular meal for all Namegivers.

Glowing Gulper

Said to be the byproduct of an alchemical experiment gone bad, this potent liquor has become common in the *trishnaris* of House V'strimon and Syrtis. The thick liquid glows the same color as Lake Pyros and can create minor (but harmless) illusions for untrained drinkers.

Scavian Crayfish

Found only in Scavian villages and barges along the Tylon River, these crayfish can compete in flavor with the spiced fish served by t'skrang *trishnaris*. Roasted over an open flame, Scavian crayfish are served with a river algae/weed assortment that looks disgusting, but adds a bittersweet taste that perfectly complements the sweet crayfish meat.

Roasted Insects

Common along the Servos River, roasted insects are viewed as unpalatable by many city-dwelling Namegivers. Cooked and deep-fried flies, spiders, and other insects are served with different sauces, varying from hot to sweet in taste. The jungle tribes see roasted insects as a delicacy and pay well for exotic sauces, while many *trishnaris* and taverns along the river serve roasted insects as a sort of "test of courage" for travelers.

Blood Ale

A deep-red color gives blood ale its Name. Blood is not one of the ingredients used in its production, however. Instead it gains the red color through the use of specially treated spices and other additives. The exact recipe is known only to the brewers of House K'tenshin, who sell kegs of blood ale along the length of the Serpent.

Sel'ecca

Sel'ecca is a sweet alcohol, treated with True water during creation. The resulting liquor is very strong and commonly served with fruit juice.

Giant Crocodile Steak

Many a young t'skrang from the settlements along the Servos River tries to impress his elders by hunting one of the most dangerous predators living in the region: the giant crocodile. As a reward for a successful hunt, the meat of the giant crocodiles makes excellent steak. They are traditionally served raw and bloody; if cooked, they are seared to seal in the juices.

Tabri Egg Omelette

Omelettes made from beaten tabri eggs have become the latest fashion among the dwarfs of Daiche and Darranis, even though the dangers of collecting the eggs makes them expensive.

T'sokata

A seasonal shot served along the entire length of the Serpent River, containing live pollywog in highly concentrated alcohol.



PROVENDER TABLE

Item	Cost	Weight	Availability
Fish-on-a-Reed	1-3	NA	Average
Glowing Gulper			
Single shot	1	NA	Average
Bottle	12	1	Average
Scavian Crayfish	3	NA	Unusual
Roasted Insects	2	NA	Unusual
Blood Ale	1	NA	Unusual
Sel'ecca			
Single Shot	3	NA	Unusual
Bottle	40	1	Rare
Giant Crocodile Steak	8	NA	Unusual
Tabri Omelette	10	NA	Unusual
T'sokata	5	NA	Unusual

MAGICAL TREASURES

Many say that t'skrang enchanters produce only novelty playthings that are equally worthless whether they cost a single piece of silver or a thousand. But that's just the things they sell to us outsiders who don't know any better. Amongst themselves, they trade some of the finest magical items ever created.

• JELARUS, DWARF TROUBADOUR •

GENERAL TREASURES AND THREAD ITEMS

Rules for General Treasures and Thread Items can be found in the **Magical Treasures** chapter, on p.130 of the *Game-master's Guide*.

ARMOR OF ELEMENTAL WATER

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 18

Legend Point Cost: Warden

Armor of elemental water is General Treasure constructed from overlapping scales of sculpted elemental water. The water carries a blue tint, and the scales appear to constantly surge downward from the neck like waves on the sea. The knowledge needed to create armor of elemental water was lost before the Scourge, and only a limited number of these suits of armor now exist.

Without a thread attached, armor of elemental water has the following characteristics: Physical Armor 4, Mystic Armor 0, Initiative Penalty 2, Weight 30. This armor includes a helmet attached to the neckpiece.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the armor.

Effect: The armor is now Physical Armor 5, Mystic Armor 1, and Initiative Penalty 1.

Thread Rank Two

Effect: The armor now has no Initiative Penalty. If fully immersed in water, the wearer floats.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: Elementalists from a long-dead kingdom near the Aras Sea created the suits. The wearer must learn the Name of the armor's creator.

Effect: The armor is now Physical Armor 6 and Mystic Armor 2.

Thread Rank Four

Effect: The armor is now Physical Armor 7 and Mystic Armor 3.

Thread Rank Five

Key Knowledge: The Elementalists who created the suits enchanted them by trapping water spirits from the Aras Sea

inside the armor. The wearer must discover the Name of the water spirit in his suit.

Effect: The armor is now Physical Armor 8. The armor shifts into the best place to cover tiny gaps once don; increase the Result Level needed to inflict an Armor-Defeating Hit against the wearer's Physical Defense by one level (usually from Excellent to Extraordinary).

Thread Rank Six

Key Knowledge: The wearer must discover the exact location where the elemental spirit in his suit was captured.

Effect: The armor is now Mystic Armor 4. The wearer gains a +1 bonus to his Initiative Tests. The wearer can communicate with the captured spirit telepathically. If the spirit is treated well, it can use its Aid Summoner power once per week on the wearer. The wearer takes no Strain for activating the power, but suffers Strain for any Action Tests he makes (see p.231 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*). The elemental's Strength Rating is 3.

Thread Rank Seven

Deed: The wearer must journey to the location where the water elemental was captured and release it from bondage, destroying the armor in the process.

Effect: Through their shared link, a portion of the spirit's essence stays with the character (who was previously the wearer). The character adds +4 to his base Mystic Armor and +1 to his Initiative Step. Additionally, the link allows the character to summon the spirit once a week to use its Aid Summoner power, as described above. At the gamemaster's discretion, the spirit's Strength Rating may rise over time as it becomes part of the character's legend.

DAGGER OF ISHKARAT

Maximum Threads: 1

Spell Defense: 12

Legend Point Cost: Journeyman

The members of House Ishkarat wield powerful talismanic daggers as tokens of their *aropagoi*. The keen edges of these black obsidian knives are as sharp as most crystal weapons from the Twilight Peaks. Because each Ishkaratan *aropagoi* Names his own dagger upon its creation, the Naming character automatically knows the Thread Rank One and Three Key Knowledges.

Without a thread attached, an Ishkaratan dagger has the same characteristics as a normal dagger.

Thread Rank One

Deed: The wielder must enter the Ishkarat *aropagoi* and swear the oath of fealty to the Shivalahala Ishkarat. The wielder must choose his *g'doinya* as the Name of his blade.

Key Knowledge: The wielder must know the Name of the weapon.

Effect: The dagger is now Damage Step 3.



Thread Rank Two

Effect: The wielder gains a +1 Rank Bonus to his Avoid Blow talent.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: The daggers are made by a small group of Weaponsmiths loyal to House Ishkarat. The wielder must learn the Name of the dagger's creator.

Effect: The wielder gains a +1 Rank Bonus to his Riposte talent.

Thread Rank Four

Effect: The wielder adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

Thread Rank Five

Key Knowledge: The wielder must discover the location of the original Ishkaratan home village of Elekso. However, Elekso's location is a secret. Those who know its location will not divulge the information to others, because each *aropagoinya* must learn it for himself.

Effect: The dagger is now Damage Step 4. The wielder may use a special ability, **Retributive Strike**, as a combat option (see p.221 of the *Player's Guide*) causing 1 Strain. In a round in which he uses **Retributive Strike**, the wielder adds his Willpower Step as a bonus to all Damage Tests made for the dagger against an opponent who has caused harm House Ishkarat, and he may spend 1 Karma Point on these Damage Tests if no other ability allows the use of Karma.

Thread Rank Six

Deed: The wielder must visit Elekso, the Ishkaratan home village.

Effect: The dagger's **Retributive Strike** ability gains even greater power. For 1 additional Strain, the wielder may now use this ability as a combat option against any enemy of House Ishkarat. When this improved ability is used with a successful attack on such an opponent, the wielder's attack is automatically an Armor-Defeating Hit. Additionally, the wielder may choose to spend up to 3 Karma Points on the Damage Test. The dagger takes on a dark-green glow when the ability is used, and shatters after the first Damage Test it makes. If the wielder kills his enemy in single combat using the dagger's improved Retributive Strike ability, he may bring his enemy's weapon to the place where the dagger was created. There, the Ishkaratan Weaponsmiths will forge the enemy's weapon into a remarkable threaded weapon. To date, no such weapon has been seen anywhere on the river.

NET OF BARBS

Maximum Threads: 1

Spell Defense: 12

Legend Point Cost: Novice

A net of barbs is a Thread Item made from razorglass reeds that can cut an opponent to ribbons. Like the nets of defense, these are made for use with the Cast Net talent (see p.218 of the *Namegivers of Barsaive* book). Without a thread attached, the net functions like a normal barbed net (see p. 232 of the *Namegivers of Barsaive* book), however this net is never destroyed or damaged in combat.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the net.

Effect: The net is now Damage Step 5.

Thread Rank Two

Effect: The wielder adds a +1 Rank Bonus to his Cast Net talent.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the net's creator.

Effect: The net is now Damage Step 6.

Thread Rank Four

Effect: Any time the wielder successfully uses the net to entangle an opponent, he can immediately make a Damage Test to damage his opponent.

NET OF DEFENSE

Maximum Threads: 1

Spell Defense: 12

Legend Point Cost: Novice

Nets of defense are specifically designed as weapons for t'skrang Boatmen and are used in conjunction with the Cast Net talent (see p.218 of the *Namegivers of Barsaive*). These nets are often decorated with ribbons and embedded crystals. Without a thread attached, the net functions like a normal casting net (see p. 232 of the *Namegivers of Barsaive* book), however this net is never destroyed or damaged in combat.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the net.

Effect: The wielder gains a +1 Rank Bonus to his Cast Net talent.

Thread Rank Two

Effect: The wielder adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the net's creator.

Effect: The wielder gains a +2 Rank Bonus to his Cast Net talent.

Thread Rank Four

Effect: Any time the wielder successfully uses the net to entangle an opponent's weapon, he may immediately make a Disarm Test to snatch the target weapon from his opponent's grasp as a Simple Action.

UNIQUE TREASURES

The following items are unique magical treasures spoken of in the tales told around fires along the Serpent River and in the nearby jungles. Rules for unique treasures can be found in the **Magical Treasures** chapter on p.27 of the *Game-master's Companion*.

HORN OF THE SEVEN WINDS

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 18

Legend Point Cost: Warden

The Horn of the Seven Winds is made from the shell of a chambered nautilid, and is about two feet in diameter. The mouthpiece is made of brass, and the spiral is decorated with gold inlays. To invoke the horn's abilities, the user must blow a note on the instrument. There are seven different notes that the horn can blow, one for each of the Seven Winds.

Without a thread attached, the horn functions as a normal musical instrument.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The user must learn the Name of the horn.

Effect: The horn's user may use the item like a crystal spell box (see p.133 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*) to capture one Elementalism spell.

Thread Rank Two

Key Knowledge: The user must discover the number of notes that the horn can produce.

Effect: The user gains a +1 Rank Bonus to his Spellcasting and Willforce talents for the purpose of capturing spells into or casting spells from the horn only.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: The user must learn the Name of the Elementalist who created the horn.

Effect: The horn can now hold up to two Elementalism spells.

Thread Rank Four

Effect: For the purpose of capturing or casting an Elementalism spell from the sphere or Air with the horn, the Rank Bonus to Spellcasting and Willforce is now +3.



Thread Rank Five

Key Knowledge: Each of the notes blown on the horn has a different Name in the ancient language of the kingdom where it was made. The user must learn the Name of each note.

Effect: The user gains a +2 Rank Bonus to his Battle Bellow talent.

Thread Rank Six

Effect: The horn allows the user to cast one of his own Elementalism spells into it. The Spellcasting Test is made against the horn's Spell Defense. Afterwards, the spell cast into the horn is considered to be a captured spell and released in the same way as any other captured spell.

Thread Rank Seven

Deed: The user must find a pack of storm wolves and follow them to a place of evil, which he must defeat.

Effect: The horn can now hold up to three Elementalism spells. The user can also use the horn to summon a pack of 16 storm wolves (see p.202 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*). The wolves escort the user for 24 hours, then disappear as suddenly as they arrived. If attacked, the wolves will attempt to summon a storm. The pack responds to only one such call per year.

LEATHERWING

Maximum Threads: 2 **Spell Defense:** 14

Legend Point Cost: Journeyman

Created by Azim Keel and Larm Keenedge, this suit of thread hardened leather armor is Named Leatherwing, and is worn by General Nikar Carinci (see p.67 of the *A Tour of the Serpent* chapter). The suit of armor has been modified by Larm Keenedge to accommodate the General's tail and *k'stulaami* wing membranes.

Without a thread attached, Leatherwing has the same characteristics as normal hardened leather armor.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the armor.

Effect: The armor is now Physical Armor 8.

Thread Rank Two

Effect: The armor is now Mystic Armor 1.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Names of the armor's creators.

Effect: The armor is now Mystic Armor 2.

Thread Rank Four

Effect: The armor is now Mystic Armor 3.

Thread Rank Five

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the person who customized the armor.

Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Physical Defense. When using the Tail Parry combat option (*Player's Guide* p.226), the wearer gains an additional +1 to his Physical Defense without a corresponding Action Test penalty. For example, if the wearer chooses to add +1 to his Physical Defense for a -1 Action Test penalty through Tail Parry, he adds +2 to his Physical Defense instead for a -1 Action Test penalty.

Thread Rank Six

Effect: The armor has no Initiative Penalty. The wearer adds a +1 bonus to Gliding Tests.

GEMWALL

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 18

Legend Point Cost: Warden

Created by Azim Keel, this is an elaborately decorated chest plate carved from a single piece of sapphire and modified for his size and wings. The chest plate contains a Strength 3 water spirit Named Voor'oosh, which Azim has bound within.

Without a thread attached, Gemwall has the same characteristics as crystal ringlet armor.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the armor.

Effect: The armor is now Physical Armor 6 and Mystic Armor 6.

Thread Rank Two

Effect: The armor is now Initiative Penalty 1.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the armor's creator.

Effect: The wearer adds +1 to his Physical Defense.

Thread Rank Four

Effect: The armor no longer has an Initiative Penalty.

Thread Rank Five

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the spirit trapped in the armor.

Effect: The wearer can communicate with the captured water spirit telepathically. The wearer can use any of the water spirit's powers, except those requiring the spirit to manifest.

NET OF DREAMS

Maximum Threads: 5

Spell Defense: 19

Legend Point Cost: Warden

The Net of Dreams is an intrinsic part of the legend of the Old Man of the Nets. Although the Net of Dreams looks like a ratty old fishing net with frayed edges and tangled webbing, the Old Man used it to gather the dreams of his family and his race, as well as fish. However, as his family grew older, the Old Man of the Nets cut up the net so that he could divide it among his 13 children. The individual parts act as separate unique items, but can be re-woven to enlarge the net. If two pieces are joined, they become a single item, though the numbers of Maximum Threads are summed up and all users retain their woven threads.

Without a thread attached, the Net of Dreams has the same characteristics as an ordinary fishing net.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The user must learn the Name of the net.

Effect: The wielder adds +1 to his Mystic Armor and Spell Defense.

Thread Rank Two

Effect: The user receives a +2 bonus to Willpower Tests when disbelieving and sensing illusions (see p.139 of the *Player's Guide*).

Thread Rank Three

Effect: The user adds +2 to his Mystic Armor and Spell Defense.

Thread Rank Four

Key Knowledge: The user must learn the Name of the child who carried his part of the Net.

Effect: The net enhances the effects of natural healing on those who sleep under it, even if they are only partially covered. The user must be one of the characters covered by the net for this ability to work. Those who sleep under the net for at least 8 hours may add their Willpower Step as a bonus to the Recovery Test they make upon waking up.

Thread Rank Five

Effect: The user adds +3 to his Mystic Armor and Spell Defense.

Thread Rank Six

Key Knowledge: The user must learn the tale of the Old Man of the Nets and his visit to the Illusionist D'rzaiya on her island in the Sea of Reeds. The tale says that D'rzaiya lured the Old Man away from his wife V'ranna by taking V'ranna's form. The Old Man remained under D'rzaiya's spell for a year and a day before he saw through the illusion. When he came home V'ranna was furious, of course, and refused to believe the Old Man's story until she heard it from the Illusionist's own mouth. So the Old Man had to return to the island and lay a trap for the old magician.

Effect: The user receives a +4 bonus to his Willpower Tests when disbelieving and sensing illusions. Also, the first Disbelief Test he makes to disbelieve an illusion does not cause him any Strain (see p.139 of the *Player's Guide*).

Thread Rank Seven

Deed: The user must find another part of the original Net of Dreams and weave his own net to it.

Effect: The user can communicate, via his dreams, with any other character who has woven a thread to his net. Distance is not a factor, but both parties must be dreaming at the same time.

Thread Rank Eight

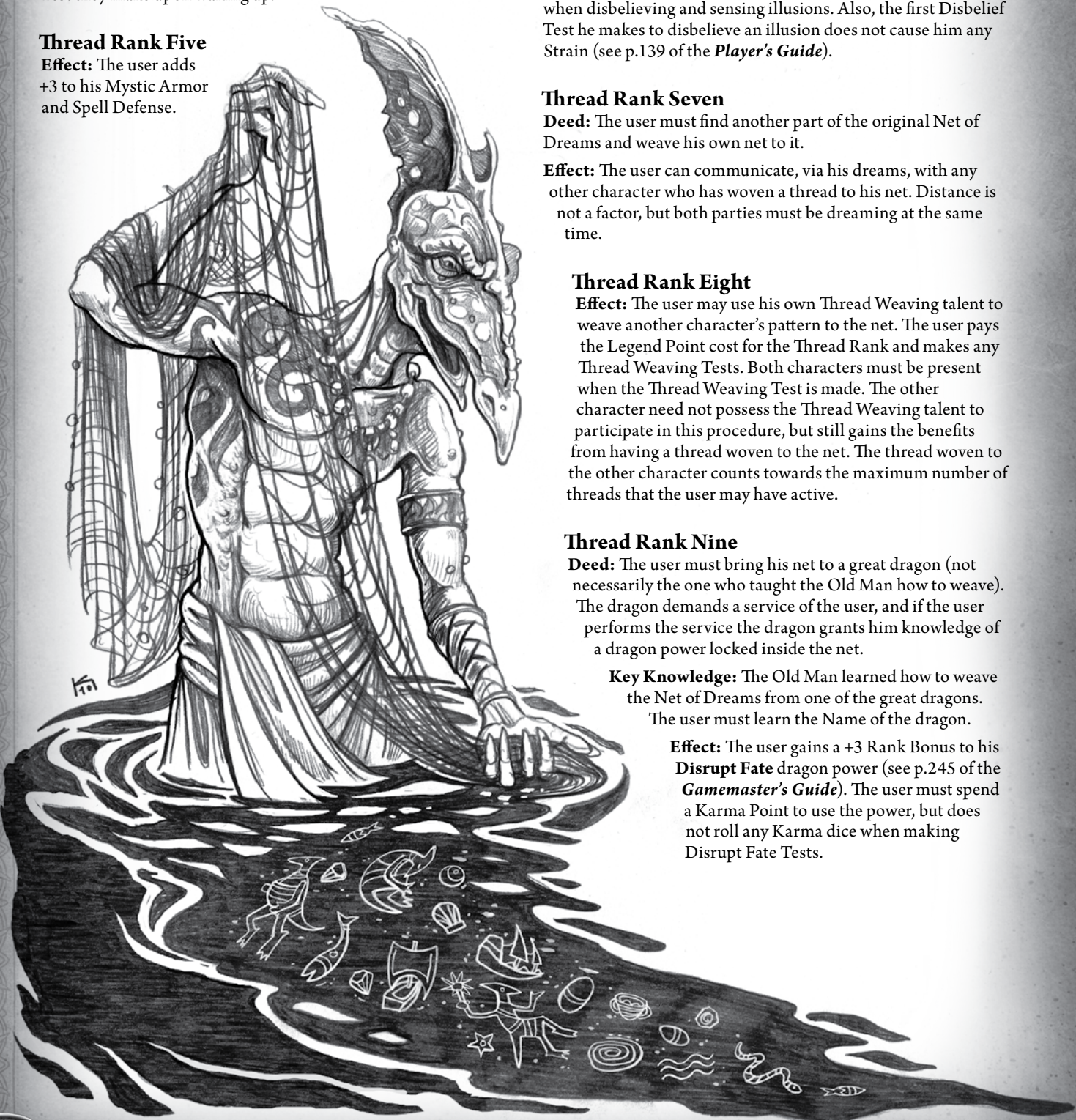
Effect: The user may use his own Thread Weaving talent to weave another character's pattern to the net. The user pays the Legend Point cost for the Thread Rank and makes any Thread Weaving Tests. Both characters must be present when the Thread Weaving Test is made. The other character need not possess the Thread Weaving talent to participate in this procedure, but still gains the benefits from having a thread woven to the net. The thread woven to the other character counts towards the maximum number of threads that the user may have active.

Thread Rank Nine

Deed: The user must bring his net to a great dragon (not necessarily the one who taught the Old Man how to weave). The dragon demands a service of the user, and if the user performs the service the dragon grants him knowledge of a dragon power locked inside the net.

Key Knowledge: The Old Man learned how to weave the Net of Dreams from one of the great dragons. The user must learn the Name of the dragon.

Effect: The user gains a +3 Rank Bonus to his **Disrupt Fate** dragon power (see p.245 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*). The user must spend a Karma Point to use the power, but does not roll any Karma dice when making Disrupt Fate Tests.



WINDCLAW

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 18

Legend Point Cost: Journeyman

Created by Larm Keenedge, this thread charge sword is Named Windclaw, and is wielded by General Nikar Carinci (see p.67 of the **A Tour of the Serpent** chapter).

Without a thread attached, Windclaw has the same characteristics as a normal charge sword (see p.233 of the *Namegivers of Barsaive*).

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the sword.

Effect: The sword is now Damage Step 8.

Thread Rank Two

Effect: The sword is now Damage Step 9.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the sword's creator.

Effect: The sword is now Damage Step 10.

Thread Rank Four

Effect: The sword is now Damage Step 11.

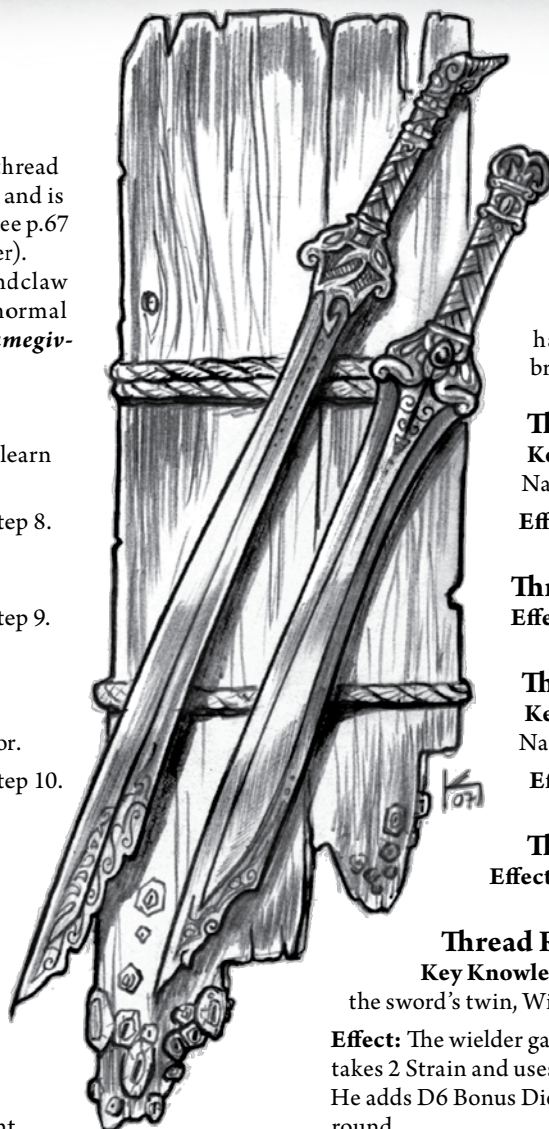
Thread Rank Five

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the sword's twin, Windrazor.

Effect: The bonus to Damage Tests while mounted or above an opponent is now +3.

Thread Rank Six

Effect: The bonus to Damage Tests while mounted or above an opponent is now +4. There is no penalty to attacking with the sword when dismounted.



WINDRAZOR

Maximum Threads: 2

Spell Defense: 18

Legend Point Cost: Warden

Created by Azim Keel and Larm Keenedge, this thread broadsword is Named Windrazor, and is wielded by Captain Drak Windsearcher (see p.71 of the **A Tour of the Serpent** chapter).

Without a thread attached, Windrazor has the same characteristics as a normal broadsword.

Thread Rank One

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the sword.

Effect: The sword is now Damage Step 8.

Thread Rank Two

Effect: The sword is now Damage Step 9.

Thread Rank Three

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the sword's creator.

Effect: The sword is now Damage Step 10.

Thread Rank Four

Effect: The sword is now Damage Step 11.

Thread Rank Five

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the sword's twin, Windclaw.

Effect: The wielder gains the **Shocksword** ability. The wielder takes 2 Strain and uses a Simple Action to activate this power. He adds D6 Bonus Die to the sword's next Damage Test that round.

Thread Rank Six

Effect: When using the **Shocksword** ability, the Bonus Die is now rolled with all Damage Tests for the sword until the end of the round.

RIVERBOATS

Right my fine lads and lasses. Wait until you can count the buttons on their tunics before you open fire. Let's show these Henghyoke pirates how a real warship fights!

• T'SLON MONSARA, CAPTAIN OF THE SERPENT FANG •

The standard ships of the Serpent River fall into two broad groups: the paddle-wheeled riverboats of the t'skrang and the galleys of the merchant cities. These two classifications contain a number of distinct ship types, such as warships, trading ships, pirate vessels, sailing ships, barges, and canoes.

Rules for ships and ship combat can be found in the **Airships and Riverboats** chapter, starting on p.57 of the *Gamemaster's Companion*. This chapter provides game statistics for additional ship types.

SHIP PROFILES

The following profiles provide descriptions and game statistics for the most common types of vessels that travel the Serpent River system.

ARAS SEA GALLEY

The People from Across the Aras Sea build massive seaworthy galleys, which are a common sight at the port of Urupa. Like typical Barsaivian war galleys, these closed-deck vessels feature two banks of oars. Because the People from Across the Sea forbid foreigners to board their ships, little is known about the interior design of these craft.

Most seem to possess crews of 300 men, and their hulls bristle with the ugly upturned snouts of fire cannons.

Speed: 5 Base Price: NA
Maneuverability: 6 Firepower: 22/22

Hull:

Armor: 24 Ramming: 24
Cargo: 120

Damage:

Derelect: 104 Critical: 28
Destroyed: 110

Crew:

Captain: 5 Crew Size: 300
Morale: 109 Crew Rating: 18

FREELANCE PIRATE

The typical pirate vessel carries less armor than an *aropagoi* warship, but pirate captains usually try to outfit their ships with every fire cannon they can get their hands on. Most pirate crews have problems keeping a steady supply of ammunition for their cannons, however, and so cannot afford to fire them all at the same time.

Keeping an adequate supply of fuel for their fire engines is also a problem for pirate crews. They also have few opportunities to overhaul their vessels' fire engines, which adversely affects their ships'

maneuverability. As a result of these drawbacks, most pirate captains rely on board and storm tactics rather than firepower when engaging opponents.

Speed: 7 Base Price: NA
Maneuverability: 7 (6) Firepower: 17 (13)/17

Hull:

Armor: 15 Ramming: 25
Cargo: 220

Damage:

Derelect: 65 Critical: 21
Destroyed: 72

Crew:

Captain: 5 Crew Size: 30
Morale: 64 Crew Rating: 16

HENGHYOKIAN MARAUDER

Henghyokian marauders are the most dangerous boats on the river. Fortunately, House Henghyoke appears to have only three or four of these remarkable ships. These marauders outclass their opponents on nearly every level. They exhibit superior speed, maneuverability, firepower, and crews, and they seem to possess an inexplicable ramming advantage. Some observers believe the Henghyokians use magic to augment their ramming attacks, because opponents who have experienced such attacks typically report seeing blue flashes just prior to impact. Additionally, Henghyokian captains regularly augment their crews with large battle-trained river otters (see p.179 of the *Gamemaster's Guide*).

Henghyokian marauders also seem to possess the ability to vanish without a trace when pursued. In game terms, add +5 to a Henghyokian marauder's Speed for Speed Tests made to avoid pursuit. If a marauder evades pursuit, add +5 to the Henghyokian captain's Pilot Boat talent when determining the Difficulty Number of any Read River Test the pursuer makes to track the marauder (see p.64 of the *Gamemaster's Companion*).

Speed: 8 Base Price: NA
Maneuverability: 9 Firepower: 21/21

Hull:

Armor: 18 Ramming: 32
Cargo: 75

Damage:

Derelect: 77 Critical: 23
Destroyed: 84

Crew:

Captain: 7 Crew Size: 200
Morale: 83 Crew Rating: 20

Special Rules

Henghyoke marauders add +5 to Speed Tests and the captain's Pilot Boat step when evading pursuit.

ISHKARAT WARSHIP

The warships of House Ishkarat contain a number of features that reflect the Ishkaratans' unique battle tactics. First, Ishkaratan vessels feature narrow, sleek hulls that enable them to close on unsuspecting opponents quickly and withdraw just as rapidly if the tide of battle turns. The sleek hull design also results in narrow decks, which make boarding an Ishkaratan vessel more difficult for opponents. And the low profiles of Ishkaratan ships provide smaller targets for enemy gunners.

The Ishkaratans consider their crews, largely composed of trained Swordmasters, the main weapons of their warships. To increase the effectiveness of boarding actions and allow their crews opportunities to fight, every Ishkaratan warship is fitted with a large, permanently attached gangplank called a *corvus*. The typical *corvus* is 5 yards wide and 10 yards long. Massive hinges and winch-operated swing lines connect the *corvus* to its warship. When the warship closes with an enemy, the Ishkaratan crew drops the *corvus* onto the opposing ship's deck. Iron spikes mounted on the underside of the *corvus* far end ensure that the plank attaches firmly to the enemy vessel. Then the warship's Swordmasters swarm across the *corvus* and onto the opponent's ship.

The Ishkaratans consider fire cannons a secondary weapon, and so the cannons on most Ishkaratan warships are slightly smaller than those used by other *aropagoi*. As a result, the range and firepower of Ishkaratan fire cannons are slightly inferior.

Speed: 8 Base Price: NA
Maneuverability: 7 Firepower: 15/20

Hull:
Armor: 16 Ramming: 25
Cargo: 155

Damage:
Derelict: 69 Critical: 22
Destroyed: 76

Crew:
Captain: 6 Crew Size: 75
Morale: 70 Crew Rating: 17

Special Rules

The *corvus* adds +3 to an Ishkaratan warship's Crew Rating during the first turn of any boarding action. Additionally, the device adds a +3 Difficulty Modifier to tests made by an opponent attempting to break off from an Ishkaratan boarding action.

RAFT OF THE PALE ONES

The rafts built by the t'skrang known as the Pale Ones are remarkably tough and buoyant. Typically, a t'skrang armed with a long pole stands on each corner of the 7-yard-by-4-yard craft to push it along the water. The fifth crewmember watches the water ahead and rests until one of his comrades requires relief. The raft can carry far more weight than seems possible. As the opponents in conflicts over territory, dwarfs have reported seeing as many as 30 warriors on a single raft. The numbers in parentheses represent the crew ratings of rafts fully loaded with passengers.

For more information about the Pale Ones, see p. 110 of the *Namegivers of Barsaive* book.

Speed: 4 Base Price: 1,400
Maneuverability: 4 Cargo: 25 (0)
Captain: 3 Crew Size: 5 (30)

V'STRIMONIAN SHIMORAM

The shimoram is a small V'strimonian attack ship built for speed and maneuverability. The word shimoram, in fact, means "eye blink," a reference to the quickness of these nimble vessels. Although the typical shimoram is less than 30 yards long, the ship packs a powerful punch.

The *shimoram*'s keel, a unique feature among river vessels, and its light weight enable it to run and maneuver more quickly than virtually any other type of ship on the Serpent. And when fitted with its special detachable ramming head, the swift shimoram is actually more dangerous than many larger vessels in ramming contests.

The *shimoram*'s relatively small size limits the size of its crew, so most shimoram captains employ the so-called Westhral principle when engaging in combat: never let 'em board your ship.

Speed: 8 Base Price: 55,000
Maneuverability: 8 Firepower: 17/17

Hull:
Armor: 16 Ramming: 28
Cargo: 50

Damage:
Derelict: 68 Critical: 21
Destroyed: 75

Crew:
Captain: 6 Crew Size: 150
Morale: 74 Crew Rating: 19

WAR CANOE

These large canoes, typically used by the fierce jungle t'skrang, are so durable that they can even withstand the average damage caused by a fire cannon. When they attack in a group, they pose a serious threat despite the attackers' primitive weapons and equipment.

The war canoes race toward the target riverboat, ducking under the fire cannon barrage, then draw alongside the enemy vessel so that the crew can climb up the sides and storm the deck.

Speed: 3 Base Price: 45
Maneuverability: 4 Cargo: 1
Captain: 2 Crew Size: 10

WAR GALLEY

The typical Barsaivian war galley is a closed-deck ship with two banks of oars. Two rowers man each oar in the top bank. War galleys are about the same size as t'skrang riverboats, but they possess slightly more armor and firepower. Although war galleys are slower and less maneuverable than *aropagoian* warships, the size and morale of their crews match those of *aropagoian* battle crews. As a result, a competently commanded war galley can fairly match nearly any *aropagoian* warship.

The war galleys of Urupa and the V'strimonian warship based in the city often stage mock battles to hone their skills—and the galleys emerge victorious as often as the warship.

Speed: 5 Base Price: 195,000
Maneuverability: 6 Firepower: 20/20

Hull:
Armor: 19 Ramming: 19
Cargo: 60

Damage:
Derelict: 82 Critical: 24
Destroyed: 88

Crew:
Captain: 5 Crew Size: 150
Morale: 87 Crew Rating: 19

CHARACTER INDEX

There's countless Namegivers living along the Serpent River. You just don't hear much about them. Because they're all t'skrang, and no one can pronounce their Names.

• KARGAK TALLHORNS WINDRIDER OF OTOSK •

The following table lists all the major characters introduced in *Nations of Barsaive Volume Two*, as well as a few characters from previous *Earthdawn* products who live along the Serpent River. The characters appear in alphabetical order. Each listing includes the character's Name, a page number on which the character first appears, and a brief description of the character, including race, gender, official position (if any), and general personality. These tables can be used to create stories, see **Using Characters to Create Adventures** on p. 86 for more information.

SERPENT RIVER CHARACTER INDEX TABLE

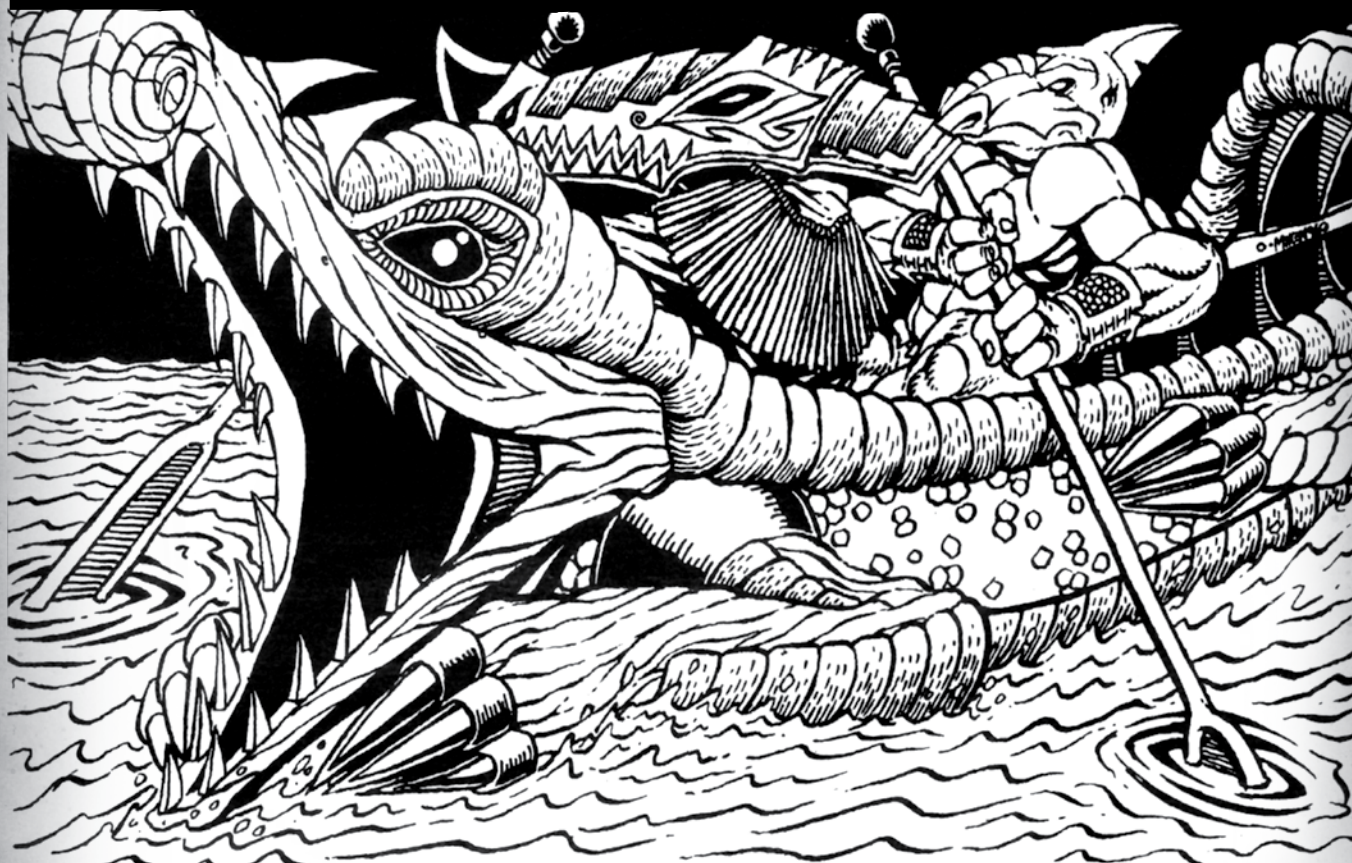
Character Name	Page Number	Description
Acharuss	p. 17	Captain of the Gorruus, as well as a merciless raider and accomplished Swordmaster, he is the bane of the North Reach
Aemilius Vellunium	p. 27	A heart and reputation of gold and a true t'skrang hero fighting for the less fortunate, he is a Swordmaster and a Boatman
Affern	p. 69	Human Archer; leader of the Elite; long-time acquaintance of Nikar and Drak
Agramen	p. 70	Human merchant; a Theran sympathizer and operative in Haven; an agent of Gendel
Alachia	p. 53	Elven Queen; jealously guards the Mothingale river; agreed to partner with the Syrtisians at Kaer Eidolon
Alevar	p. 53	Blood elven Woodsman; stationed at Kaer Eidolon
Alvar Otterpaw	p. 39	Human Boatman of the Order of the Scavian Guard
Ar' yana Marrek	p. 91	A spy, accomplished human Illusionist, and daughter of the one of the rulers of the city of Marrek
Azim Keel	p. 74	Pale-white <i>ghareez</i> known as "the Ice Magician"; Chief magician of Triumph and powerful Elemental
Belit Shustal Syrtis	p. 28	Green faction supporter and a wizened veteran of the Theran war, formerly Admiral, but now Captain of the Mistral
The Body of Five	p. 82	Five prominent magicians in Travar commissioned with designing and running the Founding each year
Brazak Skar	p. 66	Human Axemaster with knowledge of Triumph and Theran defenses and activity there
Darlon	p. 84	Inhabitant of the village of Farram; rumormonger and village idiot
Desti Denvis	p. 60	A lahala that abandoned her niall to lead the project of building new t'skrang river villages along Westhrall's Passage
Dokaros	p. 18	Village Elder of Mikanos on Lake Vors; beneficiary of Acharuss' raiding
Dorram	p. 77	An angry, ambitious, and cruel human; handles day-to-day Theran business in Servalen; adjutant to Telanis
Drak Windsearcher	p. 71	A Vagothian troll Air Sailor; Captain of the Theran kila, the Righteous, and personal friend of General Nikar
Elbonius Tartakull	p. 14	Royal Theater of Throal troupe director who runs the Troubadour showboat, the Quirinalia
The Elite	p. 69	A Named group of adepts with a group True pattern; answer directly to General Nikar for special assignments
Ellainor	p. 50	Hinterland village elderwoman, who extols the virtues of the windlings of Glenwood Deep and their magical aid
Evon Tyrlath	p. 48	A noted scholar from Urupa with theories on the the mysterious House Henghyoke and its shivalahala
Fallan Pavelis	p. 31	Former Theran Overgovernor; retreated to Sky Point after the First Theran War, leaving K'tenshin to its enemies
Ferad	p. 18	Dangerous Warrior and Illusionist working for the Denairastas
Gammalon Toolika	p. 24	Chamberlain, and real political leader, of House Syrtis
Garlthik One-Eye	p. 46	Ruthless ork Thief; ruler of Kratas, leader of the gang, the Force of the Eye, and supporter of House T'kambras
Gendel	p. 70	Human Scout; Spymaster, or akarenti, on the Triumph with nearly two dozen spies under him

SERPENT RIVER CHARACTER INDEX TABLE

Character Name	Page Number	Description
Go'lan	p. 67	T'skrang airship commander; late comrade of General Nikar; died at the spells of House V'strimon Elementalists
Gradan Sharpaxe	p. 69	Dwarf Warrior from Barsaive; member of the Elite; brother of Larm
The Gray Ones	p. 80	A pair of Namegivers in gray cloaks; mythical figures said to have prophesied the regrowth of the Servos
Grimaud	p. 58	A faithful servant who tends Talmagore's house outside the Grove of Memory along the Pilgrimage Route
Griskoll	p. 19	Chief engineer on the Gorruus under Acharuss, and a Seventh Circle t'skrang Boatman
Hancar	p. 84	Retired dwarf Weaponsmith; owner of the Friendly Forge inn in Farram
Hodanticus	p. 60	Dwarf smuggler; rumored to run the tunnels from the Coil River up into the Throal mountains for a price
Iagen	p. 52	Pre-Scourge, famed Theran poet and resident of Parlainth
Illfarelek	p. 70	The Theran spymaster of Vivane; Also a General; Gendel answers to him also
Jedaiyen Westhrall	p. 47	Highly skilled captain of the warship Astendar's Desire, and the figurehead of House T'kambras Syrtis' Prince Kalieston, the questor of Upandal who died in an accident while building the huge Dreadnought
Kalieston	p. 28	
Kela Vorga	p. 85	Human female Warrior and questor of Lochost; opposed to Scavian gender roles; agitator for change
Kreesta	p. 36	A simple t'skrang fisherwoman, full of jik'harra, who became the current Shivalahala V'strimon
Kypros	p. 67	Theran Overgovernor of Barsaive in Name, but cowers in Sky Point; envious of General Nikar and his influence
Landrial	p. 69	Elf Scout from Creana; member of the Elite
Larm Keenedge	p. 69	Dwarf Weaponsmith from Barsaive; member of the Elite; brother of Gradan
Lognar Devia	p. 82	Dwarf barge captain; son of the merchant Garrn Devia.
Loloish of Framling	p. 58	A common-born t'skrang and subject of a popular Troubadour's tale due to his love for the Shivalahala Syrtis
Lord Alderac Windspear	p. 82	Swordmaster and Magistrate of Travar, a natural mediator and shrewd negotiator.
L'tskarr	p. 62	An experienced t'skrang Elementalists; oversee the city's platforms; important in local politics
Mabon Ardoss	p. 69	An elf Beastmaster and questor of Dis; Triumph's slavemaster; treats his charges as if they were animals.
Masae Seorach	p. 63	A powerful, old elf; captains the Mallornica, the last elven sailing ship, and seeks a reversal for the Ritual of Thorns
Milos	p. 47	A powerful questor of Floranuus and a crew member aboard Astendar's Desire
M'jontass	p. 78	T'skrang adventurers; lost the rest of his group once to the man-eating plants of the Servos Jungle
Nikar Carinci	p. 67	Flamboyant and abrasive Theran general in charge of the Fortress of Triumph; trained as a k'stuulami Cavalrymen
Niss Reeves	p. 82	"Sparkling Niss", elegant and charming, especially for a troll, is a Travarian magistrate, jeweler, and Weaponsmith
Nithagi	p. 21	Ancient t'skrang sculptor who made Nithagi's Door atop the Cliff City
Nonchurr	p. 35	Ork owner of the Smiling Crojen, a high-class tavern in the Floating City of House V'strimon
The Obsidimen of Zirabul	p. 23	Mysterious obsidimen who watch over the Cliff City of Syrtis, possibly the two elders of the Liferock there
Old Man of the Nets	p. 30	A legendary t'skrang hero and founder of House V'strimon; his ghost still comes to their aid in times of need
Omasu	p. 83	Wealthy, ruthless obsidiman; founded the Overland Trading Company, leads the Liferock Rebellion
Omoo of Urupa	p. 31	An obsidiman Troubadour and visitor of Shivalahala V'strimon
Oortaal	p. 69	Ork Nethermancer from Vagothia; member of the Elite
Patrochian	p. 27	Mother of Aemilius; now deceased, but a renowned t'skrang captain and true ally of Throal
Praylar Sightshifter	p. 69	Troll Illusionist from Vivane; member of the Elite
Qulbas	p. 35	Wealthy human questor of Vestrial, exploits other people's weaknesses for his own gain
Ramos of Travar	p. 78	A scholar of Travar; wrote a lexicon of the Cathan language
Rowan Daggertree	p. 84	Retired human adventurer; once visited the abandoned river villages on the Iontos, but won't speak of them now
Sagramon Steeltoe	p. 81	One of Garlthik's best lieutenants, a dwarf now in charge of the port town of Daiche on the Tylon
Sevastoss	p. 85	A hermit near the Mist Swamps and Badlands, this t'skrang Elementalists studies various magical oddities
Shaido of the Wavram	p. 21	Syrtisian Admiral who won the Battle of Sejanus in 1502 TH
Shen Denlikian	p. 58	Legendary t'skrang engineer and advisor to Syrtisian nials during the War Against the Elves
Shirala	p. 36	An Almarran Winddancer who flew to the Floating City during the Scourge to request refuge for her community
Shivalahala Henghyoke	p. 48	While reputedly a powerful Illusionist, little else is known of her, even if she truly exists
Shivalahala Ishkarat	p. 17	Reigning from the Citadel of House Ishkarat, the former Fortress Island in Lake Vors, little else is known of her

SERPENT RIVER CHARACTER INDEX TABLE

Character Name	Page Number	Description
Shivalahala K'tenshin	p. 42	A formidable Warrior adept, she personally heads the War College and longs for K'tenshin's lost glory
Shivalahala Syrtis	p. 25	Young, prepubescent spiritual leader of House Syrtis, known as the "Prophetess" and for her mental ailments
Shivalahala T'kambras	p. 46	A t'skrang Troubadour of great power; sang a ghost song that still echoes in the cataracts of Daiche Canyon
Shivalahala V'strimon	p. 38	An Elementalist of monumental talent and a questor of Jaspre, this former fisherwoman leads House V'strimon.
S'hondla	p. 34	T'skrang owner of the Golden Reed, a high-class tavern in the Floating City of House V'strimon
Solen Ogani	p. 70	Human Air Sailor from Talea; Captain of the Theran kila, the <i>Defiant</i> ; a loyal, natural leader
S'rakar	p. 35	T'skrang basketmaker and compulsive gambler in the Floating City of House V'strimon
Synopae of Kralipur	p. 19	Legendary mother of House Syrtis, as wise as she was beautiful, became the lover of the Dragon of the Moon, Syrtis
Talmagore	p. 57	A Wizard who disappeared into the Grove of Memory several years ago after trying to exploit its abilities
T'char	p. 73	Second-in-command in Triumph, strategos T'char also oversees the Griffin Riders
Telanis Unkuren	p. 77	A fat old dwarf; highest-ranking Theran official in Servalen
Theormaz	p. 48	Independent t'skrang river pirate
T'kradio Dharm	p. 26	Former Chamberlain of House Syrtis; he established the Honor Guard
T'kraidoss	p. 29	Chosen by the Blue fraction controlled High Chamber of Syrtis as the latest Admiral to replace Belit
Valarin	p. 77	The conniving, opportunistic spokesman of Servalen, an aging elf; governs by the force of his mercenary bands
V'ranna of the Many Baskets	p. 30	Wife of the Old Man of the Nets and unparalleled basket maker
Westhrall	p. 31	A somewhat arrogant hero of the Theran War that settled in the Floating City to raise his daughter, Jedaiyen
Xoros Honeyed-tongue	p. 82	Mellow Travarian magistrate, an ork controlling a large number of smithies
Yagal Trona	p. 85	Human leader of the Scavian Guard; longing for power; opposed to Kela's attacks on Scavian culture
Zsombol Vak	p. 44	T'skrang Wizard of House K'tenshin



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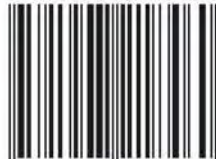
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