

EARTHDOWN

GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

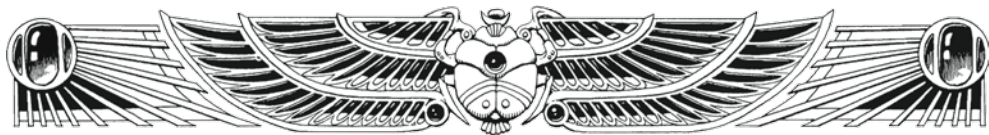




GAME MASTER'S GUIDE



EARTHDAWN SAVAGE WORLDS EDITION RULEBOOK



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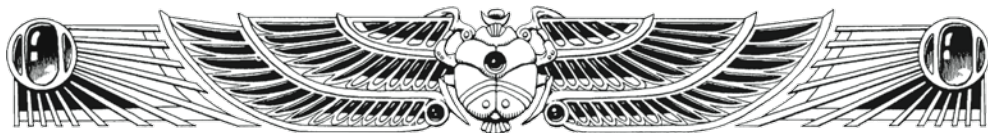
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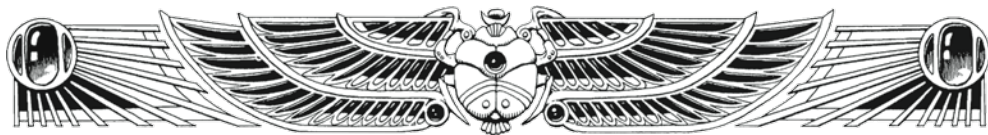
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Passions play by their own rules—every being more powerful than a Namegiver does. It's a fact we have to live with. But remember that rules work both ways. Use your wits and you can make them work for you.
—J'Role the Honorable Thief

Among the group of people who gather to play roleplaying games, one player moderates the game, keeping in mind and enforcing the game's limits and rules. This person, called the **Game Master** (or **GM**), determines the effects of the Player Characters' actions and what the responses to those actions will be.

The Game Master also plays all the bit parts—bystanders, creatures, villains, and other characters who, while not always central to the action, still interact with the Player Characters.

As the GM, you run the game. You create or adapt the story told during a game session. You create

the situations and scenes your players' characters get involved in. You determine whether or not a character succeeds at an attempted action. You decide what creatures the characters encounter, how those creatures react to the player characters, and who gets to hit who first. You describe the world as the characters see it, functioning as their eyes, ears, and other senses.

Being a Game Master requires practice, but the thrill of creating an adventure that engages the players, tests their characters' skills in the game world, and captures their imaginations definitely makes the job worthwhile.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

When combined with the *Savage Worlds Core Rulebook*, the *Player's Guide* and *Game Master's Guide* contain the rules you will need to run an **EARTHDAWN**® game.

The best advice we can give new players and Game Masters is this—*only use the rules you need*. Much of the content in the *Player's Guide* and *Game Master's Guide* is sorted alphabetically—Edges, spells, and so on—with other content organized in a similarly accessible order—creatures, for instance, which are grouped by their general type.

Chapter 2: Barsaive (p.8) offers an in-depth description of Barsaive province, expanding the information found in the *Player's Guide*, and including historical information about the Scourge and reports written by other adventurers describing the dangerous places of Barsaive.

In **Chapter 3: Game Mastering** (p.126) you will learn the art of being a GM, creating your

own **EARTHDAWN** adventures and campaigns, and how to deal with situations that your group will encounter while adventuring. It also includes examples of legends and rules for blood magic.

Chapter 4: GM Characters (p.164) covers how to handle non-player character in **EARTHDAWN**, along with a sample of typical Game Master Characters that might be encountered, plus descriptions of some of the movers-and-shakers of the **EARTHDAWN** world.

Chapter 5: Treasures (p.188) contains a number of general and unique magical items for use in your campaigns, and includes rules for learning Key Knowledges, allowing Player Characters to enhance and improve item abilities.

Finally, **Chapter 6: Bestiary** (p.217) describes magical and mundane creatures unique to **EARTHDAWN**—including the great dragons and Horrors of Barsaive.

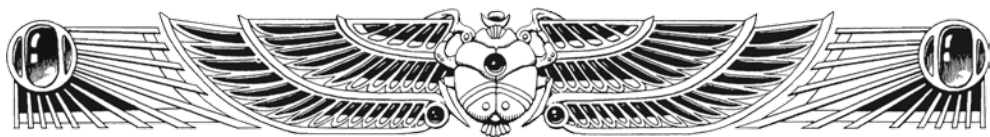


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BARSAIVE PROVINCE MAP





CHAPTER 2: BARSAIVE

ON THE NATURE OF THE EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO BARSAIVE

We live in an age of magical thought. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the earth we stand upon, and the fire before which we warm ourselves are ours to manipulate as we desire. I know people who can give life to the bones of the dead with a wave of the hand. I have traveled with troll raiders in their magical airships, flying just below the belly of the clouds. I have seen a man ripped apart from the inside out because his enemy learned too much about him. Magic controls all things, all change, all destinies.

I do not know if our world has always been as rich in magic as it is in our own age—certainly the research of the Therans dictates otherwise. For myself, I am convinced of the inevitability and power of change in all things. I have watched the world transform from a bleak landscape of dry brown earth to a living bower of lush, green forests. I have seen the terror of the Scourge give way to cautious, new hope. Where once people lived in isolated hamlets ruled by fear of the outside world, the dwarfs of Throal have brought Barsaive's towns, cities, and villages together through trade and political pacts. I have also seen Throal's efforts thwarted by the airships and legions of the Theran Empire, bent on recapturing a province they once owned. The world abounds in complications, and the ebb and flow of its transformations form a pattern that no one still living in the world can discern.

Magic gives us all the chance to influence the fate of our world, because magic allows us to know and even alter all things. Magic leads brave adventurers to glittering treasures buried in the Dragon Mountains, and magic powers the fire cannons of riverboats that clash in fierce battles along the Serpent River. One can use magic to assassinate political rivals, sway the emotions of enemies and allies, or steal jewels from the hand of a sleeping prince. Magic allows the Horrors to enter the minds of unwitting victims and determines victory or defeat for the bands of ork cavalry that sweep across the plains to plunder lonely caravans. Swordmasters, thieves, troubadours, magicians, and others practice their arts through the magical thought that is the living force of our world.

How long this age of magical thought will last, I cannot say, nor can I know what the following age may bring. I believe, however, that this magical age will one day end. So that those who come after us may remember the time in which we lived, I have commanded Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, to see to the writing of this book.

Our story is a part of the world's legend, and our children must and should know of it. In our age, farmers defend their families against creatures more dreadful than nightmares from the darkest depths of the soul, and the free kingdom of Throal battles tirelessly to throw off the last remnants of Theran oppression. Wonder and splendor exist side by side with brutality and strife.

The Barsaive I know is a world of despots and corrupted kingdoms, of magical treasures and fantastical creatures. In Barsaive, wonder and fear twine together; hope and despair are the twin sides of the same coin. You who read this, think well on our lives. Whether or not we have left you a world to your liking, we are your past, and our stories carry lessons for your future.

—Varulus III, King of Throal, 12 Gahmil, 1506 TH





ON THE COMPILATION OF THE EXPLORER'S GUIDE TO BARSATIVE

The writing of this great book began on a day no different from any other day. Though the summons that came for me was from King Varulus III, such an occurrence was not unusual. As Master of the Hall of Records of the Library of Throal, I have on other occasions been called by the king to gather certain information or to perform odd bits of research. On this day, however, his request far exceeded the mundane tasks he had previously set for me.

I found the king in his study, chin in hand as if contemplating his next move in the game of pratee he was playing with his eldest son. He looked up as I entered, greeting me with a warm smile.

"Merrox, I wish you to undertake an important task for me," he began as he almost always did. "I wish you to compile a document that describes Barsaive to those who know nothing of it. Many of Barsaive's own people remain ignorant of the wonders and perils that lie within the boundaries of their own province, but that is not as it should be. I wish for them to learn more of this place in which they live. Our library needs a book to serve as a guide to our land."

I clutched the back of a chair to steady myself, feeling the raised patterns of the carvings in its cold stone back bite into the tips of my fingers. My day had taken a turn into the realm of the fantastic.

"You may have whatever you need to complete the book—within reason," the king continued. "Spare no efforts, Merrox. This document is of paramount importance to me."

Dazed but undaunted by my king's unusual request, I returned to my office and called together my chief assistants. We sat wakeful long into the night, determining how best to accomplish our mission. It was many days before I returned to King Varulus with my list of requirements, all of which he granted save one. Permission to visit the Eternal Library of Thera he refused me, reminding me that the enmity between Throal and Thera made it impossible for any known citizen of Throal to patronize a Theran institution. Though I would have liked to inspect their archives, I acceded to my king's wisdom and began work on this book with the resources on hand.

At last, many years after King Varulus called me into his chambers that day, my assistants and I have completed the task set us. All of the information in this document was gathered first-hand by explorers and adventurers who have traveled across Barsaive in search of knowledge. Each group visited a different region of Barsaive, reporting on the various cities, mountains, rivers, forests, and other sites of interest along the way. My fellow archivists and I have distilled the information they brought into a readable and fascinating manuscript, available for the asking to any resident of Barsaive who visits the Library of Throal.

Each section of this book describes in detail a facet of life in Barsaive. Comments from the librarian in charge of each area of research preface every section. In addition, my fellow scholars and I have added our own observations regarding certain places and events in the margins of the text and copied in entries from the explorers' journals in hopes of conveying the realities of Barsaive through firsthand accounts of its marvels and terrors.

For all those who read this, remember that every individual sees the world through his own eyes. Though we have tried to pass on only verifiable facts, some of the information in this document may be inaccurate, if only because it reflects the particular bias or peculiar turn of mind of the explorer who provided the source material.

The following archivists contributed to this work, in the areas listed:

☉ Project Master Merrox, *On the Origins of the Land of Barsaive*; ☉ Daron Fenn, *On the Scourge*; ☉ Ardinn Tero, *On Life in Barsaive*; ☉ Derrat, *On the Nature of Magic*; ☉ Thom Edrull, *On Travel in the Land of Barsaive*; ☉ Jerriv Forrim, *On Denizens of Barsaive*; ☉ Kern Redhand, *On Towns and Cities*; ☉ Thom Edrull, *Regarding the Land and Its Places*; ☉ Jaron of Bethabel, *On the Kingdom of Throal*; ☉ Karon Foll, *On Blood Wood*; ☉ Merrox, *Of the Theran Empire*.

☉ —Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records Great Library of Throal, 14 Rua, 1505 TH





ON THE ORIGINS OF THE LAND OF BARSATIVE

Given the importance of the task, I thought myself the best candidate to write a condensed history of Barsaive. My work, culled from a vast array of material collected for this book, is as complete as I could manage, given the time and space constraints under which I labored. I can, however, personally vouch for the accuracy of the information given. To convey the fullest sense of Barsaive's wonders and rich past, I could find no better words than those of the following journal excerpt.

—Most humbly offered by Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records, and by the Passions' Grace, a Loyal Servant of His Majesty the King of Throal

After countless days of travel, many of my companions became convinced that we had had become hopelessly lost. Though we had followed to the letter the directions given us in Throal, the Forgotten City was still nowhere in sight. Still, I was determined to find the place and so resolved to continue on alone if need be. Fortunately my resolve was never tested, for only three days later we found it.

We were walking through a partially wooded area, the trees covering the top of a large hill. As we reached the hilltop, we saw the spires of ruined Parlainth spread out below us like a shattered mosaic. The descriptions we had read in the journals of Jrole the Thief and in the Library of Throal told of the shattered splendor of the Forgotten City, but I had foolishly considered this description exaggerated. The sight of the ruins taught me that words alone could not convey the awe and sadness one feels when face to face with the ruins of Parlainth. The city lay smothered in tangled vines and overgrown plants. Once-tall spires and pyramids had crumbled into piles of broken stone, mute testimony to the destructive power and corruption of the Horrors.

Parlainth was like no city I had ever seen. I had been an explorer of sorts for years before that journey, and had discovered more than a dozen lost cities and kaers, but none so magnificent and sad as this. The ruins had a majesty to them, as if to say that neither the Horrors nor time itself could mar their beauty. But for Karon Foll all its grandeur, the place held a cold and uninviting presence...

—From the journal of Torgak, 1665 TH
(transcribed by Lorin of Throal)

OF THE LAND AND ITS PEOPLE

The Therans named the province of Barsaive six hundred years ago, before the Scourge began. Even today the Therans consider Barsaive a province of

their empire, though most Barsaivians give their allegiance to the dwarf kingdom of Throal. This stark contradiction between the perceptions of Barsaive's people and its would-be overlords creates much of the conflict between Thera and Barsaive.

A vast land, Barsaive takes weeks to cross even on the back of a war horse. The journey from the northern boundary to the southern takes 40 days on foot, 25 on horseback; the journey from east to west requires 60 days on foot, 38 days on horseback.

Barsaive's southern boundary is Death's Sea, a huge body of molten stone so hot that only elementals, Horrors, and those with magical protection may travel over it. The heat from the sea has transformed the surrounding land into a vast expanse of barren sand and rock. Legend says that enough blood spilled into the earth will quench the fire, and the sea will turn to water.

At Barsaive's northern boundary lies Blood Wood, a lush forest many days' ride across wherein the elven Queen and her corrupt court reside. Many elves outside Blood Wood no longer give their allegiance to the elven Queen, considering her as monstrous as the Horrors. The elves of Blood Wood have never lost their ability to perform intricate magic, however. The Queen's castle, supported by six great trees, is a magical wonder to behold.

For my part, I agree, but I must add that many years ago I visited Blood Wood, and despite the horrible things the elves did to themselves, they are still a beautiful people. A terrible beauty, perhaps, but undeniable.

—Karon Foll, Scholar of Throal

In the west of Barsaive lie the Wastes, where little magic has yet touched the land to renew it after the



CHAPTER 2: BARSATIVE

Scourge. Most scholars believe that the Horrors entered more shelters built in the Wastes than elsewhere, and so fewer people survived to re-emerge. Nowadays, little exists in the region other than monsters, Horrors, and a few small plants and animals. If the scholars are correct, then the Wastes must be dotted with more unopened, undiscovered kaers and citadels than exist in the rest of Barsaive. Because of the Wastes' reputation as a storehouse of undiscovered wonders, bands of adventurers often journey there in search of ancient treasure and magical artifacts. Unfortunately, few ever return.

The Aras Sea marks the eastern border of Barsaive. This large, saltwater ocean connects Barsaive to lands beyond the province and to the expanse of the Theran Empire. From the city of Urupa and other coastal towns, scores of seagoing ships sail from port to port, trading Barsaivian goods for those from other lands.

Other major trading ports lie along the Serpent River, a majestic waterway that cuts Barsaive into two uneven parts as it winds its way from north of the Wastes down to the Death's Sea. For most of its length the Serpent is so wide that a riverboat takes an hour to traverse it. Save by magical means or on a well-designed ship, it is impossible to cross. The river creates the most fertile land in Barsaive, and the wide, long valley sloping up from its banks contains countless villages and towns. The reptilian t'skrang, who live in half-submerged towns alongside and in the river and sail their riverboats from port to port, conduct most trade along the Serpent. Many t'skrang maintain trade agreements with the kingdom of Throal and work to promote unity among the people along the Serpent. Other t'skrang captains use their ships for piracy and raiding.

The Serpent winds its way around the Throal Mountains, a large range whose peaks reach into the clouds. So huge that they are almost a province unto themselves, the mountains are home to nomadic tribes who hunt the wild beasts that roam the slopes. Within the mountains lies the kingdom of Throal, where the dwarfs retreated during the Scourge and from which they have at least temporarily united Barsaive against Theran encroachment. Though many Barsaivians are suspicious of the power the dwarfs wield, they fear the terrible magic of the Therans more and so give grudging

allegiance to Throal. The dwarf hold on this wary loyalty remains tenuous. Should the Therans ever be defeated beyond recovery, the dwarfs of Throal may find themselves dealing with a new set of troubles.

Countless people, citadels, villages, forests, and other marvels fill in the spaces between Barsaive's borders. The Theran outpost of Sky Point rests within Barsaive's southern border, near the Theran-controlled city of Vivane. Nomadic tribes of ork scorchers roam the untamed lands on their massive riding beasts. Some of these tribes are as primitive as the hunters wandering the Throal Mountains; others, known as ork cavalry, have organized themselves into effective mercenary bands. These ork cavalry sell their talents and strength to anyone who can pay the price. In the skies above Barsaive, troll raiders fly their magically crafted vessels, searching for villages to raid and Theran airships to plunder. These and other wonders are fully described in later sections of this work.

Rather than offering a detailed history of our world, or even a complete description of the ancient civilizations that thrived in Barsaive before the province was Named, this work intends only to provide the history necessary to understand the Barsaive of our time. It is the workings of the present world I wish to preserve, and this history makes those workings clear. I have added to the account of the coming of the Scourge an excerpt from A Concordia of History, a generational text constantly updated by the librarians of Throal. Readers interested in a detailed history of Barsaive and the ancient lands that became our province should peruse that volume. A similarly detailed history of Barsaive may also be found in the transcripts of the speakings of Storymaster Jallo Redbeard, an account preserved in the Library of Throal.

—Most humbly offered by Merrox,
Master of the Hall of Records

OF THERA AND THE SCOURGE

According to the tales the Therans tell, many hundreds of years ago, an elven scholar named Elianar Messias discovered ancient texts predicting an invasion of the world by creatures from a certain plane



EARTHDOWN GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

of astral space. These documents claimed that the creatures would ravage the Earth for nearly five hundred years and then return, sated, to their own plane of existence. The truth of this discovery drove Elianar to madness and a bloody death. Years later, Messias' colleague Kearos Navarim founded a school dedicated to the study of this prophecy on an island in the Selestrean Sea.

A hundred years passed, during which the school attracted talented magicians and Adepts from all fields. The school taught all kinds of magical theory and practice, but turned its best minds toward finding a way to stop the invasion of our world by its astral enemies.

At that time, the area now known as Barsaive comprised a jumble of different peoples: the dwarfs in the mountains, the t'skrang along the Serpent River, the orks and trolls on the plains, the elves in the woods, humans in stone towns and a few cities, and so on. Different communities had little commerce with one another, and the dialects of each region varied enough to make communication between different groups almost impossible. Little, if any, trading went on between regions, or even between towns. Despite this staggering degree of isolation, travelers and adventurers from faraway places gradually carried tales of the extraordinary school for magic to the people of other lands, and many magicians and Adepts traveled south to seek the school.

After a century of existence, the school had grown so large that its eldest members founded a city to house it, which they named Thera. With magicians and adepts as half of its citizens, the island that would become the Theran Empire claimed its place as the most powerful city in the world.

Word of the coming attack of the astral creatures, now referred to by all races as the Horrors, had begun to spread through the lands around Thera. When the distant elven kingdom of Shosara heard of the impending disaster, they sent messengers to Thera asking for guidance in defending against the

approaching invaders. In their studies of ways to defeat or forestall the Horrors, the Therans had devised several methods of protection. Rather than simply giving this information to the elves of Shosara, however, they demanded favorable trade agreements in exchange for the knowledge. The elves accepted these terms, and soon other realms throughout the world followed suit, giving their riches to the Therans in return for the precious knowledge that the magical scholars held.

The Shosaran treaties marked the beginning of the Theran Empire. Soon after their success with the Shosaran elves, the Therans sent envoys to all the nearby lands, warning all of impending doom and selling the secrets of safety from the Horrors to all who could afford them. With every new bargain they made, their island city grew in power, until the Therans' reach stretched around the globe. As trading increased, the various factions of the region that would become Barsaive took on common traits. The area's diverse people now shared much that they had not before: a fear of the Horrors, a need to build strongholds against them, and a distaste for Theran influence. This dislike bonded the races and factions together more tightly than any other. The Therans tried to impose their calendar, their style of dress, and

their architecture on the region; they also brought with them the barbarism of slavery. Though not everyone suffered under the lash of the slaver's whip, everyone knew and feared that they might. Some groups worked together to stop the practice of slavery; others aided the Therans in a desperate attempt to buy continued freedom.

When the Therans arrived as Barsaive's conquerors, the dwarf kingdom of Throal was the largest realm in the region, and so the Therans delegated to them much of the day-to-day government. The dwarf language became the official language of trade, superseding the Theran tongue. Through their administrative responsibilities, the dwarfs exerted considerable influence over the area.



CHAPTER 2: BARSAIVE

For one hundred years, Theran power grew. Using their magical arts to unite their new possession under a common name, the Therans officially created the province of Barsaive. They searched the world for Barsaive's pattern items, knowing that the study of these items gave them an advantage in all places not already Named by those living in the province. What they did to Barsaive, they repeated throughout their empire, creating new names and dividing the world they ruled into different provinces.

At the northeastern corner of Barsaive, the Therans built the sprawling city of Parlainth, intended as both the provincial capital of Barsaive and the gateway to the "uncivilized" world that lay beyond. Once the Horrors left the plane of the world, the Therans hoped to return to Barsaive and resume imperial rule. As the Therans worked their great magics to protect their island heart from the Scourge, people throughout the Theran Empire constructed shelters against the Horrors as the Theran magicians had taught them. Some of these shelters, built underground, were called kaers. Large shelters built above ground were called citadels. Many of the human-inhabited cit-ies became citadels.

As the time of the invasion approached, strange monsters began to stalk the countryside. Far worse than the griffins, giant serpents, and firedogs common to Barsaive, these misshapen monstrosities struck terror into the hearts of all who saw them, attacking with a perverse delight in their victims' pain. Some of these early-arriving Horrors looked like moving mass graves, single beings composed of a dozen corpses stitched together. Others wielded finely crafted instruments of torture imbedded in their own skin. Some were misshapen lizards 20 feet long. Some attacked the body with teeth and claws; others attacked the victim's very thoughts.

...The Passions no longer heed me; what have I done? I am a good king...this I know, for my subjects love me. Never, they say, never has Scythia had such a gracious and loving sovereign as King Cardok the Peacemaker.

Or so they said once. Now they raise their eyes to the heavens and cry out against the injustice of the world, begging the Passions to tell them wherein they have erred. And I, even I, the king, can do no more than raise my voice with theirs. I cannot stop the evil that has befallen Scythia. I cannot keep their children from dying.

I cannot keep my son from dying. Every day he slips a little further away from me, my only son -who almost cost his mother her life at his birthing. His illness began scarcely a week after his first breath, with a low fever and a dryness of the skin. Then a cough, harsh and hard as though the dust of a desert clogged his infant throat. He cries from the pain, but sheds no tears; he has not enough water left in his body to make his eyes wet. They stare upward at the ceiling and inward at nothing, crusted with the last tears that dried against his lashes like the salt ring on a barrel offish.

His voice comes out as a thin whine, often broken by coughs. Blood from his lungs dries on his parched lips, and his breath rattles in his throat. Ancient bones might make such a sound, raised to a horrid mockery of life by a nethermancer. In this last week, his skin has begun to wrinkle; my grandsire's leather saddle, ridden on to countless wars and cracked with age, feels more smooth and supple than the flesh

of my son. I stroked his hair last night to calm him as he wailed, and pieces of it broke off and crumbled to nothing in my hands.

My son has lived for less than three weeks. He looks like a shriveled root, a dying old man.

Of all the children born in Scythia since the last year's harvest, none has yet lived a month. Something has sucked the life from them, some monstrous evil borne by the very air. With each tortured breath my child takes, I can hear the evil's footfall. With each passing day, I feel its nearness. We are dying, and we know not why...

—From the diary of King Cardok of Scythia

Within a short time, the Horrors' attacks became bolder and more frequent. Creatures stormed villages; smaller Horrors swarmed forests and grasslands, consuming everything in their path. Flocks



EARTHDOWN GAME MASTER'S GUIDE



of birds vanished within hours. Herds of cattle disappeared, relentlessly pursued by Horrors. Barsaive's people tried to fight back, but the creatures' ferocity and overwhelming numbers finally drove the terrified people to seek protection within their kaers and citadels. They sealed themselves behind doors inscribed with wards and glyphs to ward the Horrors away, taking up residence in tomblike places that would be their homes for hundreds of years.

Within the kaers, magical lights lit the underground darkness and magical crops and springs fed the hiding populations. For four centuries, generations were born, lived, and died within the shelters, waiting for the day when they could return to the world their ancestors left behind. At the end of four hundred years, a full century earlier than the Theran magicians had predicted, the magical devices created

by the Therans to herald the end of the Scourge revealed that the awaited time had come. Under the earth and in their walled towers, Barsaive's people waited, afraid to leave the safety of their shelters too soon. Finally, driven near to madness by the longing to leave their self-imposed imprisonment, the people began to unseal the doors of their kaers and citadels. Outside, they discovered a corrupted and barren world.

Some shelters did not survive the Scourge. Horrors entered some of the kaers and citadels, crashing physically through the walls or invading the minds of those hiding within, possessing them and making them do the Horrors' bidding. Whenever the creatures could breach a kaer's defenses, they fed well in the shelters; the victims within had nowhere to run and nothing to do but die.



As people emerged from hiding, they moved back onto the land, using magical arts to turn the world green again. Though the Horrors ended their assault on the world one hundred years earlier than the Therans had predicted, some especially powerful Horrors remained. To this day, they take every opportunity to shatter the fragile peace.

For the first fifty years after the opening of the kaers, the dwarfs of Throal worked to reunite Barsaive's scattered villages and towns through trade and treaties. In all that time, no word came from the Therans. Many believed, even hoped, that the island heart of the Theran Empire had perished during the Scourge. Alas, such hopes proved fruitless. Forty years ago the Therans returned in force, determined to lay claim to the province of Barsaive once more. The return of the empire sparked the Theran War, which ended in a massive siege of Throal. For once, the Therans' armed might failed to bring them victory, however. The people of Barsaive united against the Therans and drove them back to the southwest corner of Barsaive, where they still hold sway.

Barsaive in the present day is a land still recovering from the devastation of astral invasion, its people only beginning to reclaim their world. The kingdom of Throal and the Theran Empire remain poised in conflict. Through widespread raiding, the Therans have brought back slavery to a land taking its first free breaths under the idealistic laws of the dwarf kingdom. The land is rife with unopened shelters, some reportedly still filled with people who refuse to believe the Scourge over, and monsters roam the hills in search of victims.

Upon this stage, with these players and props, the struggle for Barsaive and perhaps the future of our world will be acted out. If the Therans prevail, the world will turn one way; if the kingdom of Throal prevails, the world will turn down a different path. Between these two great powers lie constant smaller struggles, each leaving its own mark, large or small, upon the shape of our world's destiny.

To those now reading this book, we hope that you, our descendants, find our actions worthy.

ON THE SCOURGE

It fell to me to complete the arduous task of gathering information regarding the Scourge, how we weathered it, and how it changed the land of Barsaive. For two reasons I have found this a difficult assignment. First, the topic itself is less concrete than many others in this work. By this I mean that it is one thing to report on various settlements, or on the landmarks of Barsaive, but another to distill fact from opinions about the great change that shook our world. Every person we queried gave us a different answer to our questions about the changes that the Scourge wrought in Barsaive.

The second difficulty in completing this task has been facing the sometimes unpleasant fact that the Scourge changed us as a people as much as it changed our land. When our ancestors chose to hide in their kaers and citadels for the duration of the Scourge, they saw no other choice, and did not consider the ways in which such long-lasting, self-imposed imprisonment might affect their descendants. Unfortunately, the effects were significant. We cannot ignore the fact that the Barsaive we knew before the Scourge is gone. Other than geographical features immune even to time and the Scourge, little that is familiar remains. The larger purpose of this document is to serve as a permanent record of present-day Barsaive so that we may make our past and present part of our future.

—Composed on this First Day of Strassa, in the Year 1505 TH, by Archivist Daron Fenn of Throal

ON THE SCOURGE AND WHAT IT WROUGHT

We cannot hope to completely understand the Barsaive of our own day without understanding how the

Scourge affected the land and its people. Both the threat of the Scourge and its arrival changed Barsaive in ways unimaginable to our ancestors. From a vibrant land of many tribes and kingdoms, Barsaive





became a subject province of the oppressive Theran Empire, which owed its existence to the world's need for powerful magic to survive the coming disaster. The Scourge itself drove the people underground and laid waste to the land, and Barsaive has yet to fully recover.

This chapter speaks of the Scourge. To fully understand it, we must recall how our people lived during that terrible time.

THE BOOKS OF HARROW

Ever since the long-ago days when the elven scholar Kearos Navarim determined that creatures from another astral plane would one day roam the world, leaving destruction and corruption in their wake, this invasion has been called the Scourge.

The first glimmer of knowledge that such creatures as the Horrors existed came when Elianar Messias, now known as the Martyr Scholar, unearthed the *Books of Harrow* in the catacombs beneath an ancient monastery in the Delaris Mountains. After extensive study of these six volumes, Messias learned the nature of the Horrors, a discovery that drove him mad. Whether his madness or some other force killed him, no one knows. Before he died, he scrawled a note that read:

These are the Books of Harrow.

They are our doom and our salvation.

Learn from them, or we will all perish.

Cryptic and unsettling, this note provided the first clue to the coming of the Scourge. After the death of Elianar Messias, an elven scholar and colleague named Kearos Navarim took the *Books of Harrow* and traveled with several fellow scholars to an island in the Selestrean Sea. Sequestering themselves for many years on the island that would one day become Thera, Navarim and his fellows studied to unlock the secrets the volumes held.

The final translation of the first *Book of Harrow*, completed a century and a half after they first came to light, revealed that the magic level of the world would increase until it reached a peak, at which time rapacious creatures from astral space would enter our world and ravage it. Navarim and his fellows, all scholars at the newly christened School of Shadows, also learned when this fearsome event would take

place and calculated precisely how much time they had to discover a way to protect the world and its people from the Horrors. After translating several more of the *Books of Harrow* and studying them closely, Navarim wrote the *Rites of Protection and Passage*. With this collection of plans for shelters to hide people from the Horrors and theories for creating magical protection against them, the Therans could counsel the rest of the world on how to prepare for and survive the Scourge.

ON THE BUILDING OF THE SHELTERS

The Theran *Rites of Protection and Passage* instructed the people of Barsaive on how to construct two types of shelters: kaers and citadels. Though both share many features, each has unique aspects.

Citadels

The term citadel carries two common meanings. The earlier meaning, which we survivors of the Scourge have begun to use again, refers to a large, walled city that also serves as a fortress. Barsaive has many such citadels, most built before the Scourge. Some of these suffered the ravages of time, war, and the Horrors; many others provide glowing testimonials to the builders' art and craft. Today, members of many of the Namegiving races inhabit these large cities, having resettled them after the Scourge.

The second meaning originated with the Scourge and refers to a city built or strengthened to withstand the Horrors. Massive domes of rune-inscribed stone usually surrounded such citadels, though some builders created domes of elemental air and fire. To protect against Horrors that might break through the first line of defense, magicians set traps and magical defenses at the edges of these fortified cities.

Because it is easier to build shelters from stone and dirt than from elemental fire, wood, water, and air, the Theran magicians focused on building with elemental earth, in the same way that magicians weave elemental air into the design when building an airship, elemental earth could be easily woven into the walls of the shelters. Equally important, the commonplace nature of small stone and dirt shelters made it easy to develop plans for larger shelters intended to house entire villages.



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Castles and other shelters woven from elemental air, fire, water, and wood still exist, but the methods used to build those structures died with their architects. Few such citadels survived the Scourge intact, and few in Barsaive have ever seen one. Many believe that the Horrors enjoyed destroying these shelters more than any others, that the creatures took particular pleasure in crushing those who flaunted their control over magic by building such impressive citadels.

The people who lived in the citadels that survived the Scourge remained in them after it ended, and their cities became a part of the new Barsaive. The citadels that succumbed to the Horrors are little more than massive graveyards filled with the bones and treasures of their luckless inhabitants. Horrors who remained on this plane, creatures seeking isolated lairs, and roaming bands of nomads and ruffians often live in these ruined citadels, hidden from view in thick, leafy jungles that shield the remains even from passing airships.

Kaers

The kaers consisted of living quarters and common areas dug into mountains or under the ground. Unlike the people who sheltered in the citadels, most who took to the kaers abandoned them as soon as they believed it safe to do so.

Kaer designs across Barsaive varied widely, depending on the resources at hand and how much time their builders had to construct them. All, however, were designed to accommodate generations of inhabitants. Some kaers, with their countless rooms and chambers, lay deep inside mountains or far underground. Some had many levels; others consisted of one level that stretched a long distance under the earth and rock. Some were dug out roughly, like the warrens of rats, long and narrow with winding passages; others boasted the clean lines and colossal design common to Throalic cities.

Most kaers were divided into common and private areas. In many larger kaers, each family was assigned its own quarters; smaller kaers built communal sleeping quarters. Residents used the large chamber at the center of the kaer for meetings and celebrations. Other vast rooms filled with tables and chairs served as communal eating facilities,

adjoined by kitchens built to feed hundreds and set up to work day and night. Communal cooking and eating rooms also allowed the kaer's leaders to keep a watchful eye on food supplies.

As with the citadels, most kaer builders created traps and magical wards to keep the Horrors out. Though many kaers survived, many still remain sealed because of their inhabitants' fear. Other still-sealed kaers protect only the corpses of inhabitants long dead, their treasures still guarded by the traps and wards designed to repel the Horrors.

Living Quarters (1)

A large area containing many smaller rooms wherein each family slept. Most also included a communal bathing chamber. (1A)

Central Chamber (2)

In this vast chamber, lit by magical moss to create the illusion of day and night, the people gathered for ceremonies and meetings. Merchants set up shops all around the perimeter, and the village's leading citizens attended to the smooth running of the kaer from offices also built in this place (2A).

Dining Areas (3)

Here the kaer's residents ate and drank together, at times chosen by the village leaders. Every member of the kaer shared in cooking the meal and cleaning.

Food Growth/Preparation Chambers (4)

Here the villagers grew food for the kaer when the stored supplies ran out. Larger kaers set aside additional space to raise livestock (4A), but most kaers grew only vegetables and fruits. Generations of gardeners and farmers worked to feed the kaer, experimenting with water and light cycles and hybrids to produce heartier plants.

Water Source (5)

The water that kept the kaer alive often came from an underground river. A few villages built springs in their kaers that drew water from the elemental water plane.

Statue of Garlen (6)

The Passion of Hearth and Healing, Garlen spoke to the people's hearts more strongly than ever during



the fearful years of the Scourge. Almost every kaer built in Barsaive raised a statue to Garlen, though the statues vary in likeness.

*Most individuals hold a unique vision
of each Passion's appearance.*

—Merrox, Master of
the Hall of Records

Of the Rites of Protection

The Theran *Rites of Protection and Passage* offered the people of Barsaive several ways to protect themselves from the Horrors. All Horrors possess both astral and physical forms, though they manifest in different ways. Some only manifest in astral form, while others manifest only in physical form. Because of the Horrors' dual nature, the Theran protections needed to work against both astral and physical attacks.

Astral Protection

The Theran *Rites* offered astral protection from the Horrors in two ways. The natural materials used to create the kaers and citadels offered one kind of

protection; in addition to that natural barrier, the Therans created wards built of runes designed to drive the Horrors away. The protections worked in the following manner.

All living things, including animals, plants, and the earth itself, have a "solid" presence in astral space. Astral manifestations cannot pass through astral creatures or the astral aspects of other living things. Because of this property, kaer walls made of natural materials such as stone, wood, and earth created a virtually impenetrable barrier to the astral forms of the Horrors.

Not content with a single layer of protection against such fearsome beings, the Therans also researched the runes most effective against Horrors, intending to use them to create magical barriers called wards that would block astral incursions. The people of Barsaive inscribed these runes on the outer walls of kaers and the domes of citadels. In many kaers, the builders also inscribed the inner walls with runes, creating still more magical wards as an additional layer of protection. This forethought saved many kaers, because too many Horrors found ways to penetrate the kaers' outer walls.

Potentially the weakest part of a shelter's defense, and therefore the most heavily protected, was the door. Because the entrance and exit of a kaer could not be made of elemental earth, the builders took extra care to protect these openings with additional magics, inscribing the doors with intricate runes and often lining them with orichalcum.

Physical Protection

In addition to the sheer mass and thickness of rock and earth, magical reinforcement of these materials offered physical protection from the Horrors. The creators of the citadels and kaers reinforced their domes and walls with elemental earth to strengthen them against the physical might of the Horrors, but this was a costly practice. The builders of kaers that lacked sufficient resources simply took advantage of areas offering naturally strong, thick walls. The people built many kaers in abandoned mines and other places deep beneath the earth, thus providing the strongest physical protection short of reinforcement with elemental earth. Builders also used elemental earth to reinforce the doors and entranceways of both kaers and citadels.



In addition to reinforcing walls and building magical wards, many kaers and citadels also set physical traps throughout their shelters as a layered defense against any Horrors that managed to penetrate the outer protections.

Constructing even the smallest shelters presented a monumental task; some kaers and citadels required more than two hundred years to complete. Despite the protections devised by the Therans, the Horrors managed to penetrate far too many kaers and citadels. In some cases, the Horror simply proved stronger than the protections set to repel it, and easily penetrated the shelter's defenses. Other Horrors, blocked on the astral plane, were patient enough to dig through the walls of a kaer until they broke through. Still other Horrors used their magical powers to render inert the astral defenses of a kaer and then attacked the shelter's residents.

OF LIFE DURING THE SCOURGE

As might be expected, the people of Barsaive found life in the underground kaers and sealed citadels drastically different from their former existence and often difficult. Moving an entire civilization underground required people to greatly change the way they lived their lives, and many found these changes daunting to face.

To create a truly accurate portrayal of this complex subject, I have relied on the words of one long dead who lived through the first years of hiding. He left behind a journal from which I took the following entry. As a scholar, I am grateful for this and other precious records of our history.

—Daron Fenn, Scholar of the Library of Throal

...Almost three weeks have passed since the good people of Ar Dham granted me admittance to their kaer, but I still feel as lonely as I did during the bleakest days of my wanderings. Suspicious glances and halfhearted words of greeting are the only replies my overtures elicit, and mothers whisk their children out of my path as I walk through the narrow avenues and hallways of this subterranean world. Still, I am more than grateful that these good folk have granted me sanctuary, and I cannot begrudge them their fear of Horror-touched strangers.

And when I think of the stories I have heard of other kaers, where the fear and suspicion turn lifelong neighbors against one another and spawn the frenzied shillings of innocents, I consider the people of Ar Dham quite compassionate and myself Passion-blessed.

Despite my loneliness, my life has developed a strangely comforting rhythm here. Each day, we all receive a portion of vegetables from the kaer's carefully tended gardens. And on special occasions, the elders slaughter one of the precious goats, and everyone shares in the feast. I stroll through the avenues under the steady light of the glowing moss that lines the kaer walls and always seem to pass by the kaer's large signal at the same time every day. There I pause and join the others who watch the bowl of elemental water and the small sphere of elemental earth that floats in the air above it. We gaze at it in silence, all dreaming of that far-off day when the earth and water again shall meet and the Scourge will become no more than a painful memory.

Evenings are my favorite time, however. After supper a crowd always gathers for the storytelling around the fire-in the center of the kaer. Mothers cradle sleeping babes in their arms, children sit in rapt attention, young lovers hold each other in easy embraces and listen to the storytellers weave eloquent tapestries of cool mountain brooks and warm summer breezes, emerald meadows and quiet orchards, fiery sunrises and bird song and soft autumn evenings when the moonlight spills across the golden fields...

—From the journal of Dralcid,
Swordmaster Adept of Genve

On Life Outside the Shelters

Though life went on inside the kaers and citadels, the Horrors were ravaging the world without. Swarms of Horrors tore across the landscape, devouring everything in their paths. Where once lush forests had stood, the Horrors left little but gnawed, burnt roots and twigs. The Horrors fed so voraciously that at times the sound of the devastation penetrated even the walls of the shelters. This unbearable noise alternated with silence so profound that a few daring or desperate souls persuaded themselves that the Horrors had gone.

Those who dared left the kaers many years before the Scourge ended, hoping to find fresh meat or longing to once more see the sun. Of these hardy (and foolhardy) souls, only a handful returned to



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the safety of the shelters. Most ended their days as food for the Horrors; others the Horrors touched and sent back to their kaers, thereby gaining access to fresh supplies of victims. Many records found in deserted kaers imply that opening their doors was the last action the residents took. The following journal excerpt describes the fate of one kaer that opened its doors too soon.

...Not until long after Jaro's death did we learn of his corruption. When the wizards proclaimed that the Scourge had ended, he, I, and three others broke open the seals on the doors and walked outside. We had hoped to find a new world, but the one we found came close to breaking our hearts.

Before us stretched a barren land, devoid of almost all life. In what our storytellers had always described as a lush valley, we found a bleak and wasted landscape where only a few insects and small plants still struggled to survive. As we looked about us, the voice came. We all heard it—in our heads, not in our ears. As quick as thought, the sky grew dark with creatures, their attack nearly overwhelming us. We fought our way back into the kaer, just barely preventing the creatures from entering. Of the five of us that left, three died outside the kaer's doors.

We thought ourselves safe, but we had not kept all the Horrors out. We soon learned that a Horror had entered the mind of Jaro and in that way penetrated the safety our our kaer...

—From the journal of Mallem,
1401 TH, found in the ruins of Kaer
Frohn, near the Tylon Mountains

OF THE ENDING OF THE SCOURGE

Though Theran scholars had predicted that the Scourge would last for five centuries, it ended one hundred years early, marked by an inexplicable occurrence. Contrary to the predictions of Theran magical theory, the fall of magical energy simply stopped long before it should have, a phenomenon recorded in the kaers and citadels by magic-level indicators of Theran devising. Scholars and magicians still cannot explain this discrepancy, except as a misinterpretation of the *Books of Harrow*.

Based on their studies of the *Books of Harrow*, the original scholars at Thera's Eternal Library had

concluded that the magical energy of the world determined the arrival and departure of the Horrors. As the level of ambient magic rose, the Horrors could breach the astral barriers between their plane of existence and ours. When the magic level subsided, the Horrors could no longer maintain the link between the two worlds and retreated to their native astral plane.

The magicians inside the shelters kept close watch as the world's magical energy slowly declined. At some point, they accepted the fact that the magic levels had seemingly ceased to drop, stopping short of the projected safe level. Though they suspected that the magic had receded enough to force most of the Horrors back to their own plane, they also guessed that an unwelcome number of especially powerful Horrors would remain.

Following the counsel of their magicians and village leaders, ever-increasing numbers of kaers and citadels pronounced the end of the Scourge and emerged to reclaim and re-tame their world.

At long last, we seem to be winning that difficult struggle. However, many kaers and citadels still do not believe that the Scourge has ended. These people remain hidden, waiting patiently for a sign that they may re-enter the world their ancestors left behind.

This discrepancy between Theran prediction and reality has caused many scholars in Throal to dispute other so-called "revelations" by Thera's magicians.

—Merrox, Master of
the Hall of Records

Leaving the Shelters

Though the Scourge had ended, for many the battle for freedom had just begun. Most people had known only life in the kaer or citadel, and they feared to leave the safety of their shelters and face unknown danger.

Barsaivians left their shelters in a trickle, the shelters opening up one by one as the people spread cautiously across the land. By the time the dwarfs in Throal had organized a fleet of messengers to spread the news of the Scourge's end across Barsaive, the people of most kaers had rejoined the outside world. What greeted them little resembled the world described in legend. The Scourge may have ended,





but four centuries of devastation had changed the world almost beyond recognition.

...I was among the first to leave my kaer. All my life, I had longed to breathe fresh air, see the mountains, leave the kaer's cramped confines. My first glance at the world outside dashed my hopes for a new, wondrous life. At first, I thought the tales told by the kaer's storytellers had grown into myth during four centuries underground. As I looked about, I began to see the truth. It was not the stories that had lied. Instead, the world had changed. Towering oaks had become twisted husks, monstrous mockeries of trees. The mountains, once breathtaking, forested slopes, were now barren rock. I breathed in deeply, hoping to find at least the outside air uncorrupted. It tasted harsh and bitter and burned my throat. I fell to the ground gasping, hoping that I smelled the odor from the rotting trees nearby. I was wrong...

—From the journal of Me'gana
of Kaer Lowilla, 1495 TH

Only two years ago I discovered a sealed kaer whose people did not know that the Scourge had ended. I am sure that this shelter is not the only such one.

—J'role the Honorable Thief

ON HOW THE SCOURGE CHANGED US

The Scourge left its mark on every aspect of life in Barsaive. The physical devastation was the most obvious change; once-lush forests withered and rotting, towns and cities obliterated, villages forever enslaved by Horrors. The Scourge had also changed people's hearts. The Barsaivians of our time have become a fearful lot, often preferring to hide from the future rather than face it. Though this may be understandable after our four hundred years in hiding, such a closing of the heart and mind bodes ill for the healing of our land.

The Scourge may never truly be ended for it utterly changed Barsaive and its people in every possible way: physically, mentally, spiritually, and magically.

On the Changes in the Land

The physical effects of the Scourge remain the most noticeable, for the very face of Barsaive is

changed. The ravages of the Horrors left whole cities and towns in ruins. Some succumbed during the Scourge; others fell victim to the depredations of Horrors that remained in our world after the kaers opened. Entire villages were swept away, leaving no evidence that anyone had ever lived in those regions. The Horrors devastated much of the landscape as well, leaving it stripped of life except for plants and animals too small to capture the Horrors' deadly interest. In most cases, the little life that remained was forever corrupted; in the patches of forest left standing, the trees had become twisted and gnarled in a perverse reflection of their former glory. In some areas, even the air was tainted, choking the survivors who breathed it.

The worst devastation occurred in those areas now known as the Badlands and the Wastes. The Scourge altered the land irrevocably in these areas, transforming fertile farmland into barren ground, devoid of all life save the Horrors and the creatures that served them. A land once full of towns and villages became a bare and windswept plain shadowed by thick, ash-like clouds.

The effects of the Scourge in these areas teaches us a lesson regarding the power we wield as Namegivers. By Naming these areas the Badlands and the Wastes, we have created True Patterns for these areas that define them in terms of what they are now, not what they once were or what they might become. As heroes continue to explore these areas and learn more about them, their True Patterns grow stronger.

Thus, as scholars and magicians debate the best method by which to heal these regions, their very study of them as the Badlands and the Wastes strengthens these True Patterns. Even as we seek knowledge with which to heal, we make the healing process more difficult.

☞ —Derrat, Wizard of Yistaine

We must be careful with our generalizations.

Rumor has it that Mountainshadow lairs within the Badlands.

☞ —Merrox, Master of
the Hall of Records





On the Changes in Living and Thought

The effects of the Scourge on the minds and hearts of its survivors are much less obvious than the changes in the land, but in many ways far more significant. These changes fall into two broad categories: cultural changes and changes in behavior.

On the Changes in Culture

Strangely enough, the Scourge wrought some good in Barsaivian culture. Before the Scourge, the Namegiver races maintained separate cultures. The end of the Scourge, however, brought representatives of all the Namegiver races together in the same communities. When the people of Barsaive returned to the surface of the world to rebuild it, they reasoned that larger settlements might bring safety because a greater population provided a larger number of people to be trained as warriors. As groups of Barsaivians traveled across the province to establish new settlements, they realized that maintaining distinctions between races was far less important than building a strong community able to defend itself and thus chose to live as neighbors rather than enemies.

In contrast to this new acceptance between the races, though no less beneficial in its way, the isolation created by four centuries of hiding gave rise to a multitude of different customs. Before the Scourge, communities that traded with each other and intermarried developed similar cultures, possessing the same customs, modes of dress, folklore and legends, and spiritual beliefs. During four hundred years of isolation, however, each community developed a unique culture. The resulting variety of customs, styles, and legends has given Barsaive society a color and richness badly needed to heal the darkness left by the Scourge. Barsaive now boasts so many different cultures that travelers no longer know what to expect when they arrive in a new settlement.

Though these changes have made Barsaive a far more dynamic place, this cultural explosion also creates the risk of us encountering beliefs and customs different from our own.

—Daron Fenn, Scholar
of the Library of Throal

On the Changes in People

Though the wider cultural changes wrought by the Scourge seem to have brought us great good, changes in our individual thought and action often appear to counteract them. The people of Barsaive can accept differences in race and culture far more readily than did our ancestors because fear demands that we band together; yet this same fear has made Barsaivians mistrustful of everyone they meet.

The years of self-imprisonment fostered a strong streak of suspicion in most Barsaivians. Countless tales describing the dangers of the Horrors helped keep the residents of the shelters safe through constant vigilance, but many people took this caution to extremes. Family members often became as suspect as strangers, and anyone who showed even the slightest difference from “normal” behavior risked being stoned to death at the hands of frightened fellow kaersmen.

When they left the shelters, people carried their fears with them, and intense suspicion became a fact of everyday life in Barsaive. Small towns and villages rarely welcome strangers. The occasional stranger who stops for a night or several days finds himself the object of universal scrutiny and suspicion. This is true even for visitors to larger cities, whose residents are determined not to be duped by those possessed by a Horror. Travelers often feel as if everyone in the city or town is watching them.

In some ways, fear of the Horrors and the desire to avoid their influence has done more harm to Barsaive than have the Horrors themselves. The Horrors did not inflict the Ritual of the Thorns on the elves of the Blood Wood, for one. The Elven Court chose to walk that path rather than face destruction by the Horrors and did themselves greater, irretrievable harm than could the Horrors. In the same way, Blood Magic has often saved someone from the Horrors, but the price we pay for purchasing our safety through such gruesome means is often too high to justify the ends.

In an ironic corollary to this paranoia rampant in our society, travelers who feel watched in other cities almost always watch strangers in the same way at home.

—Merrox, Master of
the Hall of Records





On the Changes in the Passions and their Followers

The Passions, powerless to prevent the Scourge (though many scholars and Questors doubt they would have, even given the chance), stood by and watched the Horrors devastate their world and people. Of the twelve Passions, nine survived the Scourge intact. The remaining three—Dis, Raggok, and Vestrial—were driven mad by the corruption. Now known as the Mad Passions, these three have had a profound spiritual effect on their followers. Where once the Passions lived peacefully side by side, the three Mad Passions now work to destroy the other Passions, sowing discord and forcing the remaining Passions to fight off these attacks.

This discord among the Passions led their Questors to create the first organizations devoted to the ideals of the individual Passions. The desire of the Mad Passions to conquer and destroy the other Passions prompted their Questors to create hierarchies within the ranks of devotees, the better to serve their crazed gods' purposes.

On the Changes in Magic

Though less visible than the changes in the land and less disruptive than the Scourge's spiritual effects,

the changes the Scourge has wrought on magic are potentially the most profound.

Before the Scourge, magicians could draw magical energy directly from astral space to power their spells with little risk. Though careless spellcasters using magic in such a way often suffered damage, most experienced magicians could cast raw magic with no ill effects. But the Horrors warped and corrupted astral space when traveling through it during the Scourge, just as they did the rest of the world. To avoid the dangers of making direct contact with this polluted magical energy, some magicians developed safer methods of powering their spells. Those few magicians still willing to cast raw magic risk being noticed and marked by a Horror.

The pollution of astral space gravely concerns many magical theorists. Though most of the world's corruption has begun to heal itself, the damage to astral space shows no signs of healing. Many observers fear that the corruption of astral space is permanent. Given the pervasive nature of magic in Barsaive, this taint irrevocably alters the way we live our lives.

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Some magicians attribute the current steady level of magic to the effects of the Scourge. This theory has few supporters, though none of its detractors can conclusively prove the idea wrong.
—Derrat, Wizard of Yistaine

ON THE LEGACY OF THE SCOURGE

The Scourge left an indelible mark on our world. Though as a people we are determined to reclaim and rebuild our land, memories of the Scourge

and its lasting effects make this task tremendously difficult.

Many Troubadours and historians insist that the Therans' original prediction of a five-hundred-year Scourge was correct. Though Barsaive's people emerged from the kaers and citadels after only four hundred years, this last century might easily be considered the final stage of the Scourge. Only now, after a century of healing, do we seem to have moved away from its dark shadow. Only now can we truly begin to rebuild our world in the hope of restoring it to its former beauty and glory.

ON LIFE IN BARSATIVE

Such luck. I drew the one topic I hoped not to receive: to describe the various, unique aspects of life in Barsaive. This topic could be anything, I thought. After struggling for weeks to find a scheme for organization that worked, I finally accepted that I needed to first gather my information and then concern myself with organizing it. Unfortunately, the longer I worked at my task, the harder it became to find a satisfactory way to organize such diverse material into a logical format. Even worse, as work proceeded on other sections of the text, I was told that more and more information needed to appear in my section. By now greatly frustrated, I resolved to organize this section as simply as possible. I hope I have provided a useful chapter, one which is far easier to read than it was to write.

—Written by the Hand of Ardinn Tero, Scholar of the Library of Throal

A DISCOURSE ON DAILY LIFE

In some ways, this chapter serves as a primer on Barsaive, providing enough information to prepare the reader for travel across the province, but not so much that it becomes overwhelming. Descriptions of Barsaive's languages, customs, economy, spiritual beliefs, and so on give the reader with some notion of what to expect in different towns and cities, and also offers insights into Barsaive's many cultures.

Despite his trepidations, I think that Ardinn has done an admirable job of organizing the diverse and somewhat unwieldy material that needed to be included in this section.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

This section begins with an overview of present-day life in Barsaive, followed by essays covering more specific topics.



BARSATIVE AS WE KNOW IT

The vast land mass of Barsaive is bounded on the south by the Death's Sea, on the east by the Aras Sea, on the north by the Blood Wood, and on the west by the Wastes. The Second Theran Empire, whose lands adjoin Barsaive at its southwestern edge, claims Barsaive as part of its empire, though the people of Barsaive steadfastly resist this Theran incursion. In order to expand their empire farther north, the Therans must first overcome our resistance.

Almost six hundred years ago, Barsaive received its Name from the First Theran Empire, and this Name created its True Pattern. Once they had Named it and made it theirs, the Therans were content to let the internal politics of the province continue without interference,

as long as those politics did not affect their own plans. As token ruler and watchdog over the province, the Therans created the position of Overgovernor,



making the holder of that office responsible for shaping policy in the province to meet Thera's needs.

By Theran reckoning, Overgovernor Kypros is currently in charge of the province of Barsaive. In truth, his influence extends only over the province's southeastern corner, the area around the Sky Point outpost and the Theran-controlled city of Vivane. Sky Point is Kypros' fortress and the center of the Theran presence in Barsaive.

As Overgovernor, Kypros is actively involved in sending Theran troops and airships deep into Barsaive to harass the people and capture slaves. Though the rulers of Barsaive's various cities and regions do not recognize Kypros' authority, he has been able to establish trade and slaving agreements with certain non-official parties in some of the large cities of Barsaive's southwest quarter.

The politics of the rest of Barsaive can be best summed up in a common saying:

*The trolls raid the dwarfs,
the dwarfs dislike the elves,
the elves have no patience with the humans,
and the humans war with each other.
But everyone hates the Therans.*

In fact, though every community harbors racist factions, most of Barsaive's cities, towns, and villages gladly accept neighbors of many races. The dwarf kingdom of Throal, which encourages members of all races to settle within its borders and builds homes for immigrants, is the greatest power in the province, followed by the elves of Blood Wood and the t'skrang of the Serpent River (though the latter suffer from the continual problem of infighting). The next strongest power lies in various cities scattered across the land, followed by independent military groups such as the crystal raiders and the ork scorchers.

The people of Barsaive are not united in their allegiances. Some pledge loyalty to the kingdom of Throal, upholding its egalitarian laws and ideal of freedom for everyone. Others, believing that the dwarfs will not give up power and authority easily, fear that in time Throal may become as oppressive as the Theran Empire. The elves of Blood Wood seek far more power than they currently wield, and rumors abound that they will soon stop brooding

in their giant forest and begin laying claim to the surrounding area. Many cities also wish to establish themselves as rivals to Throal, and the trollmoots have been trying for decades to make of their diverse tribes a cohesive political force.

The years ahead clearly hold many possibilities for political intrigue and diplomacy, as each faction forms advantageous alliances just long enough to gain the upper hand.

ON THE VARYING CUSTOMS OF BARSAIVE

Despite Barsaive's bewildering variety of cultures, certain customs and conventions such as the name-day, belief in the Passions, and the use of Throalic and Theran calendars are common to many communities. The institution of slavery, a Theran barbarity imposed on Barsaive rather than a native practice, has unfortunately become enough a part of Barsaive society to rate inclusion in this section.

On the Passing of Days and Months

The people of Barsaive mark time according to one of two calendars: Theran or Throalic. The Throalic calendar was used before the Scourge, and most of Barsaive continues to use it. People living in areas under Theran rule use the Theran calendar, often under threat of punishment. In the city of Vivane, with the largest population in Barsaive under the yoke of Thera, authorities have outlawed Throalic calendars; anyone found using them must pay a heavy fine.

The Calendar of Throal

The Throalic calendar divides the year into twelve months of thirty days each, each month beginning near or on a new lunar cycle. The months are named Strassa, Veltom, Charassa, Rua, Mawag, Gahmil, Raquas, Sollus, Riag, Teayu, Borrum, and Doddul.

Between the months of Gahmil and Raquas, the Throalic calendar sets aside five days to celebrate the Earth. This five-day holiday reflects the calendar's dwarf origin. Though the dwarfs use the moon cycle to count the passage of days, they also wish to pay respect to their true home underground. With their preference for subterranean life, the dwarfs seldom see the moon. Indeed, their use of its cycles





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is more for convenience than because of any spiritual attachment to it.

Across Barsaive, people use these five days for many purposes. Throal sponsors holidays featuring contests of crafts involving stonework, primarily gem-cutting and sculpting. The contest winners earn seats of honor at local feasts. In many cities, residents indulge in revelry during these days, and the wealthy often sponsor enormous parties for the less fortunate. Farming towns and villages also use the five days to celebrate the Earth, but focus their ceremonies on the fertility of the soil. Pageants and rituals celebrate birth, growth, decay, and death—the cycle of all life. The Throalic calendar takes the date of Throal's founding as its beginning. According to this calendar, the current year is 1506 TH.

No Theran-controlled territory or city, including Iopos and Vivane, recognizes the five celebration days.

⊗—Kern Redhand, Historian of Throal

The Calendar of Thera

Each Theran day begins and ends according to the cycle of the sun, and the Therans arrange their calendar in 73 five-day weeks rather than according to the lunar cycle. The Therans do not, however, worship the sun; they adopted a solar-based calendar simply for ease of use. Each week is numbered rather than named, and each day is designated by its week number and position in the week: for example, “fifth week, second day.” When written, this date appears as 5/2, sometimes followed by the year. The Therans begin their calendar with the founding of the city of Thera; by their reckoning, the current year is 1063.

Most Barsaivians assume that the Theran government adopted their calendar in order to more frequently tax their citizens. The Therans collect taxes every fourth week, or twenty days.

⊗—Ardinn Tero, Scholar of the Library of Throal

On the Feast of the Name-day

Because our ability to Name things separates Namegivers from the other creations of the universe, the Naming of our own offspring becomes a significant event. Every culture and every race in

Barsaive and in the whole world performs a Naming ritual for its children; even the Therans practice a Naming ritual, and slaves brought to Thera and Barsaive from other lands describe similar ceremonies common to their homelands.

Naming makes a person significant in our world. Though every person, place, and thing possesses a pattern that lets it interact with magic, Naming creates a True Pattern and focuses the magic of the world into that pattern. By the act of Naming, Namegivers separate themselves from the formless void of the universe.

Most Name-day ceremonies take place within the first week of a child's life, though some people celebrate the Name-day during the child's adolescence. All children receive at least a simple nickname soon after birth. Children who perform the Name-day ritual during adolescence receive a second name to signify their Naming according to the proper ritual.

Most communities create a True Pattern for their place of Naming by setting aside one location for the Naming ceremony. The family of the child to be Named prepares this place for the Naming according to local custom. In the morning of the third day of the child's life, the parents bring him or her to the Naming place, usually a windowless room. They carry the child into the room and close the door, plunging the room into darkness. The scent of burning incense soon fills the room, calming those present and helping to make the coming ceremony the focus of their thoughts.

By magic or other means, a magician lights a candle. This single point of light illuminates the faces of all present—the baby, the parents, a magician (usually the person who produced the flame), and friends of the family. Their illuminated faces and bodies seem to float in the surrounding darkness, and in that moment all present turn their hearts and minds toward the child.

One of the parents says to the child, “On this your Name-day, I Name you so you may be known. This Name is not who you are, but who you will be. It is not a limit, but a vessel you shall fill.”

The other parent then says, “When people think of you, they will think not of your Name, but of the Passions that Name represents. You are not bound to this Name, for you are a Namegiver. We give you this Name. From now on, you will Name.”



The parent not holding the child then picks up a candle and lights it from the flame the magician created. As the wick catches fire, both parents speak the first syllable of the Name in unison, then place the candle on a small table in the center of the room. The parents continue to light candles as they speak each syllable of the Name until they have spoken each separate syllable. When the couple has lit candles for each syllable of the child's Name, the magician opens the door of the room just as the gathered group speaks the whole Name in unison. The light from outside the room rushes in, joining the light produced by the candles and driving out the void.

On Common Spiritual Beliefs

Barsaivians believe that the Passions of the world are the living embodiments of the life force of the universe. Much as an adept draws on the magic of the universe to perform great deeds, the Passions grant similar strength, power, and abilities to their Questors, who in turn live out the ideals of the Passions in the eyes of the rest of the world.

Questors devote their lives to living as their chosen Passion would have them do and to teaching others about that Passion. Most Questors wield power equivalent to that of magicians and adepts, but receive their power as a gift from their chosen Passion, rather than drawing it directly from the universe. Living his or her life according to a given Passion's ideals focuses a Questor's power much as a Discipline focuses an adept's. The Questor's life becomes a metaphor of the ideals that the Passions embody.

As their name implies, Questors spend their lives pursuing a mission, the nature of which depends on the Passion the Questor serves. As with magicians and adepts, the actions of most Questors add color and vibrancy to the world.

On the Theran Abomination of Slavery

The evil of slavery came to Barsaive with the Therans, who began to deal in slaves as a valuable commodity during the First Theran Empire. In those long-ago times a slave was educated, held a certain status in society, and could eventually earn the means to purchase his freedom. Though no one could ever view slavery as a good condition of life, a slave's lot



in the First Theran Empire would be enviable compared to the plight of a slave in our day.

Theran slavery weighed heavy on the citizens of Barsaive, especially the dwarfs of Throal. During the Scourge, the dwarfs decided to outlaw the practice of slavery in any form. They also vowed to enforce this sanction in Throal or in any other place where the shameful practice existed once the Scourge had ended. Though this resolution implies that Throal intends someday to invade Thera and abolish slavery there, at present King Varulus has his hands full rooting out slavery in Barsaive.

In stark contrast to the Therans' view of slavery during the First Empire, the Therans of our time no longer believe that the Passions deign to inspire slaves and deny the unique nature each slave possesses as a Namegiver. They see slaves as less valuable than tools. While the Therans take special care of their tools, slaves they treat no better than coals and dry wood tossed into a fire and consumed. Once used, these materials turn to ash and burn away as waste.

Theran law sets forth certain conditions that make it legal to sell an individual into slavery, the foremost of which is criminal activity. Theft, murder,



assault, or destruction of property can be punished by slavery. In cases involving Therans, Theran judges determine a criminal's fate. For cases involving Barsaivians, local judges pass sentence. Theran criminals receive a sentence of slavery only when they commit one of the aforementioned crimes against another Theran. By contrast, non-Theran criminals may be sentenced to slavery for almost any crime, regardless of the motive or victim.

In short, Theran law inverts Throalic justice, which states that the wealthier and more powerful the criminal, the greater the punishment. Theran law also ignores the fact that few Barsaivian communities other than Throal possess a legal system as complex as their own. The legal accountability that Therans take for granted simply does not exist throughout most of Barsaive. When a band of slavers arrives at Lopos or Sky Point herding two dozen prisoners they claim are murderers, the Therans do not bother to ascertain whether or not the prisoners received a fair trial and deserve their fate. They simply assume it is so, pay the slavers for their property, and set the slaves to work.

This attitude encourages slavers to roam the land in search of the powerless and isolated for capture and sale. Attracted by the prospect of making profits at little risk, some Barsaivians have also begun to kidnap and sell their fellow citizens to the Therans. Scorcher tribes, neighboring villages, and others level spurious claims of criminal activity against each other in a desperate attempt to earn money or to avoid becoming slaves.

Theran slaves perform the work of household and personal servants, soldiers, farmers, miners, airship rowers, builders of ships and buildings, and innumerable other difficult or menial tasks. Because they receive little food, water, or rest, most slaves die within a few years of capture.

In an effort to prevent slaves from rebelling against their captivity, the Therans usually put them to work far from where they were captured. Though much of the slave trade is made up of unfortunates from communities too small to know Throalic or even be aware of the Theran Empire, the Therans make sure their slave gangs are composed only of individuals from various far-flung places, people who do not share a common language, culture, or knowledge of the nearby land.

Theran slave-owners also control their slaves by offering them a chance at freedom in return for information about planned revolts and escapes. We do not know, however, if the Therans reward such behavior by keeping their promises. Regardless of the debatable morality of slavery, its continued existence in Barsaive seems a certainty for several years to come.

Years ago when I was enslaved, I rowed a Theran mining ship alongside people who spoke words I had never heard before. I never knew how many of my fellow sufferers were from Barsaive and how many had been dragged countless miles to suffer in my homeland.
—J'role the Honorable Thief

ON OUR DIVERSE LANGUAGES

Barsaive's diverse population speaks several languages, some of them more widely used than others. The following discussion touches on each of the major languages.

On the Language of Throal

Throalic, the most common language in Barsaive, is a corrupted version of the ancient tongue used by the dwarfs of the Throal Mountains centuries ago. When the First Theran Empire conquered Barsaive, its leaders encouraged the dwarfs of Throal to establish trade routes throughout the province. Of all the native groups in Barsaive, the dwarfs alone could match the Therans in prosperity. Realizing that the dwarfs were helping to create trading ties throughout the land, which would only make the Theran Empire stronger, the Therans gave the dwarf merchants free rein.

The Throalic dwarfs have always been adept at weaving other people's customs, words, and ideas into their own ways, instinctively whatever will make their own kingdom and people more appealing to others. Of course, many claim that the dwarfs just as instinctively take credit for these customs, words, ideas, conveniently forgetting that they originally borrowed them. I cannot dispute this claim.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records





For hundreds of years dwarf traders traveled throughout Barsaive, eventually establishing their language as the language of trade. Throalic words described the standard for measurements, weights, money, and the accepted terms of negotiation. The spread of language worked both ways, however. As the dwarfs went about their business in towns and villages across Barsaive, they incorporated many words from those communities into the Throalic tongue.

On Throalic as the Common Tongue

Because Throalic is a relatively easy language to master, and because, over time, it incorporated so many pan-Barsaivian words, increasing numbers of people found it expedient to use the language for purposes other than trade. Because rule by the First Thera Empire made trade and travel safer and easier, people from all walks of life and areas of the province were encountering each other on the road, in cities, and everywhere else people could meet. The only language they had in common was bits and pieces of Throalic. In this way, Throalic eventually became the most widespread provincial tongue. Later the dwarfs began to record and standardize their language, thus ensuring its continued prominence as the common tongue of Barsaive and furthering the spread of dwarf culture.

How the Book of Tomorrow Came to Be

As part of this effort, a group of linguists headed by the legendary dwarf scribe Mabbon Destroggus created a book listing all the Throalic words in common use in Barsaive at that time, adding the rules of grammar according to dwarf custom. As the time of the Scourge drew near, the purpose of this book changed to eventually include the history of Barsaive and Thera, the province's tales and legends, and the knowledge that Throal possessed concerning the coming Scourge. What began as a book of language became the *Book of Tomorrow*, offering Barsaivians counsel on surviving the coming Scourge and how they might one day resume their normal life after the Horrors departed our world.

King Varulus II commissioned countless scribes to copy out this tome so that the book could be sent to communities all over Barsaive—cities, trading towns,

t'skrang crew covenants, farming towns and villages, ork tribes, and so on—until nearly every settlement, big or small, had received a copy.

Most communities received their copy just as the Scourge was about to strike, and so the people carried the Book of Tomorrow with them into their kaers and citadels. During the four hundred years of hiding, the *Book of Tomorrow* became a symbol of hope for the people of Barsaive, a link to their past and the promise of a brighter future.

Those of us now living in Barsaive must understand that the people who sealed themselves away in the shelters—even those who knew no other way of life—never accepted that state of affairs as natural. People hid because of the Horrors; the Horrors were terrible, and therefore living in shelters was terrible. Each generation told its children stories of life before the Scourge, of living in a world with a warm yellow sun, vast green jungles, blue skies, trails of white clouds, and grassy expanses that stretched as far as the distant horizon.

The *Book of Tomorrow* reminded people of what they had lost and what they would someday regain. The word for “sun” was clearly defined in the book, so that every day people could open the book and know that the sun existed! Every day people could read and speak words that referred to things they had never experienced, things that they had lost generations before when the Horrors tore the world apart. Sky. Mountains. Farms. Airships. Flowers. Riverboats. Races not represented in certain kaers were remembered as well: elves, dwarfs, orks, windlings, and so on. Though the people in their kaers and citadels had little firsthand knowledge of the wonders described, the *Book of Tomorrow* ensured that little was forgotten. As generations passed, the words for things in the world they had lost took on the mystique of magical talismans. And gradually, the peoples of Barsaive developed a deep reverence for the land they could only dream of.

Generation after generation learned the language of the dwarfs. As the *Book of Tomorrow* gained mythic proportions, entire communities began to adopt the tongue that spoke of the promised land we would find once the Horrors retreated to their own astral plane. In this way, Throalic became the standard language for all of Barsaive. Pronunciation varied wildly, of course, as each community spoke according



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to its own way. But when the people began to emerge from hiding again, a common language with which to communicate made it easier for Barsaive to begin its long road to recovery from the Scourge.

As a boy, I learned much about the world that I could not verify as true. The warmth of the sun, the majesty of the airships, and the beauty of the elves all seemed too fabulous to be believed. And neither had anyone I knew seen such things, for the last people to see the sun had died centuries before.

—J'role the Honorable Thief

A Few Remaining Curiosities

Because written Throalic is a complicated language, formed by pictures adorned with elaborate symbols, only a few, well-educated people in any community could read and write it. These more literate folk took on the task of teaching the spoken language to the rest of their communities. The inability of most ordinary citizens to read Throalic added to the mystique of the *Book of Tomorrow* and of the words within it.

Almost universal access to the *Book of Tomorrow* had another unexpected effect. Because the book described many dwarf customs, attributes, and ideals, most Barsaivians emerged from the kaers and citadels already feeling a comfortable familiarity with the dwarfs and their ways. Though generations had passed without contact, the *Book of Tomorrow* established the dwarfs in the hopes and dreams of their

countrymen. It was that which allowed the small subterranean people of the Throal Mountains to play such an important role in unifying the land and attracting other races to their cities after the Scourge.

On the Theran Tongue

Prior to the Scourge, the Therans attempted to teach their language to the wealthy and educated citizens of Barsaive, and records show that the Theran language enjoyed widespread use hundreds of years ago. However, it was the *Book of Tomorrow* that sustained the people of Barsaive during the terrible time of the Scourge; the Theran language quickly fell into disuse. Only a few stories tell of communities that spoke Theran when they emerged from their shelters.

Except for the many Theran words adopted by the dwarfs during the First Theran Empire, Theran is rarely heard in Barsaive. As part of the Therans' attempt to reconquer Barsaive, they are once again attempting to teach us their tongue, but find their task even harder now. When the First Empire dominated Barsaive centuries ago, no common language unified the people. Now the Therans must grapple with a cultural identity that they helped forge, only to have it work against them.

In general only Theran bureaucrats learn Throalic, and then simply to communicate more easily with the local population. The Theran government has not given up its goal of establishing Theran as the official language of Barsaive and the rest of its empire, however.



On Racial and Local Languages

Barsaive's unification has made racial and local languages rare, but a few such tongues are still spoken. Countless farming villages and towns, some cut off completely from the political turmoil that has gripped Barsaive in recent years, still speak their ancient languages. Lacking copies of the *Book of Tomorrow*, these communities did not learn of the Throalic language and therefore continued to speak the tongue of their ancestors while in hiding. Even the best-prepared heroes re-exploring our land may find themselves unable to communicate verbally with such people. Some communities use more than one language. The crystal raiders and ork scorcher tribes speak their own ancient tongues as their primary languages and in some cases also speak fluent Throalic.

The t'skrang of the Serpent River, members of the Elven Court, and other single-race communities also preserve their racial languages, but tend to use them as formal, almost ritual tongues, reserving them for official functions. Only the elite of such communities learn these ancient tongues, and many fear that these venerable languages will one day be lost to time.

Of course, racial languages only remain pure in racially pure communities. The t'skrang crew covenants and the Elven Court of Blood Wood are two examples of this increasingly rare phenomenon, notable exceptions to the interracial communities that make up the bulk of Barsaive. In this modern day, most Namegivers define themselves by where they live rather than by race.

ON TRADE AND THE FLOW OF GOODS

Though many self-sufficient villages remain scattered throughout Barsaive's remote regions, trade has once again begun to generate wealth in most of the province. Since the emergence from the shelters, burgeoning trade has created both rich and poor and given rise to various standards of living ranging from squalid to wealthy.

The Mercantile Exploits of Torkel of Barsaive as recorded by

Thelonius, scribe of Bartertown,

on the First Day of Raquas, 1506 TH

('Tis truly a sad day, Thelonius, when a learned scribe such as yourself is reduced to recording the daily life of

a common trader. But you have only yourself to blame, after all. And Bonecrusher cannot remain angry forever. In a few weeks the swordmaster will calm down and surely understand when you explain you had no idea the young lady was his niece. In the meantime, where were we? Ah yes, Torkel.)

The beneficent merchant Torkel set out from the gates of Bartertown at dawn, leading a caravan of three camels, two oxen, swords and shields—a virtual cornucopia of fine merchandise...

(Yes, quite a "cornucopia"—one long sword; two shields; three dwarf-weave rugs; assorted spearheads; a week's worth of dwarf rations; a mold-covered old keg, the contents of which I cared not to learn; 27 copper pieces; and a weathered old troll war helm fashioned from the skull of a thundra beast. The trader seemed especially proud of this last item.)

By midday our caravan reached Larken, a small village in the foothills of the Throal Mountains. Several young children ran out to greet us as we arrived, and Torkel puffed out his chest like a victorious warrior returning from battle. A small crowd had gathered in the town square, bringing sheep, wool and cotton, pelts of exotic creatures, and other sundries to exchange. Torkel's spearheads and rugs attracted immediate attention, and after much haggling he had exchanged six of the dwarf points and one rug for a small espagra hide, two bolts of cotton, and a basket of fresh apples and walnuts from the orchards and hills outside of town. The villagers insisted we stay for lunch to celebrate our transaction.

(Torkel accepted immediately, apparently not the type to turn down a free meal, no matter how crude the cuisine.)

Afterward, the magnanimous merchant treated our hosts to a round of the "finest dwarf stout" in a display of his unending generosity...

(He had one of the crew pour the toast from the mysterious mold-covered keg. The villagers apparently didn't know the difference or were ashamed to admit they had never tasted the rare dwarf brew, for they quaffed the vile liquid as though it were fine t'skrang vinlo.)

...The remainder of the day passed uneventfully. We stopped at two other villages, where Torkel traded several more spearheads for incense, more fruit and nuts, and some primitive but not displeasing jewelry.

By noon of the second day, we had reached one of the lush green valleys that surround the Serpent's upper tributaries. We followed the road, winding our way through

the vineyards that lined the hillsides until we reached a settlement of dwarfs and trolls nestled along the river's edge. Torkel spent the rest of the day trading, and by evening he had exchanged the two oxen, the two remaining rugs, the bolts of cotton and the rest of his spearheads for six large kegs of the valley's strong red wine.

Then, in yet another display of his uncommon generosity, Torkel treated your scribe, the caravan crew, and several of his dwarf and troll clients to a feast of roast pig at the local inn...

(Well, one could easily have mistaken the lavish repast for a display of generosity, until Torkel subjected his captive guests to an interminable discourse on the unrecognized importance of the merchant class in the life of the province. Some of my dinner mates had apparently heard it before, for they seemed to instinctively reach for the wine jugs as soon as he raised his cup and launched into his address. By evening's end, all present—save the magnanimous merchant—wore the same droopy-eyed expression.)

...On the third day we followed the river south as it gradually widened. We continued along the well-worn path, the camels straining under the weight of the heavy wine casks, until we reached the small river port called New Parlainth. The town did not look very impressive at first, but then we came on the docks along the river's edge, where t'skrang rivermen had tied their paddle-wheelers and set out their wares. The exquisite aromas of trikella, ustander, pestain and other rare t'skrang spices filled the air, piles of spiced fish towered taller than a troll, finely detailed silks rippled in the breeze. Several of the boisterous lizard-men shouted greetings to Torkel, making offers of silver and gold coins, exotic clothing and jewelry, finely carved flutes, crying statues and chameleon rings and other t'skrang magical novelties in exchange for his wine casks.

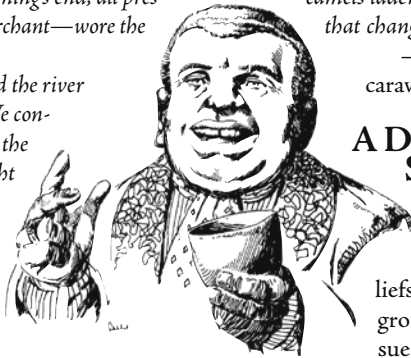
Torkel, cunning merchant that he is, only smiled and nodded. After he sent the crew off to secure the camels and their cargo for the night, he explained that he would let the demand for his wine casks grow until the next day, when they would fetch twice the price. Then we made our way to a riverside tavern, where he treated me to a feast that surpassed even the previous evening's abundance.

(I excused myself, citing fatigue from the morning's travel, when Torkel began asking one of the t'skrang dancers if she had ever contemplated the vital contribution to cultural exchange made by Barsaive's merchants.)

...At midmorning of the fourth day, Torkel departed the port of New Parlainth in triumph. In an amazing stroke of good fortune, he said, he had made the chance acquaintance of a t'skrang dancer the previous evening—a dancer whose uncle just happened to possess the last remaining stock of genuine t'skrang kalydospheres in New Parlainth! Unwilling to risk the chance that another buyer might snatch up the precious wares the next morn, he had cleverly concluded an agreement with the dancer that same evening and gained possession of the magical treasures for a mere six casks of wine, two shields, a sword, and assorted merchandise.

Thus our caravan departed the t'skrang river port, our camels laden with 600 elemental-water balls that change color when shaken...

—From the journal of Torkel, a caravan trader of northern Barsaive



A DISCOURSE ON SECRET SOCIETIES

Within every society there exist small groups of people who share minority beliefs and values. In Barsaive, these groups take many forms and pursue many goals. Some are guilds,

formed by craftsmen who share a common trade. Some are spiritual groups, drawn together by devotion to a particular Passion. Others consist of men and women attracted by the opportunity for profit or dissatisfied with the way of the world. Partly because they expect opposition, partly because exclusivity appeals to most people, and sometimes because their goals may harm the larger society, many such small organizations keep their existence secret. The information provided below regarding the following five secret societies came from many sources, some more reliable than others.

The Hand of Corruption

Though the name might suggest it, the Hand of Corruption has no ties to the Horrors. This group believes that the Horrors have forever tainted and

corrupted the world, and that to heal the world all life must begin anew. To make this happen, members of this group pledge to cleanse the world of all the Namegiver races, so that life may be reborn. Our sources hint that the Hand of Corruption is organized into many layers, its members scattered through cities across Barsaive. Unfortunately, the travelers with whom we spoke could offer us little information beyond whispers and rumors.

The Keys of Death

A group of assassins, the Keys of Death intend to spill enough blood to free Death. According to legend, the Passions imprisoned Death beneath Death's Sea, where it will remain until enough blood has been spilled in Barsaive to allow Death to sunder its shackles and escape. The Keys of Death offer their expert services across Barsaive, performing their specialty for anyone able to pay their price.

Living Legend Cults

This type of group originated with small societies that promoted hero worship. Living legend cults grew from those groups who believed that the answers to meeting the new challenges of our world could be found in the legends of Barsaive's past. Each living legend cult takes as its focal point the legend of a hero or magic item from the past. For example, one living legend cult seeks Purifier, the sword that legend says is destined to slay the remaining Horrors in the world. Another group, the elven Seekers of the Heart, vow to undo the corruption of Blood Wood and return the Court of the Elven Queen to its past glories.

Though the members of most living legend cults seem harmlessly obsessed with certain legends, a few present a real danger. These extremists consider anyone not equally devoted to their chosen legend as an enemy of their work of trying to save the world.

In a world as wondrously diverse as ours, their suspicions may even be accurate.

Lightbearers

The Lightbearers are dedicated to ridding the world of the Horrors and their dreadful legacy. They intend to bring light back to the world through the Passions, and so drive away the darkness of the Horrors. As with the Hand of Corruption, the Lightbearers cover their tracks so well that few people know anything of them save rumor; some even believe that they do not exist.

WHERE THE PEOPLES OF BARSAIVE DWELL

Though each of the Namegiver races contributes to Barsaivian culture, the influence of each race on a given area differs according to its numbers in that area. The province of Barsaive can be divided into three broad regions: the kingdom of Throal, including its recently constructed cities; the lowlands, which include most of the province's jungles, the Serpent River, and so on; and the highlands, which include all the mountains and plateaus of the province.

All Barsaivian cities outside of Throal lie in the lowlands; many smaller villages and towns lie in the highlands.

Each of the three regions contains the following percentage of Barsaive's people: Throal, 33 percent; lowlands, 50 percent; highlands, 17 percent. Note that one-third of the province's population lives in the mountain kingdom of Throal. Half the population lives in the lowlands, with half of this number residing in the cities. This means that the great lowland jungles of Barsaive support slightly more than a fourth of the province's population. Though the Scourge ended more than 80 years ago and we can now travel the land freely, most people, from habit or wisdom, prefer to cluster together.





ON THE NATURE OF MAGIC

We live in an age of magical thought. Because this age may end or the magic transmute into some other form, we have included an overview of our understanding of its workings in this guide to Barsaive. A reader desirous of specific discourses on the nature of magic may find them in numerous tomes covering that subject. I recommend the Thoughts Concordia by Vercian and The Art of Sword Magic by King Varulus I of Throal. Both of these books contributed to the following description of magic, as did theorists willing to explain to us their understanding of it.

☉—Inscribed by the Hand of Derrat, Wizard of the City of Yistane

ON THE WIELDING OF MAGIC

There are many planes of existence beyond the one we see. Some, particularly the etheric plane, mirror our own world. These other planes are the source of magic in the universe, and the medium through which magical energy travels. We use magic in two different ways: as magicians and as Adepts. Though magicians learn to use magic as an adept Discipline, an essential distinction between Adepts and magicians does exist. Understanding this distinction clarifies the two uses of magic.

On the Practices of Magicians

Magicians wield magic by tapping magical forces and controlling them through spells. Such practitioners seek to understand their magic, and so whatever magical theory exists comes almost exclusively from their ranks.

Magicians can be identified by the colorful, ornately embroidered robes they wear. In the early days of the Scourge, people found it necessary to prove that they were free of the Horrors' taint. Magicians chose to do this by practicing the artisan skill of embroidery, constantly stitching and redesigning elaborate patterns on their robes. These patterns draw on all aspects of Barsaivian life in ways meaningful to the magician. What a magician stitches into his or her robes often reveals much about him. Sometimes the magician creates geometric patterns, such as linked golden triangles set against blue squares. Other magicians may choose more domestic designs: farmers toiling to raise their crops, a river flowing through fertile valleys, and so on. The intricate detail of these illustrations make the pictures seem to move slightly, as if with a life of their own.

Because magicians draw magic from the astral plane to weave their spells, they are particularly susceptible to the Horrors, which often exist on

both the physical and etheric planes. These abominations constantly search for magicians tapping the astral plane's mystical forces, hoping to mark and so control an unwary victim.

As soon as magicians realized that the astral corruption that followed the Horrors had made it dangerous to draw magical energy directly into the world, they began using their robes and other objects to store their spells. This proved an unfortunate practice, however, because magicians lost spells when they lost the relevant object. Further research provided another solution to this problem: spell matrices.

On the Practices of Adepts

Any person who uses magic even without casting spells is an Adept of a Discipline. The nature of Adept magic is obscure. Magicians—who cast spells—consider Adepts as lesser magic-users; Adepts can spend their whole lives in ignorance of astral space and still perfect fantastic abilities that earn them the name of hero.

Even the most learned magicians, such as Ystan of Chorlath, can only suggest a comprehensive theory of the workings of Adept magic. His theory has drawn the fewest objections, though some detractors suggest that Chorlath's explanation stands only because one cannot argue with a theory as amorphous as air. The following explanation appears in the introduction to his definitive work, *The Universe and the Arts Magical*.

"The universe is alive with magic. Our lives, the lives of the Namegivers, feed the magic; we give the universe form and meaning. Without the Namegivers, the universe is but an amalgamation of light, a planet, trees, animals. Life follows its course under such conditions, but there is no mystery, for there is no one to wonder at the universe. There are splendid sights, but no one to





marvel at them. The universe may teem with life, but it has no meaning. Without the Namegivers, life has no passion, no love, no loss, no joy, no confusion. The universe itself longs to be filled with wonder, marvels, passion, love, loss, joy, and confusion, for these qualities make the universe feel appreciated.

"To maintain us Namegivers, the world's most rewarding form of life, the universe feeds us magic. A symbiotic relationship exists between the universe and the Namegivers, proving us at once part of and separate from it. As squirrels and trees are inside the universe, so are we. But we also stand outside the universe, aware of our place in it as squirrels and trees are not. As Namegivers, we are separate from one another and separate from the universe.

"The universe feeds with magic those most passionate about their lives, their emotions, their art. The universe feeds with magic those who challenge themselves with adventures, who challenge their own beliefs, who strive to become more than they were the day before. But the sustenance of magic carries a price. To truly thrive on the magic, one must give oneself completely to a Discipline. Many exist: archery, swordsmanship, thieving, sailing. Each Discipline serves as a metaphor for living. Focusing on one Discipline allows one to see one's relationship to the universe clearly, come to a better understanding of one's self, and reach the true potential of one's talents and abilities.

"A person who dedicates himself to practicing a Discipline and views his role in the universe through that Discipline has, in essence, Named himself. Such a one we call an Adept. Many archers live in Barsaive, but not all archers are Adepts. The ordinary archer knows how to bend a bow, may even have extraordinary shooting skill, but he does not see his occupation as a metaphor for his life. He does not understand his life through this metaphor. When the Archer Adept aims an arrow, he understands that he aims at every element of his life in the same way. Through careful aim, he can always strike his target. The Thief Adept does more than move silently or hide well in the shadows of night, as other thieves can. He knows that his silence and ability to wrap himself in shadows provide a metaphor for how he lives; silent and separate from his fellow beings, he remains unknown and unknowable. He cannot allow himself to trust others fully, nor by his very nature will people trust him fully, whether or not they know he is a Thief.

"This is the way of the Adept. Living fully within his Discipline forces the Adept to see the universe in a starker light. Some consider this unrelieved, true vision limiting. But this narrowing of choices makes life's direction clearer. Without a Discipline, a person simply drifts according to the whims and goals of others. By contrast, the adept is bound to no force other than the universe."

ON THE NATURE OF MAGICAL THOUGHT

According to Ystan of Chorlath, the universe feeds the Namegivers magic so that we may experience its wonders. He goes on to say that all Namegivers use the magic of the universe, not only magicians and adepts. Though magicians and adepts have the most skill in using magic, the universe feeds magic to all the Namegivers, who in turn help shape the world.

Many scholars refer to this synergistic relationship as magical thought. The theory of magical thought states that the world is alive with magic. The Namegivers are part of the world, and its magic affects their actions, thoughts, and lives. The magic of the world influences the Namegivers, and under that influence the Namegivers begin to see the world differently. This altered view in turn affects the magic of the world and so creates a new magical world in which the Namegivers live and act.

On the Workings of Magic

The interaction between the magic of the universe and the Namegivers relies on a complex relationship between Names, Namegivers, pattern items, and knowledge. Those interested in a scholarly study of magical theory should read the *Writings of Jaron* in the Library of Throal. For the layman, we explain these ideas below.

The Nature of Names and Namegivers

The Namegivers referred to by Ystan of Chorlath are the people of Barsaive, all the intelligent and sentient beings who Name themselves and the world around them. Any living being, place, or object can be Named. And once Named, it is tied to the universe magically. For example, a horse is not tied magically to the universe, but a horse Named Sharrer the Swift is. A stone is not, but the Varness Stone is. A prison is not, but the Pit in Blood Wood is.



CHAPTER 2: BARSATIVE

People who find, identify, and study threads connected to people, places, and objects learn important, powerful knowledge about those people, places, and objects; they learn the True Pattern of the thing they study. When the person who researched the being, place, or object uses magic with or against the being, place, or object, the knowledge of the True Pattern enhances the magic, and the adept or magician performs it more effectively.

The most difficult aspect of Naming for a young adept or magician to understand is the distinction between two related objects, places, or people. For example, if an adept studies threads connected to the kingdom of Throal, this information does not make magic cast within the Hall of Records in Throal more effective, for the following reason.

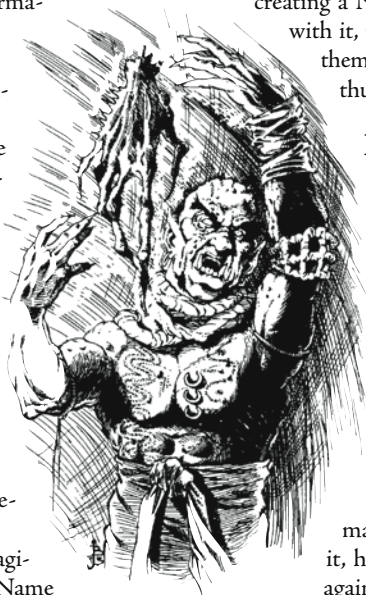
Each Named place can be viewed as nesting within another Named place and containing still other Named places, much like a series of boxes within boxes. For example, Throal rests within Barsaive, and the Hall of Records lies within Throal. The information an adept possesses about a place enhances his magic until he leaves his current box and moves to either a broader or more specific box.

If a magician has studied the magical knowledge connected to the Name of the kingdom of Throal, that knowledge helps him interact magically with certain aspects of the kingdom while walking through its unNamed corridors. To gain that same advantage in the Hall of Records, however, the magician must study the threads of that place, because he has entered a new Named place within Throal. If he leaves Throal, travels to an unNamed place and uses magic there, knowledge about Barsaive makes his actions more effective, because the Name of Barsaive encompasses the pattern of the unNamed area.

Object patterns nest together in much the same way. For example, the Bell of Vanthairn in the Tower of Challi has a pattern separate from the tower,

which has a pattern separate from the village in which it stands, and so on.

The Namegivers themselves provide an exception to this general rule. Namegivers can rarely be Named as groups; the life force of each individual is too strong to be dominated by an arbitrary Naming. Though fifteen orks may ride together as comrades under the banner of Yoarkall's Mercenaries, the name itself does not enhance a magician's or adept's power to work magic for or against those orks. Instead, each individual ork is magically connected. However, certain rituals allow groups to Name themselves en masse. And despite the risk inherent in creating a Name and the pattern that come with it, many adventuring groups Name themselves to heighten their magic and thus their abilities.



Knowledge and Pattern Items

Each piece of knowledge about a being, place, or object is tied to an object, called a pattern item. For example, the infamous ork thief Garlthik One-Eye was so named because he lost one eye to an evil magician, who used the eye as a source of knowledge about Garlthik. As a part of him, the eye was one of Garlthik's pattern items; because the magician had successfully studied it, his magic became more effective against Garlthik.

A stone from a castle wall serves as a pattern item, allowing a magician to better understand that castle. Knowledge of the bones of the first animal to enter Blood Wood would allow a magic-user to cast more effective magic in the wood. The diary of a wizard serves as one of that wizard's pattern items and so on.

Pattern items are rarely so obvious as the above examples, however. Those who wish to use pattern items to enhance their magic against a specific enemy or to gain an advantage when casting a spell in a specific place must invest a great deal of time. First, the magic user must discover the objects that form the needed pattern items. Depending on the magical

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significance of the being, place, or object, each pattern item will contain a different amount of knowledge, providing different numbers of threads. Except in unusual circumstances, even the most diligent research rarely reveals more than one item related to a person or place, and few people ever know all of the pattern items connected to a person or place.

My master says it is simple: the Pattern reflects the whole. It shapes it, defines it and maintains it. The physical structure defines something here in the natural world. But its pattern, which bridges astral space, lies behind it and within it, defining its physical structure and its mystical properties as well. Patterns are shaped by their interaction with the magical forces of the world. A pattern that has been exposed to few magical forces will be simple and lack power. One that has ridden waves of magical force will be bright and powerful. He says this as though it were as obvious as the city wall. I have thought for years now on what he says, but it is only within the past few days that I am finally beginning to understand.

Imagine if you can, that patterns could talk. (Oh that they could! My efforts would be so much simpler!) What would they tell you? Like a person, they would tell you of the people they've known, the places they've seen, the things they've done. Patterns that have no tales to tell are dull and lifeless. They have been nowhere, seen nothing, and therefore have nothing special about them. But the patterns of heroes and magicians, the patterns of the items they carry and the places they affect—these have wondrous tales to tell! The greater the tale the more powerful the pattern. Like tales, though, patterns grow with the telling. A sword that participates in a wondrous deed today might not manifest powers based on that event for some time.

The tales of all things are hidden away within their patterns. We cannot ask a pattern to tell us where it has been, what has it done, or who aided in its creation. We can, however, weave threads that reveal the tales within. That weaving brings revelation, understanding, and knowledge. And with knowledge comes power

—From the journal of Ketsh Ara Shet, Wizard Adept apprentice

Once he has found the pattern item, the user must weave a magical thread to it. Because the magic-user must physically possess the item in order to weave

a thread, this step often requires him to either hire adventurers to find and retrieve the item or to search for it personally. Because a pattern item is almost always a personal possession, this step may be difficult to accomplish. For example, the wizard Tylaser discovered that his heart was one of his pattern items. Aware of how vulnerable this made him, he devoted years to creating a spell that would allow him to remove his heart from his body and hide it away in an orichalcum jar. I also know that the Elven Queen has obtained two pattern items of Blood Wood and keeps them under guard in her castle.

Each time a person learns more about a pattern item, he or she can weave a stronger thread, which makes the magic more effective against the being or object or within the boundary of the place. For example, if a troubadour adept studies a pattern item for Blood Wood and weaves a thread to the item, the next time he sings a song using magic while in Blood Wood, the magic in the song will be more powerful.

Learning your own pattern items is as time-consuming as learning others. I know two of mine, but only because two separate people found my pattern items and tried to use them against me. During my struggle to avoid their hostile magics, I acquired the objects and hid them away. There was no point in destroying them; we are all tied to the universe by a certain number of threads. If a pattern item is destroyed, the loose thread simply attaches itself to another object. By keeping my known pattern items, I have won a little safety. Sending the threads back out into the wide world would deprive me of this security.



—Derrat, Wizard of Yistaine

ON THE NATURE OF MAGICAL ELEMENTS

The world's magic flows through the Namegiver races, through the air we breathe, the water we drink, the land we walk upon. Though magic lives and breathes in every particle of the world, people can manipulate magic more easily if they have access to its basic elements of air, earth, fire, water, and wood. These magical elements can be mined from places where the physical world meets the astral plane and distilled into base magical substances.



CHAPTER 2: BARSATIVE

A Discourse on Elemental Planes

Astral space includes many different planes of existence. The five elemental planes—air, earth, fire, water, and wood—are each a separate universe within astral space. Unlike our plane of existence, which balances these elements, each elemental plane belongs to one element alone. For example, the elemental plane of fire roars with constant flames. Little solid ground exists in it, for this plane cannot tolerate earth. Water sometimes appears, but immediately evaporates. The elemental plane of earth is a nearly solid mass of rock interrupted by occasional small pockets of air or water or fire. Only the strange creatures who live there and are suited for traveling through stone can pass through this plane.

The elemental planes support life forms, but because these need their own special environment to survive, these life forms rarely appear in our world and protect their own most fiercely.

Where Planes Meet

According to recent research, the planes of astral space apparently move “closer” together at certain times in history. This description is a metaphor, however, for the astral planes do not take up physical space. Yet, in some sense the elemental planes and our world meet, allowing creatures from the elemental plane to enter our world and allowing us to reach into the elemental planes. For example, the Death’s Sea offers many doorways to the elemental plane of fire. Because this fiery ocean so closely resembles the elemental planes of fire, the strange creatures that inhabit that plane can survive on ours in that one place. The same is true for water elementals in the Serpent River, earth elementals in the deep caverns of Barsaive’s mountains, and air elementals in the sky over the province. Because the natives of our world are not suited to the environments of these other planes, there is little reason to travel to them bodily, for death surely awaits. However, we often create doorways between planes by artificial means in order to mine the magical elements of the elemental planes.

On the Gathering of Magical Elements

If care is taken, it is possible to mine each of the five magical elements—air, earth, fire, water, and

wood—from the environments corresponding to each element. Elemental air is mined, or gathered, from the sky; elemental fire, from Death’s Sea; and so on. The magical elements do not actually exist on our plane, but share our world with the elemental plane of their nature. Thus, the elemental fire in the Death’s Sea exists at once in the molten rock of our world, but also in the elemental plane of fire.

Gathering each element requires tearing holes in the fabric separating the elemental planes and our world. This process works differently for each element. For example, Death’s Sea is connected to the plane of elemental fire through the law of similarity. When a charge of elemental water is dropped into the sea, the force of the magical explosion rips a hole in the elemental plane of fire, freeing shards of that element. Miners then capture the floating magical element in nets lined with orichalcum. I have never seen any other element mined and have found these individuals quite unwilling to speak of their methods. I can hazard a guess, however, that the relationships between the elements determine the ways in which we may gather them. So complex are these relationships that theorists are still determining them.

Orichalcum is a unique magical material produced when all five elements interact in a certain, precise way. Depending on how the orichalcum is made, it can conduct magic or contain it. For example, magical elements are usually stored in sealed orichalcum jars for safety. A pliable material, orichalcum can be pounded thin or spread out over large areas. A small amount of orichalcum can, for example, be shaped into thin threads, which are then woven into the hemp nets used to gather magical elements. Many ruined kaers and citadels contain stores of orichalcum and other magical elements used as protection against the Horrors. Because magical elements bring a high price to those who sell them, adventurers willingly enter ruined citadels and kaers to retrieve and sell these stores.

ON THE LAWS OF MAGIC

The Law of Contagion and the Law of Similarity govern the use of the magic flowing through the fabric of our universe. These laws lie at the core of magical thinking. Magicians must use them when





casting a spell, but they influence many other aspects of our life as well.

The Law of Contagion states that once a connection has been forged between two things, they remain connected forever-more. A dragon's scale is always part of that dragon, even if he sheds it. The place of his birth is a part of a Namegiver's legend until the end of his days, even if he journeys far away from it.

The Law of Similarity states that those things that look alike are alike; things that behave the same way are the same. This law allows airships to float on air using magic, for they look and act like ships that float on water.

Though the magical elements and orichalcum forged from all five of them can be used to circumvent the Laws of Contagion and Similarity, it often takes years to find the proper proportions of elemental magic needed to achieve various effects. Many people have, for example, tried to create ships able to sail through land as boats sail through water and air, but no one has yet succeeded. The combination of elemental earth and other magics needed to accomplish such a feat have yet to be discovered.

ON TRAVEL IN THE LAND OF BARSAIVE

I somehow earned the distinct privilege of compiling the information on travel in Barsaive. I have always enjoyed traveling, even under the most difficult conditions, and working on this part of our book gave me the opportunity to travel (free of charge, I must add!) by land, water, and air. Researching by doing rather than by taking someone else's word for the experience may sound like a sensible method of discovering the truth of any given matter, but not all of my fellow scholars enjoyed this luxury. For example, Merrox himself did not have the opportunity to visit Thera to research that chapter of this guide.

Describing travel in Barsaive brought me many delights, especially the opportunity to study at length the original maps of our province drawn by Shantaya Nightstar. Using these maps, exquisite in every detail, made my task much simpler and more satisfying. I now understand why travelers over all of Barsaive praise the work of this great explorer. Legends say that Shantaya ventured beyond the borders of Barsaive and mapped those regions with equal care and thoroughness. If this legend is true, these maps have a home in some other place than the Royal Library of Throal. According to the same legend, Shantaya is a descendant of the ancient elven kingdom of Shosara, proclaimed forever sundered from the Elven Court centuries ago by Queen Alachia's predecessor, Queen Failla. If Shosara still exists, perhaps Shantaya's legendary maps reside there.

It is my devout hope that Merrox will send me in search of these additional maps as my next task.

☉—Humbly presented for the edification of the reader by Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records

ON THE DANGERS AND DELIGHTS OF JOURNEYING

Travel is an unending concern for all merchants, traders, explorers, and adventurers who live and ply their trades in Barsaive. Even with our command of magic, travel in Barsaive remains a perilous task at best. Villages, town, and cities lie far apart, and traveling from one place to another requires long journeys. The weather, landscape, plant and animal life force travelers to be cautious, as does the hazard of encountering a Horror.

Those who must travel across Barsaive can choose one of three methods: by land, by air, or by river.

ON TRAVELING OVER LAND

Most Barsaivians travel over land either on foot or mounted. In the interests of safety and to avoid losing their way, land travelers usually follow roads and established trade routes.

Those who journey by land normally travel for eight to ten hours each day, including stops for rest and meals. Travel during daylight is much preferred.



Travel by night increases the chance of becoming lost or of succumbing to attacks by fearsome creatures and Horrors.

On Determining Safe Routes and Places

Because most of Barsaive remains unexplored, travelers with legitimate itineraries consider only the areas immediately surrounding most cities and a few established trading routes to be safe. Accidentally wandering away from these safe areas or deliberately traveling off the main paths can prove hazardous.

Small villages and farming towns surround most major cities, most no further away than a three hours' ride. These towns supply the city with foodstuffs in exchange for protection, usually regular patrols and quick defense by available armed forces, and favorable trade agreements. As the towns lie close to the city, brief trips between the city and the farming communities are common. Heavily settled and well-protected relative to the rest of Barsaive, the land between major cities and outlying villages offers travelers safe passage, but even these areas contain desolate and dangerous spots.

Other safe areas follow Barsaive's well-traveled trade routes, which connect great cities with trading ports along the Serpent River. The landmarks for these routes change occasionally, based on the most recent travelers' tales of their encounters. However, every trade route crosses unexplored regions; travelers who stray as little as a thousand yards off the trade route may stumble into unmapped regions and areas unexplored even before the Scourge.

...We were three days out of Travar when the storm hit us. Gray clouds had been drifting across the sky all morning, and by mid-afternoon they had formed a black mass that blotted out the sun. The torrent began with a crack of thunder that reverberated across the plains, and within minutes rain was falling so heavily I could barely make out the man in front of me. Soon

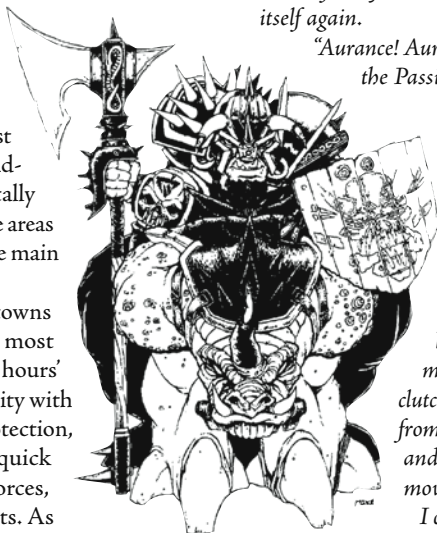
the trail became no more than a pool of mud, but the merchant insisted we keep moving, so we pushed on blindly. When the wagons could no longer negotiate the knee-deep muck, we drew them into a circle and stopped to wait out the tempest. Hours passed before the rains finally subsided and the horizon revealed itself again.

"Aurance! Aurance, we've lost the trail, damn the Passions! We've lost the..."

The scorchers ripped through us like the claws of a mighty dragon, scattering the wagons and sending sprays of crimson and severed limbs into the air. Guttural war cries and the pitiful screams of dying men blended into a horrible music, and when the man beside me fell to the ground, clutching the spear shaft protruding from his chest, I grabbed his sword and began swinging wildly at any movement within range.

I cannot tell you how long I carried on so or how long that terrible night lasted, for the next thing I recall was waking to the sound of vultures tearing at the corpses that lay all around me...

—From the diary of Aurance, Swordmaster Adept of Baku



On the Recognition of Distance Markers

As trade routes proliferated across Barsaive, King Varulus III saw the wisdom of marking those routes used most often by merchants traveling to and from Throal. These markers would also help travelers find the dwarf kingdom.

The route markers look like small stone monoliths standing some six to seven feet high. Triangular and pointed at the top, each side of the post shows the distance in days' travel on foot and by horse to Throal and other significant cities in Barsaive, such as Ipos, Travar, Haven, and Urua. The markers also bear the symbol of the kingdom of Throal.

Travelers can use these markers in conjunction with maps to plot distance and direction, much as one might use the maps created by the legendary



traveler Shantaya. I describe the method for using Shantaya's maps further on in this section.

On the Perils of Land Travel

In addition to the expected hazards of traveling outside areas considered safe, land travel in Barsaive holds other dangers. Trouble can also befall the traveler who loses his way, encounters Theraan slavers, or runs across hostile villages.

Regarding the Hazards of Getting Lost

Any number of circumstances can cause travelers to lose their way. A fierce storm might force them to travel in the wrong direction, or a small caravan might lose its bearings while making a detour to avoid a band of ork scorched. Because so much of Barsaive's landscape changed beyond recognition during the Scourge, even the newly installed route markers may not prevent travelers from getting lost, especially if they wander through areas inadequately mapped before the Scourge.

Losing one's way poses enormous risks for the unlucky traveler. Adventurers may roam certain areas of Barsaive for years without encountering civilized settlements, and many small towns and villages are so isolated that they know nothing of the nearest village, let alone landmarks or trade routes.

On the Dangers of Trespass Among Strangers

Though the people of many kaers and citadels chose to come out of hiding long ago, and have re-established their villages and towns under the bright light of day, travelers can still find sealed kaers and citadels. The residents of some are dead, while others still live in fear, trapped by Horrors or unaware that the Scourge is over.

Many small towns and villages rebuilt near their kaers, using their former home as a shelter in emergencies or for extra storage. Most communities have simply let their kaers fall into disrepair, however, hoping that memories of the Scourge will disintegrate along with the kaer's walls.

Most citadels have removed the domes that shielded them from the Horrors, and these proud castles and strongholds stand as they did before the Scourge. Despite the people of Barsaive's bold steps into the

new world, however, the fear brought by the Scourge still lives in their hearts.

Between their terror of being Horror-touched and their isolation, the people of small villages and towns regard strangers with suspicion. If travelers wish to remain safe, they must understand the reasons for the hostility shown them and be prepared to answer probing questions with politeness and patience.

On the Depredations of Theraan Slavers

Travelers in southwestern Barsaive face a danger unique to that region. The Theraans who control the area hire mercenary bands to roam the countryside, capturing unwary travelers and hapless townspeople from the surrounding villages to serve as slaves in Thera. Though slaving has declined in the years since the Theraan War, slavery dragnets still imperil travelers in the region near those imperial outposts. On rare occasions, Theraan slavers range as far north as the Delaris Mountains and as far east as the Twilight Peaks.

A DISCOURSE ON MAPS

My son,

As your mother informed you, I am not pleased with your decision to form your own caravan and establish a trade route to the t'skrang of Lake Vors in partnership with this guide you call Welis. I can already hear you mutter that you led three caravans from Kratas to Bartertown and are well versed in the ways and means of commerce, and doubtless you will tell me that your friend Welis has great knowledge of the pathways through the mountains of Tylon and the plains beyond. Well, my son, your fine words matter nothing, and I shall tell you why.

The route to Kratas that you have so bravely traversed has been well established for more than twenty years. Posting houses and towns dot the route. An injured man can quickly be delivered into the hands of a Questor of Garlen, not left to die in a desolate spot along the road. Break a wagon's axle and a wheelwright arrives in half a day. Lame beasts can easily be exchanged for fit and hale animals, and the lances of Throal hold scorched at bay.

Nothing of this ilk exists in the wilds that you wish to travel. You will need to live on what you carry and protect yourself from man, beast, and Horror. I question





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you on the thoroughness of your preparations. Have you food for a hundred days, a Questor of Garlen, hut-tawas, horses, herders, drivers, guards led by Warrior Adepts? And will the profit you make exceed the cost?

I also question your guide, Welis. Does he have a Sextant of Shantaya? Does his rutter contain knowledge of the land as it is, or only as it was in the past? Can he find Vestrial at his darkest height even with the sun overhead, or must he sight the star at night? Does he know which scorcher tribes will grant safe passage for a flask of white water crystals, and which tribes desire blood for their dark magics?

You are well beyond the age of consent, so I cannot demand that you give up this foolishness. But listen to my questions and answer them truthfully.

May Chorrolis guide you in your paths.

—Letter from the merchant Dolhuan to his son.

To reach their destinations and avoid dangerous areas, travelers over land need a map. The province of Barsaive covers great distances, but all maps of the province show many areas left unexplored. In addition, the Scourge changed the land drastically by obliterating many towns and cities, forcing some to rebuild elsewhere and destroying many landmarks such as rivers, lakes, forests, and so on. Even the famous voyage of the *Earthdawn* made no provision for mapping Barsaive, and so no reliable maps have existed since the Scourge.

Most maps only show the best-known landmarks still in existence, such as the larger mountain ranges, the ruins of Parlainth, the Theran outposts at Vivane and Sky Point, the Serpent River, Death's Sea, the great cities of Iopos, Travar, Jerris, and Kratas, and the kingdom of Throal. Some more costly maps also show the main trade routes across the province, but most of these maps are commissioned by traders and few can be found for sale.

Most mapmakers in Barsaive draw their maps for use with a device called Shantaya's sextant. Shantaya Nightstar was an elven troubadour who traveled the province and mapped it in the years before the Scourge. To make her work easy for others to use and copy, she developed a device to chart distance and bearings using the maps she drew.

By aligning the sextant with certain landmarks and using the constellations on the margins of the map, a traveler can determine the bearing and distance in

days walking or riding to almost any place in Barsaive. Also, by sighting the stars at night with the sextant, a traveler can determine his location. The most prominent landmarks on Shantaya's maps include Throal, Sky Point, Blood Wood (named Wyrn Wood on her map), the Death's Sea, and the Dragon Mountains.

On the Use of Shantaya's Sextant and Maps

When used together, Shantaya Nightstar's maps and sextant can guide travelers even through trackless wilderness. Travelers most often use Shantaya's Sextant with maps that do not show all of Barsaive's important cities and landmarks. Those lucky enough to find and rich enough to afford detailed maps can make their way from place to place simply by following the star groups in the proper phases. For example, on a map that shows both Throal and Kratas, one can easily see that to travel from Throal to Kratas, a traveler need only follow Floranuus at sundown for 15 days walking or 9 days riding.

For reaching places not marked on maps, Shantaya's sextant becomes invaluable. From verbal or written directions provided by travelers, mapmakers can create instructions for arriving at the same location using the Sextant and Shantaya's maps. For example, if a traveler began his journey in Jerris and traveled for a certain number of days on foot with the star group of the Passion Raggok in sight, then stumbled over a tiny kaer along the way, mapmakers could provide directions for using Shantaya's sextant to reach that same kaer from anywhere else in Barsaive.

Shantaya's sextant consists of two parts: the astrolobe and the rod. The astrolobe is a metal disk with a hole in its center. A sighting arm pivots around this hole, allowing the traveler to sight the stars in the same manner that a surveyor's transit is used to sight a distant landmark. By aligning two or more sightings to the map, a traveler can find his exact location. At irregular intervals around the perimeter of the disk are marked eight directions, which represent the eight sane Passions. The constellation devoted to Garlen is not used, because she is always used to align a traveler's map. Prior to the Scourge, the astrolobes included directions that utilized the Mad Passions as well, but such astrolobes are never used in our own day.





Each interval between the directions is larger than the previous one. The user aligns these directions with landmarks to determine the direction of travel to his intended destination.

The rod is a long, rectangular piece of thin metal marked along both edges. These marks indicate, according to the scale of Shantaya's maps, the distance to various destinations in days walking and riding. The center of the rectangle is cut out to serve as a frame for the destination.

Shantaya drew her maps specifically to work with the sextant. They begin as standard maps drawn to a specific scale, but are then embellished with a series of concentric circles that represent distances from Throal in increments of 11 days' walking each. These circles help travelers judge distances with a quick glance at the map.

The second set of marks that distinguishes Shantaya's maps from others are twelve straight lines originating at Throal that divide the map into twelve wedges. A representation of one of the Passions and a star group associated with that Passion appears in each wedge. At some point in the past, perhaps originating with Shantaya, a specific group of stars was ascribed to each Passion and considered to symbolize some aspect of that Passion. One of these star groups appears over the horizon in each of the twelve directions and serves as a navigation point for travelers who know their directions but do not have a map. Travelers can judge their course more precisely by journeying toward a Passion star group at one of three phases of the day: sundown, midnight, and sunrise.

By performing a minor ritual, skilled guides can use the astrolobe to determine their exact location without actually taking a sighting on a star. Taking the map, the master guide places the center of the astrolobe on the marginal representation of a Passion. He then turns the sighting arm until it stops and inscribes a line along the arm onto the map. He then places the astrolobe on another Passion, turns the sighting arm, and inscribes a second line. The point at which the two lines meet is the place where the guide is standing.

Using the maps and sextant, a traveler can reach any destination from a known location by following a simple set of instructions. A traveler in Urupa wishing to go to a kaer near Parlainth can find his

way by aligning Upandal with Parlainth and traveling along Mynbruje's setting for five days. To find the direction of Mynbruje's setting, the traveler places the astrolobe on the map at Urupa and aligns the sighting arm with Upandal. He then aligns Upandal with Parlainth, and draws a line along the direction of Mynbruje's setting position. Using the rod along this direction, he can find the kaer's exact location on the map.

ON THE JOYS AND DANGERS OF RIVER TRAVEL

Those who must travel great distances often arrange for transport down the Serpent River that crosses the length of Barsaive. Because few ordinary citizens own boats, most travelers must buy passage on a t'skrang riverboat.

At this writing, passage on a t'skrang riverboat costs an average of five silver pieces per person per day. Most ship captains demand full payment before beginning the voyage, though some accept partial payment in advance with the remainder due upon reaching the traveler's destination. Though the captain of my ship did not do so with me, I saw her charge certain passengers more than the average price, then encourage the passenger to bargain for the sheer joy of the exchange. Mounted travelers can arrange to transport their mounts on the same craft, but must pay an additional five silver pieces per day for the animal.

Travelers determined to reach their destination but short on ready coin may pay for their passage by working as a crew member during the voyage. I traveled this way, wishing to help my t'skrang hosts with the work of the ship. Each day that a passenger works for the crew earns him an average of three silver pieces, though pay rates are negotiable based on the person's skills. Instead of paying coin, some captains simply exchange passage for the traveler's time and labor. As I did, a passenger can usually work off most or all of the cost of his trip in this manner.

Swift and riverworthy, t'skrang riverboats cover vast distances in the 16 hours per day that they travel, stopping all along the river to deliver and take on goods and passengers. Most riverboats sail through the night without stopping, laying over at ports until morning only if night sailing would take the boat past its destination.





Concerning Acts of Piracy

Pirates also travel the Serpent River, attacking riverboats that carry passengers or any kind of cargo. Passengers who help fight off these marauders often receive a partial refund of their passage payment from a grateful captain.

...Gyllina and I set out this morning aboard the Pride of Upandal. Our captain, Yrogerg, sniggered when I offered to lend the crew a hand, and so after a quick breakfast of the spiced fish for which the t'skrang are so rightly famous, I climbed to the top deck of the Pride to better enjoy the beautiful morning. From my perch, the dark blue waters of the Serpent seemed to dance with a life of their own, and I began to understand the almost mystical awe the river inspires among the river folk.

Suddenly, the roar of fire-cannon drowned out the gentle splashing of the Pride's paddle-wheel. Startled, I peered over the edge of the deck and saw the t'skrang crew swinging about on the Pride's pole lines, their swords flashing as they grappled with the crew of a broken-down riverboat that had pulled alongside our craft.

My heart nearly stopped when I saw Gyllina in the clutches of a pirate.

"Val! Val!" she cried out as the lizard-man leapt to the pirate vessel.

I grabbed the nearest pole line and was halfway to the paddlewheeler when a t'skrang tail caught me in the side of the head and I fell into the wine-dark waters of the Serpent...

—From the journal of Val,
Troubadour of Klestra

A Discourse on the Construction of Riverboats

A t'skrang riverboat has five decks; one lower deck, three upper decks, and an aft castle from which the captain commands the ship.

The lower deck fills the flat, wide bottom of the riverboat; on it are stored the ship's supplies. The three upper decks, covering half the riverboat's length, hold the crew quarters, the ship's cargo, and the fire cannons. The cargo holds have large doors cut into the side of the riverboat, from which wide gangplanks are lowered during loading and unloading. Because the plank lies at a steeper angle against the uppermost deck, the crew stores lighter cargo items on the highest deck and the heaviest items on the lower deck.

The mid-decks are terraced in such a way that the exterior walls are set back a few yards from the ship's edge. The entire surface of the ship bristles with sturdy poles attached to hinged braces; from each pole hangs a length of rope. To move around the ship, t'skrang sailors grab the end of a rope and swing out over the water, then arc back toward the ship. If this swing leaves the sailor short of his destination, he grabs another rope and swings further. Though the interior of the ship provides corridors and stairs leading to every part of the vessel, the t'skrang prefer to swing around the ship—even if the trip takes longer.

Fire cannons stand along the decks and on the roof of the topside. First used hundreds of years ago when the first Theran Empire dominated Barsaive, the fire cannons' roaring explosions captured the imaginations of the excitable, spectacle-loving t'skrang. The cannons are fixed in position, forcing the crew to turn the entire ship in order to aim them. As one might expect, t'skrang crews quickly become expert at maneuvering in a fight.

The aft castle is a large room elevated on stilts a few yards above the top deck. Windows line the bridge and provide a clear view of the river in all directions. The controls for the elemental fire engine and the ship's rudders are in the bridge, allowing the captain to determine where the ship goes and how fast it travels.

Methods of Propulsion

Unlike any other vessel in Barsaive, t'skrang riverboats do not use sails or oars to move through the



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river. To my knowledge, not even the Therans possess anything as extraordinary as the t'skrang fire engines and giant paddle wheels.

The fire engine is generally housed in a large room at the stern of the lower deck, and consists of a large metal chamber with one wheel on either side.

A large wooden arm attaches to each wheel and extends past the rear of the ship.

The large, cylinder-shaped paddle wheel sits above the water on an axle, the large slats of wood fastened to the edge of the cylinder and angled as if radiating from the center of the cylinder resting in the water.

The arms protruding from the fire engine are attached to either end of the cylinder shape. As the wheels of the fire engine turn, they pull and push on these arms, and the arms pull and push on the paddle wheel. This motion spins the paddle wheel around its axle. As the wheel turns, the planks consecutively sink into the water and push against it. This pushing forces the riverboat forward or backward, depending on the direction in which the wheel is turning.

The Therans always dismiss the achievements of native Barsaivians. They desire to make us all seem utterly insignificant.

—Vellunium, Captain of the *Breeton II*

Different traditions describe the origins of the t'skrang knowledge of fire engines. Theran scholars suggest that the original fire engine was an ancient artifact from a time before our recorded history. They claim the t'skrang imitated the combination of engineering and magic by accident, and contend that the t'skrang have never applied the knowledge to anything else because they do not understand it.

The t'skrang themselves disagree about the source of their fire engines. Some believe that a Questor of Upandal created the device centuries ago. According to the story, the power of the Passion Upandal so filled the Questor's being that he was touched by madness. It is said that no Namegiver can begin to comprehend the complex and wonderful ideas that Upandal possesses. Driven by his madness, the Questor constructed the fire engine, a device that combined mechanical ingenuity and a great deal of magic. This first engine powered the first riverboat

and set the t'skrang on the path to become Barsaive's most skilled sailors and traders.

Other t'skrang believe that several t'skrang villages together created the device, working under the guidance of Upandal. The Passion was pleased by their ingenuity and willingness to cooperate in this creative process and ensured that this engine would succeed. When the marvelous device was completed, Upandal showed them how to attach it to their riverboats, and they grew rich from the trade the miraculous engine brought them.

With their newfound speed and mobility, the t'skrang prospered. Their battles also grew more destructive, for they could maneuver more quickly. According to a popular t'skrang tale, some of the Passions became jealous of the devotion to Upandal inspired by the fire engines and told Upandal that he must destroy his work. Upandal refused, and Chorrolis, Passion of trade, sided with him. This tale provides the only hint that the Passions could fight among themselves before madness took three of them during the Scourge.

The jealous Passions swore to destroy the t'skrang if Upandal did not destroy the fire engines. Now Upandal loved both the engines and the t'skrang who had worked so hard to build them, for it is Upandal's nature to love the objects made as much as those who fashion them. He agreed that the fire engines could be dangerous and proposed a compromise. The t'skrang would live and keep the engines attached to their riverboats, but no one would ever be able to build another engine of that kind for any other use. As a reward for their faith in him, Upandal made the t'skrang the only Namegivers capable of building the engines, but only for use on their ships. This compromise placated the jealous Passions and restored harmony among them.

This last tale in some ways seems the least likely, for we have found no other records of conflict between the Passions before the Scourge. On the other hand, Upandal has never again helped anyone who tried to duplicate the t'skrang fire engines. Though many have tried to build them, including the Therans, none have succeeded. Upandal himself never speaks of the matter, nor do any of the other Passions. I believe that there may be truth to the story; it may even be the entire truth, for all that I can tell.

Historians reading this must realize that the t'skrang created the fire engine and paddlewheel long before the city of Thera was founded, and many centuries before our province was called Barsaive.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records



ON THE WONDERS OF AIRSHIP TRAVEL

Because of the difficulty and expense of arranging airship passage, people only travel across Barsaive in this manner when they must reach their destination swiftly. Travel aboard airships can be unpleasant; most lack space for passengers, and airship captains and crews are rarely disposed kindly toward strangers aboard their vessels.

Most airships in Barsaive belong to the troll crystal raiders. Small and swift, these ships are made for combat and raiding, giving the captains even less reason to want the burden of passengers. Travelers who find troll raiders willing to give them passage should negotiate the terms of travel with extreme caution. Ideally, travelers seeking airship passage should track down the owner of a galley, most of which belong to trading companies. A galley captain will welcome passengers with less distaste than his fellow captains and flies his ship into fewer perilous situations.

Speed is air travel's greatest advantage. In the course of 16 hours, an airship can travel a distance of 60 days' ride on a mount. Most airships do not fly through the night, except in battles or raids. Airships carrying passengers rarely go raiding unless the passengers agree to fight for the ship as part of the terms of passage.

On the Perils of Air Travel

The greatest danger of traveling by airship is the risk of encountering crystal raiders and Thera slave ships. The crystal raiders fly small, maneuverable, and well-armed ships that they call drakkars. Though the trolls most often raid near their homes in the Twilight Peaks, they sometimes range as far as 100 days' ride away. The huge stone slave ships of the

Theran Empire prey most often over the southeast reaches of Barsaive, capturing slaves and then ferrying them back to the Thera stronghold at Sky Point or to the nearby Thera-controlled city of Vivane. Thera slave ships often attack other airships as well as people on the ground in their quest to capture slaves for the Empire.

...I did not see my first airship until I was thirty years old. It was a Thera fortress—a castle made of shimmering white stone that could fly just beneath the clouds, then land on the ground and serve as a fortress. A true magical wonder, it was. Like everyone in Barsaive, I had heard of the troll airships, but they were said to have the shape of seagoing vessels. This Thera marvel was a gleaming pile of stone upon stone, built into chambers and corridors and stairways without number. And still, for all its vastness and heaviness, it floated on the wind as lightly as a feather.

The wonder held me even though I first saw the ship as a helpless captive—but the wonder lasted only until Overgovernor Povelis put me aboard a mining ship. Shackled to a hard stone rowers' bench in the dimly lit belly of the mining vessel, I no longer found the magic so splendid. The magic that propelled the vessel drew on the life of the slaves to keep the ship aloft as we searched the sky for pockets of elemental air. To this day, I hear the sound of the rowing drum in my nightmares. Intended to help us keep time, by some dreadful magic it kept us rowing far beyond our strength. Even those who had died on their benches kept rowing, rowing, rowing.

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Thankfully, a troll raid cut short my time aboard the slave ship. The crystal raiders also use life force to power their vessels, but they know well the air currents above Barsaive. Their light raiding ships darted quickly and easily through the sky, surrounding the Theran mining vessel like gnats around a dying crakbill.

—From the journal of J'role
the Honorable Thief

On the Building of Airships

The multitude of tales that describe encounters with airships misrepresent the facts: airships are quite rare, being difficult to build and difficult to fly. A great many magicians must first enchant the materials used to build the ships, then the builder must find a way to power the ship so that it will travel through the air. Larger ships use sails for propulsion; smaller ships use oars. According to rumor, substantiated by the journals of J'role the Honorable Thief, some Theran ships move by draining the life force from the ship's rowing slaves. Barsaivian airships are generally made of wood, while the magic-rich Therans float stone vessels the size of castles. Many cities controlled by Thera have shipyards able to produce one to three airships a year.

Construction and Destruction

The builders of wooden airships fashion the hulls in shapes similar to waterborne vessels. Theran ships, by contrast, are great blocks of stone that often resemble fantastic, flying cities. During construction of all airships, elemental magicians weave elemental air into the wood or stone to make the ships fly. In accordance with the Law of Similarity, a wooden airship floats in the air as other ships float in water. Just as a water ship will sink if its hull is breached, so an air ship will sink if its hull takes too much damage. Whether damaged by fire cannon, magical spell, or a flock of giant eagles, a breached ship will sink slowly toward the earth. If the damage has been extreme, it will quickly plummet to the ground below. Theran ships make no use of this law, relying on other, crueler magics.

Regarding the Diversity of Airships

Airships are made of either stone or of wood. Within these two broad categories are three types of

ship. Below I have provided general descriptions of the different ships; in practice, airships can take on any configuration. The Therans, rich in magic and ever willing to flaunt their wealth, build stone airships almost without exception. The crystal raiders and shipwrights in Barsaivian cities build wooden airships.

Stone Airships

Unlike wooden airships, which use the magical Law of Similarity to navigate, stone ships have not the look of water-borne vessels. At best, they resemble flat-bottomed barges. Most lack sails, and few have the rudders or keels common to wooden ships. Many stone airships are powered by the physical strength and life force of oarsmen, usually slaves. Rather than relying on physical methods of navigation and steering, the Therans chart and stay their course through magic.

Most stone ships are built like fortresses—thick-walled, heavy, and nearly impossible to keep aloft. The magical resources required to construct such a ship and keep it airborne speaks well of Theran wealth and ill of their wasteful habits.

Three types of stone airships cruise the skies above the Theran Empire: behemoths, kilas, and vedettes. Though all stone airships are classed as one of these three, the classes themselves are determined by size. Thus, the vedette, the smallest class of the stone airships, includes small warships as well stone mining ships.

Behemoths are the size of a town. The bottom of the ship is a hollow foundation, usually circular or square. In this sunless area, the ship's slaves live out their miserable existences. The foundation supports two dozen or more buildings housing Theran officials, soldiers, libraries, and the ship's crew, making the behemoth a portable community of conquest. In these vessels, the Therans travel throughout the Theran Empire, carrying enough officials, soldiers, magicians, adepts, and Questors to invade and occupy any place they wish to lay hands on.

The airship known as the kila is the size of a vast, fortified castle. Instead of the dozens of buildings found on a behemoth, a kila supports only one building with several towers and one wall. The kila serves as a movable fortress for the Theran military; they can land this airship on any patch of ground and

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immediately establish a fortress. These huge ships are much larger than our wooden galleons, and the greatest of them can eclipse the sun by floating past it. Like the behemoth, the kila has a flat foundation where the ship's slaves are housed.

Vedettes, the smallest of the Theran stone vessels, are the most comparable to seagoing ships. Built long and wide, the vedette features several lower decks and a few upper decks, and serves many different purposes. The Therans often use vedettes against the crystal raiders and other native airships that prey on Theran vessels. Vedettes also swiftly move strike forces where they are needed and work as escorts for mining ships and behemoths. Vedettes also make useful barges for gathering magical elements. The sturdy stone hulls protect slaves and crews mining the Death's Sea for elemental fire, and the ships can rise high enough into the sky to gather elemental air.

According to the Therans with whom I have spoken, behemoths carry more than two hundred slaves. A great many die during long journeys, and so the ship must land often to replenish its slave population.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Wooden Airships

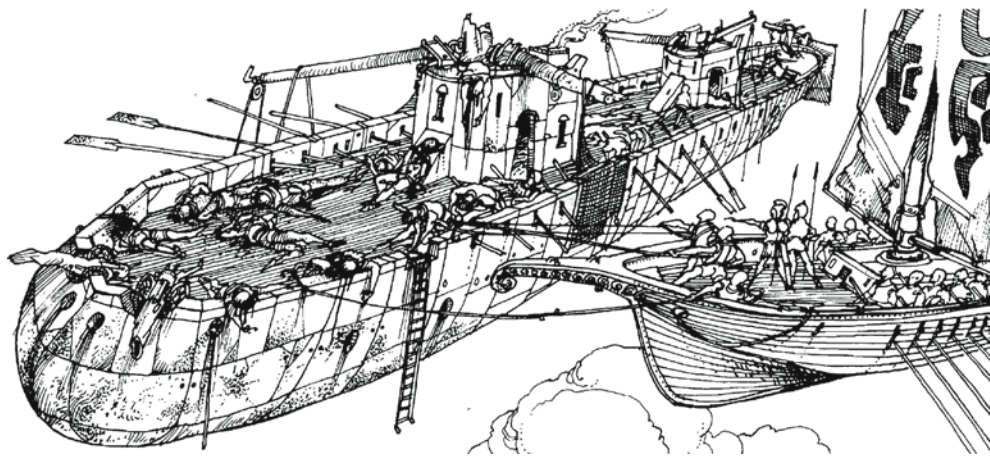
In sharp contrast to stone airships, wooden airships are easier to build, easier to fly, and less expensive in terms of both elemental magic and money. At this writing, the crystal raiders are the best shipbuilders

in the province. Several Barsaivian cities also build wooden airships, notably Urupa, Travar, Jerris, and Iopos. The art of shipbuilding has returned slowly to Barsaive since the Theran War, as the people struggle to recover from the Scourge and the Theran invasion. The shipbuilders might hope for greater profit if one or more shipyards pooled their resources, but, unfortunately, no two shipyards have been able to agree to work together.

The galleon, the galley, and the drakkar represent the three classes of wooden airships. Galleons, the largest of the wooden airships known to fly in Barsaive, have not flown in our skies since the Scourge. Like the seagoing ships from which they take their name, these ships carry three or four masts. Most galleons are 30 feet wide and 130 feet long, with three lower decks running the length of the ship and two decks each on the fore and aft castles. These ships boast huge spaces for cargo and are commonly used to transport trade goods, soldiers, and fire cannons. If the leaders of Throal could find a way to build a galleon, such a ship would surely strengthen our defenses against the Theran airship fleet.

Barsaivian ships seldom use slaves for propulsion. When an airship must fly swiftly, the crew members give their life energy voluntarily. Unlike the Therans, who kill slaves by draining their life force for this effort, Barsaivian crews give up smaller amounts of life energy and almost always survive this process.

The galley is the class of ship most often built in Barsaive. Usually 100 feet long by 20 feet wide, each galley is fitted with two or three sails, supplemented





by up to 100 oarsmen. It has two lower decks and two upper decks on each of the fore and aft castles. When fitted for war, as most ships are these days, the castles serve as firing platforms for fire cannons.

Records show that Barsaive's ancient trading fleet included four galleons; these ships must have gone somewhere. My best informants tell me that rumors place the remains of these ships in the Wastes or atop the craggy peaks of the Throal mountains. Whether the rumors speak true is one matter. Whether the ships can be found is a second. And whether they can be salvaged is a third. But if they could...

—King Varulus III of Throal

The crystal raiders use a class of ship known as the drakkar. Air-faring trollmoots have built such ships for untold centuries, and their skill continues to grow. Drakkars average 100 feet in length and sometimes support a single mast. This sail supplements the ship's power, most of which comes from rowing crews of approximately 70 trolls. The ships can carry cargo, but usually use that space to transport an additional 100 crystal raiders.

Swiftness and maneuverability are the drakkar's greatest advantages, but its light weight means the ship can flip over easily in a high wind. It is a tribute to the skill of the crews that these ships so rarely plunge to the ground and shatter. In the course of my research I flew on a drakkar, an experience I found exhilarating beyond compare! In contrast to the large galleys, which feel much more substantial, little seems to hold the vessel up; it rushes through the air at dizzying speed, and the cold, sharp wind strikes your face like a surging wave.

Drakkars cannot carry fire cannons, but the crystal raiders have no great love of such weapons. When raiding, they prefer to rush slower vessels, evading the fireballs shot at them in defense. As soon as they are close enough, the raiders throw grappling hooks toward the other ship and use them to pull their own ship closer. Rather than waiting for the ships to touch, some raiders throw themselves across the space between the vessels—an extraordinary feat of courage when one considers that they are leaping over a sickening drop of many hundreds of feet.

At this point, the true crystal raider battle begins, for the raiders excel at hand-to-hand combat. Once boarded, few ships can defend against the crystal raiders' fierce, joyous attacks.

Ghost Ships

During my travels, I heard tales of airships that fly without crews. Called ghost ships, most such vessels ply the skies only briefly. Without life force from a crew or regular replacement of the ship's elemental air, a ghost ship will eventually crash to the ground like any other airship.

A fellow traveler who had seen one told me that many ghost ships are created when a Horror invades an airship and kills the crew. The Horror then abandons the ship for greener pastures or else waits for salvagers to board the vessel and serve as its next victims. On rare occasions, crystal raiders attack a ship, kill its crew, take its riches, and leave the ship floating dead in the sky.

On occasion, more extraordinary events produce ghost ships that roam the skies for many years. These ships stay afloat as long as the spirits of the dead crew haunt the vessel. The *Golden Cloud*, a Theran mining ship, is one famous long-lived ghost ship. Once part of a fleet that used elemental fire charges to rip into the plane of elemental air and gather the shards of that magical element, the *Golden Cloud* fell victim to its success. The continuous mining ravaged a portion of the elemental plane beyond repair; angered by the destruction, elemental air creatures entered our world and slaughtered the airship's crew. They invested the ship with enough elemental air magic to keep the airship high in the sky over Barsaive.

To this day, so stories tell, the ship cuts a wide swath through the sky, reminding those who live below that air miners harm the elemental planes at their own risk. Several heroes and Theran salvagers have attempted to board the ship and capture its cargo, but none have ever returned.

Perhaps the most famous of all ghost ships is the *Earthdawn*, the ship flown by Vaare Longfang on her exploration of Barsaive in the days immediately following the Scourge. The *Earthdawn* returned once, then set out again. It never returned from its second journey. Many legends tell of the *Earthdawn* appearing in the sky, and then vanishing in an eyeblink.





CHAPTER 2: BARSAIVE

...From the decks of our drakkar, we watched the derelict Theran barge loom closer. In the prow of our ship, several of the Stoneclaws' best warriors pulled on the grappling ropes that made a slender bridge between our ship of wood and the stone barge. Though most Theran craftsmanship shows grace and beauty, the ugly lines and angles of the mining barge reflected the Therans' callous indifference to their workers. Ash from mana bursts used for the mining caked and dirtied the vessel.

As the barge approached, everyone fell silent. On the deck of the barge lay the remains of the slaves, their bodies torn apart, their blood seeping into the deck. Across a rowers' bench lay an elf's corpse, his long, lean body sliced open with delicate precision. Though the barge moved, nothing on it lived. We knew then it was that the Horrors had done this...

—From the journal of Vorg of the Stoneclaws

ON THE DENIZENS OF BARSAIVE

My task of compiling notes describing all the known denizens of Barsaive began easily enough, then quickly became more difficult than I had expected. The known denizens of our province include not only the Namegiver races, but also dragons, mundane creatures, and the Horrors.

Documenting these three latter groups took a heavy toll on my already precarious health.

Members of each Namegiving race gladly provided information regarding their own people. However, I found listening to their stories and recording everything in the proper order extremely taxing. In fact, I accumulated so much information that

I intend to begin writing one or more volumes fully describing the character and unique qualities of each Namegiver race once I complete this current task. If, that is,

I am granted a life long enough to complete such a monumental undertaking.

Even my colleague Merrox cannot fully understand the danger to which I exposed my fragile self to acquire accurate information regarding dragons, creatures, and Horrors. The foul miasma infusing the journals of adventuring groups who so kindly donated their tales to the Library of Throal, and from which I excerpted most of the text in this section, was enough to drive me to my pallet. I hope that by repeating their adventures, rather than retelling them, I have given readers a truer picture of the races and other denizens of Barsaive.



—Humbly offered to the Reader by Jerriv Forrim,
Scribe and Scholar of the Library of Throal

REGARDING THE NAMEGIVER RACES

Eight Namegiver races live in Barsaive: dwarf, elf, human, obsidiman, ork, troll, t'skrang, and windling.

In view of the mountains of information I gathered for this book, I have dispensed with physical descriptions of the races. Instead, I offer each race's own words about its ways, customs, and place in Barsaive's society.

On the Ways of Dwarfs

We dwarfs are the most numerous people of Barsaive, numbering nearly a third of the province's inhabitants. Though half our people live in the kingdom of Throal, the rest (such as myself) live in villages and cities throughout the land. To give you an idea of how many dwarfs live outside of Throal, our

numbers nearly equal those of the trolls, orks, and humans in Barsaive. Elves, obsidimen, and windlings are far fewer than we.

Ironband quaffed dwarf stout ale throughout this interview. He insisted that I drink some, which I did, against my better judgment. It was delicious, but later made me quite sick at my stomach.



—Jerriv Forrim, Scribe and
Scholar of the Library of Throal

Our brethren in Throal have given Barsaive freedom from Theran rule and are leading the land back to greatness. All dwarfs, in Throal and outside it, know our place as Barsaive's chief citizens and feel kinship with all of its peoples and places. We are our fellow



EARTHDOWN GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

racers' elder brothers and have a duty to live ourselves as we would have them live. Unlike the Therans, who oppressed us, we dwarfs lead by example.

All of Barsaive is home to a dwarf. We go where we will, and all welcome us. The Caucavic Mountains, the Serpent River, it matters not. Wherever we go, we remain dwarfs and are proud to be so.

Our nature as builders makes us dwarfs. We build everything: weapons, jewelry, roads, farms, houses, ships, carts, and, everything else needful. In Throal, we have even built a new society! Of course, our pride in building carries its price, as does any gift. A dwarf measures himself by what he makes, by its beauty and its quantity, and by what he can endure in the making. I have seen fellow dwarfs exhaust themselves in labor to earn the respect of neighbors.

You ask me if the kingdom of Throal holds the same place in a dwarf's heart as Blood Wood holds for an elf, and I tell you it does not.

Though built by dwarfs, Throal is not a dwarf land. Most dwarfs in Barsaive take pride in the kingdom and its growing power, but we know well that many races other than dwarfs live inside its boundaries. And so it should be, for what is Barsaive itself but the common home of many peoples? Those of us who live outside Throal wish it well, but it is not our home. Like any other Namegiver, a dwarf's home is his city, town, or village.

In the interests of honesty, I must confess to you that some dwarf villages view Throal with suspicion. Not many, mind; those of us who know how to think know that Throal has done well by Barsaive. But some dwarfs with suspicious minds fear that Throal's military and political power will lead it to oppress the people of Barsaive once we have driven the hated Therans from our land.

—Transcribed from the speaking of
Lunas Ironhand, Weaponsmith Adept

On the Ways of Elves

Of course you wish to know of Blood Wood. Why would anyone who speaks to an elf wish to know of anything else? No matter that throughout

Barsaive live many elves who refused to take shelter in the Elven Queen's Court during the Scourge and so were saved from corruption. No matter that we are set apart from those now known as the Blood Elves. No matter that, like all the Namegiver races throughout Barsaive, we uncorrupted elves live in harmony and peace with non-elfen neighbors. No matter that we do not look to the Elven Queen's Court to guide our existence. No matter that we live our lives like any of our neighbors, whether we live in a great city such as Travar or a small farming village buried deep in a jungle. People see us and think of the Blood Wood and must know what we think of it.

To my sorrow, I cannot claim that Blood Wood has no hold on me. Though it causes me great pain, I must speak truthfully of this matter. (There you have what it is to be an elf, chronicler. We

follow the path of honor though we may

die for it. See that you write that, when you tell our tale.) We cannot help but remember in every waking moment that in the northern reaches of Barsaive live a community of elves that most of Barsaive regards as monsters.

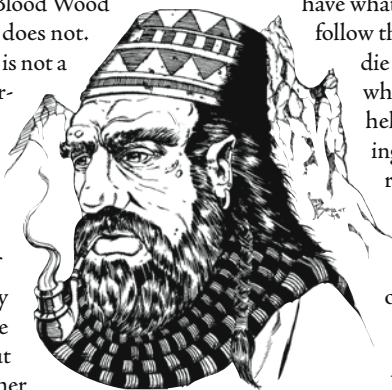
And yet, these monsters are of one flesh with us—or were, ages ago. Our loyalty is torn.

We recognize that the elves of Blood Wood did an abominable

thing to themselves during the Scourge,

yet cannot wholly renounce them. How can we renounce them, remembering that the Elven Queen's Court was once the heart of all elves? When it was Wyrn Wood, it was our glory; in it we gave voice to higher ideals and shape to finer beauty than any other Namegiver race has ever created. When Wyrn Wood became Blood Wood, it perverted these ideals and this beauty. And yet, it remains an exquisite place.

This change has worked its ill upon us. Where once elves strode across the land with heads held high, our bearing now at times reveals shame. Some elves let their shame weaken their pride in their heritage, walking with their eyes downcast and doing all they can to forget that they are elves. Other elves hide their shame by sneering at the ways of



CHAPTER 2: BARSATIVE

other races, belittling them and striving to show that elven ways are best. They do not truly believe this, of course; if they felt pride in being elves, they would feel no need to sneer and bully.

We uncorrupted elves firmly believe that we can and must someday return Blood Wood to its former purity and glory. Many of us devote our lives to working toward this day, some alone and some as members of the Seekers of the Heart. We reveal this hope in a short poem recited at the evening meal, spoken aloud among our own and silently in the presence of non-elves. An elven Troubadour wrote it 50 years ago. Your ears, chronicler, are the first non-elven ones ever to hear it.

*My woodland heart is by its children killed,
In mocking life its voice forever stilled.
The sweet rose has become a cankered bud;
Its thorns have drowned the blossom deep in blood.
In memory, I see your beauties clear,
Each tree inclining gladly toward the sun
That in its turn rained down each golden tear
Till green and gold met, joined, became as one.
It lives within you still, each tree, each flower;
Each joyous elf, to reclaim with love's power.
Until that day, this world I'll not depart;
And to its coming, I do pledge my heart.*

Besides the duty to purify Blood Wood, all elves have an obligation to protect nature. Even those of us who live in the cities must do what we can to heal the ravages of the Scourge. I know that many other races view elves as a reserved people, and so we are when alone. But in large gatherings, elves can become quite raucous. We sing, dance, drink wine, and carouse through all hours of the night. Despite the pain of Blood Wood's corruption, we can still be joyous. And we are still beautiful. We elves take great pride in our elegant bodies, and love to adorn ourselves with beautiful jewels.

—Transcribed from the speaking of
R'iallan ni Mar, merchant of Travar

R'iallan ni Mar's perfume gave me a splitting headache. I apologize if my inability to concentrate because of the pain caused me to transcribe anything inaccurately.

—Jerriv Forrim, Scribe and
Scholar of the Library of Throal

On the Ways of Humans

Let me tell you about my fellow humans, friend. We would like to swagger through the world with as much bravado as orks and trolls, but humans haven't enough bulk to back up rude behavior. Instead, we humans accomplish our ends through manipulation, controlling magic, politics, and money. True, everyone else in Barsaive also uses magic, politics, and money to get what they want, but humans excel at it. We gather information, influence, and wealth and hold it close. Others may share if they can persuade us to trust them, but may not own what we have.

Humans, especially men, foolishly insist on believing that life is a conflict. He who refuses to see enemies everywhere will lose all to them, and so must strike others before they strike him. You must have listened to many a human conversation; you know the truth of what I say. Every discussion that does not turn on how best to do ill to someone else will

invariably fall into gossip. Women gossip about personal matters—people in the village, who is wearing what these days. Men gossip about more general matters—people in power, who is dictating to whom these days. We humans rarely get to the heart of whatever business is at hand. Determining and

establishing status, in any form, lies at the root of all our dealings.

Humans play these games of prestige and power in many ways. Some humans make sure the world knows that they have power. They seek positions of rank, flaunt their wealth, and lord it over everyone they meet. Others traffick in secrets, worming information from confidants, gathering influence



and resources secretly, and revealing them only when they must.

I find it amusing when other Namegivers lump humans together with orks and trolls, as if we had much in common with those great louts. I find it even more amusing when my fellow humans take the comparison seriously. More than once, I have seen other humans display ridiculous physical bravado to prove that they are as tough as trolls and orks. Often, trolls and orks pick fights with hot-headed humans, knowing that the human will enter the fray to preserve his pride. As might be expected, the human always loses. But in the strange world view held by my race, such a human wins. The simple fact that he accepted the challenge allows him to go back to his friends and boast that he stood up to the aggressor, gaining him much honor among his peers.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Tel

Kour, Thief Adept of Kratas

Of course, many humans will back down from a fight—and then arrange for ruffians to set upon the ork or troll later that night, or have the local authorities fine the bully until he has no coin or possessions to his Name.



—Jerriv Forrim,
Scribe and Scholar of
the Library of Throal



On the Ways of Obsidimen

We obsidimen have a slow and steady nature, tied to balance. We believe that all things should remain stable at all times, like the tranquil life of a mountain. Time and rain and wind may alter a mountain, but the mountain does not make the changes. It changes slowly, simply by being.

Unlike our fellow races, we obsidimen are not easily moved by the Passions. Our strength is that of the rock and we can easily defend against any attack, but we do not understand conflict. Fighting and war, these things do not belong to us. Those who fight become imbalanced, a thing we abhor. An obsidiman forced to fight strides up to his opponent and strikes a decisive blow, ending the fight and its imbalance in the same moment. Obsidimen rarely

feel excitement, but when they do, those around them should seek cover. As the proverb says, when the ground shakes, everyone falls.

Most often, we find our contentment in standing motionless, among each other and in the elements. We gather in groups to stand silent and draw comfort from each other's presence. When we stand so, we see and hear and feel only each other, only the earth and rock and air and rain. These things become our whole world, unless some foolish one threatens us.

Some obsidimen like myself become adventurers, seeking out other races simply to see how the imbalanced, frenzied, energy-wasters live. For myself, I have even come to love the life of quick energy that others of our race consider useless. Over the years, I came to spend less time with my own people and more with those who adventure by trade, until I

chose to live in this great city among my hasty, strange, but beloved companions.

I have worked for many merchants as a caravan guard; they think well of obsidimen because we are well-behaved, responsible, and as tough as the rock we resemble. I have also worked for mercenary bands, though they had some difficulty in teaching me to attack swiftly. For those of my race, the world is less urgent, and so we sometimes fail to see the need for

action until long after others join the fray. I must confess, I prefer working for merchants; among them, I face less conflict and imbalance.

—Transcribed from the speaking of
Omeyras, Troubadour of Urupa

Obsidimen are rare in Barsaive, though some students of the race conjecture that they may live in greater numbers in other parts of the world. Needless to say, I had a difficult time finding one to speak to. The effort of traveling to Urupa to speak with the Troubadour Omeyras sent me to my pallet for a week.



—Jerriv Forrim, Scribe and
Scholar of the Library of Throal

CHAPTER 2: BARSATIVE

...We walked toward a rocky outcropping, led by Grinache, my obsidian companion. I was sure we were in the wrong place. He had said we were looking for his Liferock, where he and his family enter their "time of thought," as he called it. Surely, I thought, this out-sized rock formation couldn't be his Liferock. What's a tumbled lot of boulders got to do with life? I mean, rock's never been alive, has it? I asked him why he was stopping. "Because we are here," he said.

I'd nothing to say to that. Just blinked at him and kept my mouth shut. I couldn't believe that a heap of ordinary, reddish brown rock could be anything special to anyone.

But then, as I watched him move toward it, I saw the shape of an obsidian begin to form in the stone. As I looked even closer, I realized that the shape had been there all along; I just hadn't seen it. To the left of the first shape I saw another obsidian, curled up tight next to a third who was sitting.

As I stood mesmerized by the shapes in the Liferock, Grinache spoke to me. His deep voice, as always, reminded me just a little of muffled thunder. "Thank you for coming home with me, Rinn. I'll be staying for a time."

I stayed and watched. He leaned against the outcropping, not truly rock, but his obsidian brothers, and over the next several hours became one with the Liferock...

—From the journal of Rinnthal of Travar, 1506 TH

On the Ways of Orks

We orks have ambition, we do. We work hard at a task and never quit until it is done. Show me the puny human who works half as hard or does half as much! One in five of all Barsaivians is ork. Outside of Throal, more of us live in Barsaive than any other single race. We live everywhere, we do: in villages, towns, and the greatest cities. We farm, we sell, we soldier, we lead the people, and we protect innocent folk. Plenty trust us these days; some still spit on the ground we walk on, but that only shows how stupid they are. As for us, we

care nothing for what they think. Why should we? They are not ork.

Know what sticks in my throat, friend? We work so hard and do so much for Barsaive, yet other races still belittle us. They refuse us their respect. It isn't right. Every ork child grows up and goes off on his own, working hard to succeed as a farmer or merchant or even to strike it rich in a deserted kaer. Yet even if they get respect for what they have done, they get it in spite of being orks. Their so-called betters overlook their race, as if being ork were like being diseased.

Ironically, this hardened individualism is exactly what keeps orks from gaining power and respect as a group.

—Jerriv Forrim,
Scribe and Scholar of
the Library of Throal



No matter what, an ork strives to succeed. Any ork worth the name will do almost anything to reach his goal. Most of us call this good, but sometimes it turns us bad.

Honest orks work hard enough to make a dwarf jealous. In a dishonest ork, this striving to succeed at any cost can produce a thief, a murderer, or worse. Lucky for Barsaive, most of us are good people. Even the scorcher bands only want respect

and a good living...well, most do. After all, why shouldn't orks charge tolls for the roads? Didn't we build most of them?

We built those roads, we did, with a stamina that no one else can claim. Orks can endure any pain if we must. Failure is not an end to an ork, only a wayside stop on the road to success.

Our children learn ambition through the stories we tell each generation. Ork lore tells us that in ancient times almost every race in the world used orks as slaves. We were Namegivers, yet they treated us as mindless animals. We didn't stand for it, we didn't. We won our freedom with our blood; we fought hard for it. We made them see us as Namegivers, just like themselves. They hated us for it. The

looking-down-the-nose started back then. Strange to tell, it was the Therans who made things better for us. They enslaved all races in Barsaive, and only then did our fellow Namegivers began to understand, just a little, what they had done to us.

When it came time to build the kaers and citadels, we orks built more and faster than anyone; that earned us heartfelt thanks, if nothing else. But not respect, oh no. Not for the lowly ork. I tell you, friend, sometimes it's enough to drive an ork to plunder and murder. If I have a treasure and you have nothing, you must respect me, right?

—Transcribed from the speaking of
V'Gogh Bonecracker, innkeeper

*The food served at the inn in
the Tylon foothills made me
break out in spots. I cannot
speak well of his cook.*

—Jerriv Forrim,
Scribe and Scholar of
the Library of Throal



On the Ways of Trolls

On behalf of my village, I welcome you, Jerriv Forrim. I say this so that you will know we are civilized.

First, let me say that we are not cousins to the obsidimen. True, we are large; true, many of us dig homes deep into the sides of mountains. We value the obsidimen, as we do all Namegiver races, but the rumor that we are kin is false.

It is sad that we trolls so confuse our fellow Namegivers. They see us impassioned, impatient, intemperate, and driven to extraordinary physical exertion; then they see us fall as suddenly still as an obsidimen when contemplating a sunset or the sparkle of sunlight against a mountain stream. They know not what to make of a race both fierce and gentle, and too often this confusion makes them fearful. To understand, they need only remember that we trolls have strong ties to the earth and nature. Nature itself is both fierce and still, noisy and silent. As is nature, so are we.

Many also fail to understand that there is more than one kind of troll. The trolls of the highlands

have become a crude stereotype of our people; they live in hard-to-reach mountaintop villages and live off the land, often herding goats and other animals for sustenance and barter. The crystal raiders are the best known of the highland dwellers, though many highland trolls do not fly airships. Compared to those of us in the lowlands, highland trolls have primitive laws; among them, might makes right, and they venerate the warlike Passion Thystonius above all others.

Sadly, most Barsaivians believe that all trolls act like highland trolls. Like all stereotypes, this notion is unfair and untrue. A troll family such as my own that has lived for generations in the lowlands has only its race in common with the highland trolls.

To assume that we too are brash, violent, and driven by a need to plunder represents the worst sort of ignorance. We are a people like any other; we live peacefully in villages, towns, and cities, and some of us even achieve positions of power. Because many of our neighbors fail to fully accept us, however, most of us appear socially awkward in their eyes.

The greatest trouble we face in Barsaive society is our size—or rather, the failure of others to accommodate our size. As we lowland trolls are few in number, architects and other craftsmen rarely build corridors, doorways, chairs, tables, and tools large enough for troll bodies. In any city, a troll rarely finds a room to rent that he can fit in comfortably. Rarer still does a troll find a chair at a tavern that he will not crush by attempting to sit in it or a mug large enough to hold with any semblance of grace. Because we are large and the world is built small, everywhere we go we trolls appear ungainly, clumsy, and destructive. This is not our nature, but simply the fate of those living in a world not made for our comfort. Despite, or perhaps because of, these difficulties, we lowland trolls take pride in working to prove our worth to the towns and villages we live in.

—Transcribed from the speaking
of Haschem, leader of Kahlor

On the Ways of T'skrang

The Serpent River is the mother of the t'skrang. We sail her waters in our riverboats and profit from trade, with which we enrich our crew covenants. To us, a crew covenant means a family: those we eat with, play with, squabble with, care for, and fight for. Though many t'skrang leave the river and wander the width and breadth of Barsaive, they return in their hearts to the ways they learned growing up along the Serpent. And well they should; there's no life like it, and no race like the t'skrang.

We value bravado above all other things. Only the t'skrang truly understand bravado; we live it and breathe it as no one else does. Oh, a few individuals may, but as a race... (Here the t'skrang shrugged.)

I will give you what explanation I can, of course. Gladly! Every t'skrang tries to fill his life with as many personal challenges as possible—day to day, moment to moment. Some journey on fantastic quests. Others choose new, difficult feats to attempt each day—swinging from ropes, turning back-flips, and such. If there is a simple way to do a thing and a flashy way to do the same thing, a t'skrang chooses flash every time. Other t'skrang follow those who show the most bravado, regarding the bravest and flashiest as the best teacher from whom to learn bravado.

Many people believe that the t'skrang express bravado only through fighting, but this is not so. Feats of dexterity, endurance, public oration, impromptu storytelling, blunt flirtation, and even convincing a man to give away all his goods count as impressive acts of bravado.

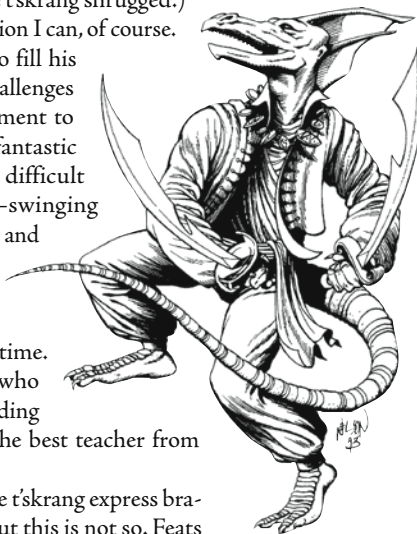
The other races of Barsaive laugh at us, but like true t'skrang we take that which is intended as good-natured contempt and make it a point of pride. Perhaps we are reckless, absurd, and fit to be laughed at—but after all, what is life without daring and amusement? We provide these things for you duller creatures; you'd die of boredom without us.

Understand, however, that t'skrang culture is more than showing off. We t'skrang are fiercely loyal to those around us—whether members of our crew covenant, neighbors in a city, or companions on an

adventure. We balance our recklessness against the community's survival and safety, and each t'skrang must choose his or her own way to do this in the heat of the moment.

Let me explain this by way of a story. We have a great, epic poem—the tale of Yustraa Piaan, most beloved among ancient t'skrang heroes. The climax pits Yustraa against just that conflict: should he return home alone, armed only with a bow and a quiver of arrows, to rescue his wife from the importunate attentions of suitors who have taken over his home? Or should he hire mercenaries to drive the suitors out? In the tale, he goes back alone and kills all the suitors, but both Yustraa Piaan and his wife also die. Many might consider this a tragic legend; we see it as a testament to the hero's bravado that he attempted such a battle single-handed. That he failed after coming so near to success gives the story a tragic undercurrent, but we regard his choice as courageous rather than foolish.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Dariinaeus, captain of the Swiftwater



Captain Dariinaeus pressed me to accept some of the famous t'skrang spiced fish. Surprisingly, it agreed with me. I recommend it.

—Jerriv Forrim, Scribe and Scholar of the Library of Throal

...On the fourth day, our riverboat pulled into the port town of T'uurl to take on supplies, and Nadalya and I took the opportunity to sample some t'skrang river life. We began with a fine t'skrang feast and were enjoying some music in a local tavern when we were unexpectedly treated to a taste of the infamous t'skrang bravado.

It all started innocently enough when an extravagantly dressed t'skrang riverman struck up a conversation with us. We both found his outrageous boasting amusing and soon were exchanging toasts of vinlo, an exquisitely spiced t'skrang wine with a kick like an ork war horse. Eventually the t'skrang's near-constant patter turned to

Nadalya's physical charms, which didn't really bother me at first. But when I spied the lizard-man's tail begin snaking its way under the hem of my Nadalya's skirt, I decided enough was enough.

"All right, fish-face, that's it. Either keep your tail where it belongs or I'll do it for you."

"What's wrong, little man?" he replied. "I'm only trying to show this beautiful lady some t'skrang hospitality. After all, such a fine young flower obviously cannot be satisfied by a tail-less freak such as yourself."

I must admit I lost my head at that point. I began to close with the t'skrang, and when he began to reach for the bejeweled handle of his sword, I sprang inside his reach, pinning his arm against his side and stepping down on his slimy green tail with all my weight. He immediately dropped to the ground, wailing like a wounded crakbill and cradling his scaly appendage.

I grabbed Nadalya by the hand and we flew like frightened windlings from the tavern, not stopping until we had reached the safety of our riverboat. When we finally caught her breaths, Nadalya let loose with a string of obscenities the likes of which I'd never heard before. Apparently she thought I had overreacted!

Three days passed before she would speak to me again...

—From the journal of Paolo of Travar



On the Ways of Windlings

Change, change, change—that is the nature of windlings. Change is what we love, and change is what we will have. One generation may borrow the martial trappings of the highland trolls, the next dedicate themselves to peace. We watch everything and everyone; nothing escapes a windling's eye. We borrow what we will from the ways of others, shifting from one to the next as quickly and easily as the wealthy change their wardrobe to keep up with fashion. As we windlings often say, "Why live one way if there are hundreds of ways waiting for you?"

Children we love most of all. Few of us bear them, and so we cherish them and raise them with great care. A child is change made flesh. As the child windling sees the world through fascinated eyes, so do grown windlings try to recapture and sharpen our own feelings of wonder and enjoyment of the world.

We raise our children in clans of 30 windlings or so, four adults for each child. All grown windlings share care for all the children as if each were his or her own. Some doubtless think us too frivolous for parenting, but we take that task more seriously than any other. Any creature or person who threatens a windling can expect no quarter, and our small size belies our fierceness.

We windlings love to travel across Barsaive, meeting different races and telling stories back home of what we have seen and done. If we like what another race does, we do it; their ways become windling ways, at least until we tire of them and make up new ones. They say that windling life changes dramatically every ten years. I say it's more like six or seven, but that changes too.

A windling will try anything new at least once, laughing all the way through every new experience. Some call this windling daring bravado, comparing us to the t'skrang. Unlike the river people, windlings rarely care if we succeed or fail at something new. A t'skrang might feel shame at failure; not so a windling, except in matters of life and death. Windlings possess a fierce desire to live and will take fewer risks than a t'skrang. What matters most to us is not succeeding, but simply doing.

—Transcribed from the speaking of Tyrwhill, Archer of Clan Wheale

ON THE MULTITUDE OF OTHER DENIZENS

On the Nature of Dragons

The fiercest and most powerful of all the Namegiver races, dragons are creatures of immense size and

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longevity. At full size the average dragon measures up to 90 feet long, with a 60-foot or longer tail, a shoulder height of up to 18 feet, and a wingspan of 130 feet. The thick scales that run the length of a dragon's body vary greatly in color, ranging from deep greens to fiery reds, though each dragon is usually a single color. Most dragons have long, narrow necks and horned heads. Though they walk on all fours, their front feet have thumbs that allow them to handle objects.

Though dragons properly belong among the Namegiver races, I have placed them in this section to differentiate them from the Namegivers who form the population of Barsaive. Their distinct, aloof nature calls for a unique treatment of their physical types, relations with each other and other races, and other pertinent details.

—Jerriv Forrim, Scribe and Scholar of the Library of Throal

The dangers that dragons pose come from more than their great size, large claws, and thick hides. Some can breath fire, control animals, spit venom, and control the minds of people with whom they speak.

Few dragons are known to exist, and those whose existence we know of tend to live alone. In general, dragons consider themselves superior to the other Namegiver races and seem to show little interest in the Passions. They usually accomplish their mysterious ends by manipulating members of other Namegiver races, often threatening to destroy people, entire villages, or towns unless the dragon's will is carried out.

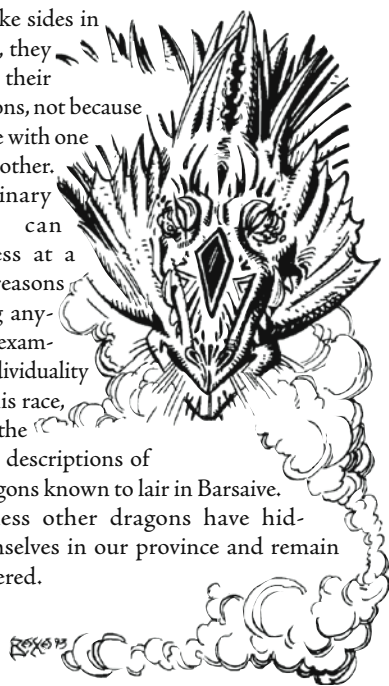
Dragons commonly lair in mountains, fens, bogs, and dense jungles, away from other Namegivers. The most popular tale about dragons—that their lairs run over with precious metals and other treasure—happens to be true. Would-be dragon slayers often bring these treasures to the dragon's lair, hoping to use magical swords and armor to kill the dragon. As one might expect, these bold hunters rarely win the battle against the dragon, and their bones and wealth add to the dragon's hoard.

Despite their solitary ways, dragons sometimes involve themselves in the affairs of other Namegivers. Why they do so, no one save the dragon knows.

If they take sides in a conflict, they do so for their own reasons, not because they agree with one side or another.

The ordinary citizens can only guess at a dragon's reasons for doing anything. As examples of individuality among this race, I provide the following descriptions of three dragons known to lair in Barsaive.

Doubtless other dragons have hidden themselves in our province and remain undiscovered.



Aban

The dragon Aban lairs in the steamy shadows of the Mist Swamps. She tolerates no intruders, and surviving travelers to the area describe the terrifying experience of being chased out of the swamps by the dragon. Some people believe that no one has found the pre-Scourge city rumored to be lost in the Mist Swamps because it lies beneath Aban's lair.

Aban has dark red scales and black eyes and moves noiselessly through the swamps. Those who have survived an encounter claim that they had no idea she was near until her huge silhouette rose up through the steam before them.

Mountainshadow

Mountainshadow lives in the Dragon Mountains, which were so Named after explorers discovered the dragon laired in their peaks. A huge dragon, Mountainshadow differs from others of his race in his fascination with the other Namegiver races. The dragon studies us not for some obscure political end, but apparently to understand our hearts and minds. Alas, no one can guess what use he plans to make of whatever he is able to learn.

Mountainshadow's lair lies in a deep cave high on a mountainside, the cave protected by winds too fierce to navigate in airships and sheer cliffs on all sides of the mountain. It is possible to see Mountainshadow only when the dragon wishes to be seen, usually when he flies down the mountain to retrieve one of his rare guests.

According to one tale, Mountainshadow's lair is home to enough orphaned humans and orks to make up a village, all raised from infancy by the dragon.

Supposedly, the community lives on the chill and barren peak by wielding many of the same magics that kept kaers and citadels functioning during the Scourge. Other tales say that Mountainshadow has a second lair deep within the Badlands.

"It is one year after we opened our kaer, the kaer designed by our protector, the dragon Mountainshadow. We owe Mountainshadow. He aided us and showed us how to protect ourselves from the Scourge that ravaged all of Barsaive."

"He asked but one payment...that we write down all that transpired during our time in the kaer and give him a copy of it. Today, our end of the bargain is fulfilled."

"Today is the Festival of the Sun. On this day, we send our history to Mountainshadow as we promised."

—From a speech by village elder
Mila Neb of Jud-alam

"Do you know who you have disturbed, boy?" The voice boomed in my head until I thought my skull would explode.

"I seek Mountainshadow, the dragon," I squeaked. "I have the history of the village Jud-alam. It is a payment."

"Humankind," the voice boomed even louder. "Ever the prompt creatures." And the voice laughed until it seemed that the mountains themselves would collapse.

—From the testimony of the
messenger Telemir of Jud-alam

Mountainshadow is silver and blue with black eyes. Those who have seen him claim that he frequently

breaks into musical laughter, which unnerves people because they fail to understand what he finds amusing.

Usun

Usun makes his home in the Liaj Jungle; because of the dragon's lair, few other communities settle in or near the Liaj. Observers report that animals living in the Liaj seem to fear him less than do the Namegivers; the jungle fairly teems with creatures of all types. Usun's scales are green and his eyes are blue. When he sits motionless, it is nearly impossible to distinguish him from the jungle trees and plants.

A Brief Discourse on Barsaivian Fauna

Even the patchiest listing of the creatures that inhabit Barsaive falls far beyond the scope of this book. Rather than list and describe each one, I have chosen to briefly mention the types of creatures Barsaive contains and comment on the most unusual characteristics of those creatures.

Mundane creatures range from small forest dwellers to the large predators common to the Servos Jungle of central Barsaive. Other creatures possess innate magical powers that allow them to fly, defend themselves through magic, or attack those who threaten them in unexpected fashion. Many creatures both fantastic and mundane are constructs of the Horrors, who create minions and slaves to serve them in their search for victims to sate their terrible hungers.

In the days since the Scourge, most creatures living in Barsaive seem more eager to attack any creature they perceive as an aggressor or threat, often striking without provocation. Scholars blame this behavior on the Scourge, claiming that most animals and other creatures react as if they must still battle nature itself for survival. This abnormal aggression has not abated since the Scourge ended, and many scholars believe it may be a permanent change.



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...Day 2: I saw the same three heroes today as yesterday—Neggil Pax, swordmaster; Teavil, weapon-smith; and Tasha Wilk, wizard. Pilla Doog, thief, still has not appeared.

Neggil: Now this scar here, the one that starts at my shoulder and ends at my hip, I got that one from a gargoyle. Dropped on me from above. Never saw it. Those monsters have stone claws, razor sharp. Happened near the Tylon Mountains.

Tasha: No, no. We fought the crakbills near the Tylon Mountains. I was still weak from fighting the cave troll the day before. The troll hit me with a stone axe; I still walk with a limp. With my bad leg, I couldn't save Teavil from the crakbill's paralyzing breath.

Teavil: I remember that. That bird thing bit me on the leg, and I could only stand there and curse. Didn't hurt so much...more annoying than anything else. Scared me, though, not being able to move.

Neggil: Irritatin' little critters, them crakbills. Not much to fright one. Like those ghouls we saw...hideous to look at, frightening at first, but really nothing but pests.

Tasha: Deadly pests! Remember the time we finished off a gaggle of them without breaking a sweat, only to face cadaver men and then a spectral dancer?

Teavil: I'll never forget it. Thank goodness Pilla attacked just after Tasha started to dance, or we might have lost our wizard.

Tasha: Speaking of our thief, here he is at last.

We looked toward the doorway, and I beheld a man with no left arm. A stump grew where his right leg had once been. Using a crutch, he hobbled to the table. My gasp must have been audible, for the other three looked at me and said in unison, "blood monkeys."

—From notes for *The Legend of the Four Warriors*, by the Troubadour Mert Looha

On the Dreadful Nature of Horrors

Unlike the dangerous creatures and monsters native to our plane, such as griffins and hydras, the Horrors invaded our world from another plane of

existence. Alien to our world, these fearsome beings possess unique abilities, twisted logic, and a love of pain that is absent from all but the most disturbed beings of our own world.

According to the magical scholars of Thera, the Horrors invade our world every several thousand years, when the magic level of the world becomes so high that these creatures can force a passage between our plane and theirs. We know not if the Horrors invade other worlds, but their invasions of our plane, the times we know as the Scourge, last hundreds of years. The most recent Scourge ended roughly ninety years ago and lasted more than four hundred years.

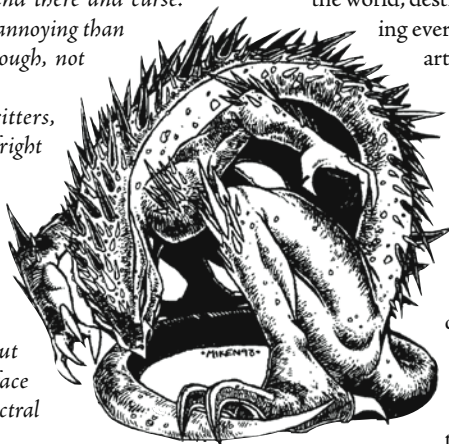
During the Scourge the Horrors swarmed over the world, destroying, torturing, and devouring everything in their paths. Lack of artifacts or other evidence of the

existence of previous civilizations leads us to believe that the Horrors must have completely wiped out earlier inhabitants of the Earth in past ages. The fact that so much of our own culture survived the Scourge intact can be credited to the efforts of the Therans, who warned us of the Horrors and taught us how to build shelters against them.

As for the rest of the world, we have had little contact with civilizations beyond Barsaive since the Scourge, but that is not to say those civilizations did not survive. Through trade with cities on the other side of the Aras Sea, we know that some lived through the Scourge. Perhaps others also survived, but like us must rebuild their own lands before reaching out to others. Also like us, they may still be battling a few lingering Horrors.

I have seen ruined kaers where hundred of skeletons lay strewn about the corridors, a sword or dagger in each bony hand. I could only conclude that the people killed each other. I doubt not that the Horrors helped bring them to this end.

—Win Thraul



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As far as we know, as many types of Horrors exist as do types of creatures on our own plane. Some Horrors are mindless omnivores, consuming grass and trees and insects. Others show more cunning by solving simple puzzles and eluding simple traps. Undoubtedly, many citadels and kaers fell to Horrors of this kind.

The most powerful Horrors think much as we do. Like us, they have a language and seem to feel some level of emotion. Their considerable cunning makes them very dangerous. This type of Horror especially savors pain and fear. Rather than simply killing their prey as other Horrors do, they stalk, manipulate, and toy with their victims, sometimes for years.

We may never know for certain why they behave so, but most believe that the Horrors draw a kind of psychic sustenance from the painful emotions they inspire in their prey. Many of the most intelligent Horrors deftly breached the defenses of kaers and citadels, then kept their presence within them a secret. For years they stalked the residents of these shelters, often killing more victims by driving the inhabitants into frenzies than by shedding blood themselves.

Some Horrors possess people; others can slip in and out of shadows. Some animate corpses or inhabit weapons. We have discovered so many types of Horrors that no one knows the full extent of their abilities.

...We spoke with the kaer's last inhabitant, one Bylon by name. To this day, his words chill my blood.

"You are wrong," he said. "My master is not a Horror. He protected us from them. Master knew that some of the people would object to being his servants, so he asked my help. I explained to our people that it could only benefit our town to have Master watch over us. Of course, he did ask a price. At first he wanted only the elders and the sick. No one minded. Those who did, the criminals and troublemakers, I took to my Master. He showed them the error of their ways.

"Soon, other kaer residents began to give themselves. People killed themselves for my Master. All the members of a family would come in together to give themselves to him, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons."

Bylon ceased speaking and gazed skyward, a look of pain crossing his gaunt face as his body stiffened.

"Master? I have told too much. I am sorry." Standing up, he grabbed a knife from the floor. "Excuse me. My master needs another sacrifice." He smiled at us over

the rusting blade, then turned and vanished into the kaer's dark depths.

—From the journal of Gliock Bluch, Warrior Adept, and companions upon finding Kaer Phil-tolo

As the world's magic level ebbed, the Horrors could no longer remain on our plane. The decrease in magical energy forced them back to the hellish place that had spawned them. Many of the creatures had power enough to resist the drain of magic and remain here, however. Others became trapped in our world, lingering too long to escape the way they had come. Though the Horrors no longer threaten the entire world, they still present a real danger to both heroes and common folk.

TRIBES AND CLANS WITHIN THE RACES

Some of the Namegiver races form clans or tribes that live outside the normal existence of the people of Barsaive. Though these groups make up part of Barsaive, they keep to themselves and regard their affairs as private. These clans and tribes represent the greatest threat to the peace the kingdom of Throal is determined to bring to Barsaive. Though most inhabitants of Barsaive gladly joined the society built by Throal, these groups stand outside of that society and therefore weaken it. The largest of these groups include the troll crystal raiders, the ork scorchers, and the t'skrang river villages.

The t'skrang weaken Barsaivian society? I think not. Barsaive belongs to us as much as to any lot of dwarfs—we differ from Throal, but we do not weaken our own land.

—Dariinaeus, captain of the Swiftwater

Crystal Raiders

For centuries, countless troll clans have claimed the Twilight Peaks as home. The tall mountain range put welcome distance between the trolls and the other Namegiving races and offered them deep caves and caverns in which to live. Before the Scourge, the Twilight Peaks abounded in life. Rich flora covered the mountains, even above the tree line in other areas of similar elevation. Careless of their prosperity, the troll clans gave little thought to farming and



agriculture, neglecting the Passion Jaspree in favor of Thystonius, Passion of conflict.

They fashioned weapons of war from stone and crystal, for the Twilight Peaks were rich in elemental earth and the caverns rich with the crystals they loved to craft into shimmering swords and armor. Few other species possessed the brute strength required to wield and wear such heavy, ornate items, and the trolls took pride in their unique weapons. They also built drakkars—long, wooden airships in which they sailed around the mountain peaks, fighting great battles against their own kind in the sweeping mountain slopes. These trolls were not the raiders we know today, who fight others as well as their own.

Like every other place in Barsaive, the Scourge changed the Twilight Peaks almost beyond recognition. Most of the trolls survived the Scourge buried deep in their mountain kaers, but their land fared far worse. Where once trees and grass, and fruits and vegetables grew wild, the Horrors left only barren ground and gray stone. The surviving trolls, inexperienced at working the land, have so far proved unable (some say unwilling) to re-plant the vegetation that flourished in earlier days. Instead of learning to use elemental earth and mundane tools for farming, they began to raid surrounding towns and villages in their drakkars, taking the food and supplies they needed.

Over the past 90 or so years, the trolls of the Twilight Peaks developed a new culture based on raiding and created customs and rituals to support their changed way of life. Their trollmoots have grown larger, some two hundred to a thousand strong. Though such numbers give the trolls an advantage in their constant warring, they have grown too numerous for the Twilight Peaks; the mountains cannot sustain the number of trolls attempting to live off the barren landscape. This crowding only worsens the lack of food and supplies and drives the trolls out on ever-increasing raids.

Crystal raider trollmoots vary greatly in temperament and fighting styles. They still fight among themselves in the mountains, but are as likely to attack Theran airships, farming communities, and caravans. Some, such as the Bloodlores, are the most ruthless of beings. The Stoneclaws, by contrast, are rumored to have offered shelter to

those less fortunate than themselves during the Theran War.

On the Customs of Crystal Raiders

Crystal raider society is organized around the trollmoot, two or more troll clans that have banded together to share their lands, labor, and the rewards of raids. When two or more clan chiefs agree to join forces, the clans perform the Ritual of the Trollmoot, a rite of Blood Magic that requires the clan leaders to swear a blood promise to one another, forever proclaiming the loyalty of their two clans.

The many different trollmoots share a few common traditions. A chieftain leads each crystal raider trollmoot, usually the troll most feared by the other trolls. Anyone who believes he or she can best the chieftain may challenge him or her to one-on-one combat. The chieftain sets the terms of victory; most often, the battle continues until one troll falls down, bleeds, falls unconscious, or dies. The challenger chooses the method of combat, barehanded or armed. If the fight is set to continue only until one of the trolls is knocked down, the combatants usually forswear weapons. However, many challengers choose to fight with weapons regardless of the victory conditions in the hope that they can slay the reigning chieftain and take his or her place.

Work and danger fill the lives of crystal raider trollmoots. When they desire entertainment, they mount celebrations that rival any others in Barsaive for energy and frenzy. The mountain trolls love to move, whether in combat or while dancing around the great bonfires they build. In their wild dancing they call on Floranuus, Passion of revelry, victory, and motion.

Crystal Raider Ships

Trollmoot activities center on airships and raiding. Crystal raiders use drakkars, the smallest type of wooden airships in Barsaive. These ships boast ornately decorated hulls, finely carved with runes by clan raiders. Narrow caves near the trollmoot's village serve as concealed mooring places; within them, the trolls care for and repair their swift vessels.

The chieftain of the trollmoot appoints a captain for each drakkar the trollmoot owns. The captain of the ship commands the crew of the vessel and makes decisions whenever the chieftain cannot bespeak the



ship. For his own ship, the chieftain chooses a vigg (second-in-command), ensuring a swift and smooth transfer of command should the chieftain die in battle. A few of the prouder warlords refuse to do this, annoyed by the suggestion that they might not survive a fight. Everyone else on the airship serves as crew, works the oars, or joins the warriors who will strike first. These fortunates sit in the center of the boat, swords in hand, ready to engage in combat at a single word.

The trolls left behind are either too young or too old for combat; sometimes they stay behind because the clan does not have enough airships to hold them. These members of the trollmoot build weapons, make repairs, and care for the young.

On the Place of Newots in Society

Over the past 80 to 90 years, the crystal raiders began abducting people from the towns, villages, and ships they raided. These prisoners, called *newots*, prepare food and perform other menial tasks for the trollmoot. Escape is difficult. Even trolls find it difficult to scale the Twilight Peaks, and a *newot* who escapes one trollmoot faces likely capture by another trollmoot during the climb down to the foot of the mountains.

The crystal raiders make a sharp distinction between their taking of *newots* and the Therans' taking of slaves, though only they understand the difference. They base their claim on the fact that the Therans trade and sell slaves, while the trolls capture *newots* only for their own use. They consider the *newots* members of their community, albeit members with no power, authority, or respect within the trollmoot.

A *newot* who survives the rigorous life of the trollmoot long enough may be formally invited by its chieftain to join the trollmoot as a full member. If the *newot* accepts the invitation, he or she undergoes the initiation rites of an adolescent troll. If the initiate survives the rituals, he or she receives all the rights of a member of the trollmoot.

In truth, the distinction between newots and slaves eludes most scholars. Of course, few scholars would dare say so for fear of angering a crystal raider.



—Jerriv Forrim, Scribe and Scholar of the Library of Throal

On Weapons and Armor

Besides being master craftsmen of their drakkar airships, the crystal raiders produce some of the most extraordinary weapons and armor in all of Barsaive, perhaps in all the world. It is from these trappings of war that they take their name, which suits them better than any other. Though the raiders also use conventional arms made of metal and leather, a great many wield swords and spears made of blue-tinted crystal or wear armor thickly encrusted with jagged crystal shards.

The trolls cannot use natural crystal alone to produce such weapons and armor, because they would shatter during combat. Instead, they carve these beautiful but deadly weapons from crystals native to the Twilight Peaks, and then lace them with elemental earth to make them as strong as metal.

The Twilight Peaks offer two resources that make such craftsmanship possible. In deep caverns at the heart of the mountains lie a great supply of crystals called ice stones, so named because they are cold to the touch, and a rich supply of elemental earth. The caverns remain largely unexplored and unsettled, for they are rife with strange and dangerous creatures from the elemental plane of earth. The raiders, fierce and eager for combat at almost all other times, make expeditions into the caverns with uncharacteristic timidity. Though they greatly desire the treasures contained therein, they also believe that they are trespassing by intruding into these caves. For more information on the nature of the caverns, turn to the section called **On the Mountains of Barsaive** (p.96), in which the Twilight Peaks are further described.

...The entire moot came out to see us off, the little ones gathering in the shadows of the mighty airships as I had done only a few years before. The moot elders, grizzled men and women proudly bearing the scars of long-ago raids, bade farewell to their battle-girded sons and daughters with the traditional admonition to "Return victorious—or draped across your shield."

At the deep, rich sound of a b'ruar, fashioned from the horn of a thundra beast, we five hundred warriors formed a column. A second bellowing call sent us marching toward the drakkars.

We moved as a great, terrible beast, bristling with the gleaming points of crystal-tipped spears and swords.

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Others wielded finely wrought battle-axes fitted with ice-stone heads the size of thundra skulls. Still others carried flails and maces, laced with elemental earth for strength. Some even wore elaborate helms and armor of jagged crystal, and all bore large ice-stone shields that flashed in the harsh mountain sun like dragon scales.

As the last warriors boarded the drakkars, the crowd fell silent. Then the slow, steady beat of spears against shields announced the beginning of the h'kradt, the ancient raider ritual. Slowly, the beat grew louder and faster until it grew into a thunder that filled the sky.

The crowd answered with war cries and cheers. Then, as the last echoes of the h'kradt reverberated through the mountain passes, the drakkars of the Stoneclaws rose toward the clouds...

—From the journal of
Zurc of the Stoneclaws

Crystal weapons and armor offer the same protection in battle as metal weapons or armor and seldom have magical properties. Few other than trolls use them, as it takes troll-like strength to wield such heavy armaments. However, a troll Weaponsmith occasionally creates a truly extraordinary weapon, by accident or design. Such items that we know to exist include an enchanted crystal sword that inflicts more harm than any other sword of comparable weight and size, crystal spiked maces that emit a blazing blue light to blind the wielder's opponent, and suits of crystal armor that weigh as little as leather armor.

Many warriors throughout Barsaive covet such wondrous items; the raiders often become the raided when bands of adventurers attempt to slip into a trollmoot and steal such armor and weapons. Other heroes make desperate attempts to stop the trolls in mid-attack in the hope of seizing enchanted items from their fallen foes.

An Examination of Three Trollmoots

During my research, I spoke with members of three crystal raider trollmoots, and offer the following

summations of their words to demonstrate how differently each lives out the ways and customs now common to the crystal raiders.

I consider myself a good friend of the moot's chieftain, Kertbale. His father was instrumental in bringing air power to the Throalic cause during the Theran War. Of all the crystal raider trollmoots, the Stoneclaws seem the most open to shedding their harshest customs. Every year I visit Kertbale it seems his people have adopted more lowland ways.

—Thom Edrull, Archivist and
Scribe of the Hall of Records



The Ways of the Stoneclaws

The Stoneclaws trollmoot, though retaining their fierce crystal raider temperament, have lately taken on the trappings of what we call civilization and refined their raiding techniques.

The Stoneclaws, a clan some 1,000 strong, own ten drakkars and make their home in the northeastern part of the Twilight Peaks. Like all crystal raiders, the Stoneclaws still raid to survive.

But instead of wearing thick furs as do their fellows, the Stoneclaws prefer cloth and have adopted the square, boxy fashions popular in Throal. Unfortunately, such clothing—designed for the squat bodies of dwarfs—looks even more ridiculous on trolls than on humans.

Disdaining the opinion of others, the Stoneclaws take immense pride in their new-found cultural tie to the lowlands, and their proud bearing almost makes the ill-conceived design work. Though the trolls have not taken to the dwarf fashion of wearing their beards in a flat row of cylinders, they do trim them more often than do members of other trollmoots. The pains they take with their appearance and the Throalic accent with which they speak lends the Stoneclaws an unexpected air of sophistication.

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Their attempts to imitate lowland dress and speech make their continuing raids an unpleasant shock to their victims. Regardless of their outward appearance, the Stoneclaws still board drakkars and sail away from Twilight Peaks in search of villages to raid. Outward trappings have had little effect on the trolls' inward nature; violence and raiding remain as natural to them as breathing.

The real difference between the Stoneclaws and other crystal raider trollmoots is that the Stoneclaws no longer raid indiscriminately. Instead, they most often raid Therans and those who support them. When pickings are slim, however, they will still gladly raid any likely target.

The Ways of the Bloodlores

The Bloodlores trollmoot numbers nearly 800 trolls and owns eight drakkars. This bloodthirsty clan makes its home in the northwestern portion of the Twilight Peaks. The most violent of the known crystal raider trollmoots, the Bloodlores kill for sport and often attack without bothering to loot their victim's bodies. They regularly attack other trollmoots to test their martial prowess against those they consider their only truly worthy foes.

Chorak Bonecracker, the Bloodlores' chieftain, particularly hates the Stoneclaws. He and his entire trollmoot loudly proclaim that the Stoneclaws have become too soft to deserve the name crystal raiders. In an effort to destroy his most hated enemies, Bonecracker has waged two bloody wars upon the Stoneclaws, drawing several other trollmoots into the conflict as allies.

Kerthale of the Stoneclaws, having inherited some of his famous sire's diplomatic skills, successfully created his own alliance of trollmoots to repulse the Bloodlores' attacks. Despite the terrible shedding of blood and loss of lives, both wars ended without victory.

The Bloodlores usually paint their furs and crystal armor with the blood of slaughtered animals before battle or a raid. Over time, the blood stains their clothing a dark crimson. Many of them also wear bones knotted in their long, unkempt hair, creating the appearance of crazed savages—exactly the effect they seek.

Rumors in Throal have it that Chorak has his hands full with a pack of young trolls led by an ambitious crystal raider named Prokkvar Tornflesh, who has his eye on the chieftainship.

Prokkvar so far refuses to challenge Chorak in a traditional contest for the title, for he knows he cannot win. But given time, that young troll might well do Chorak in, by fair means or foul. Chorak recently suffered several accidents that nearly took his life, all suspicious in nature and assumed to be the work of the Stoneclaws tribe. Certain circumstances point to Prokkvar's involvement, however, and if true, Prokkvar and his companions appear willing to ignore the traditions of trollmoot accession. If they can toss that aside so easily, what other traditions might they choose to ignore?

❶—Jaron of Bethabel, Scholar of the Library of Throal

The Ways of the Ironmongers

As savage as the Bloodlores, the Ironmongers feel a special affinity for metal that distinguishes them from other trollmoots. Like other crystal raiders, they work with stone and crystal, but make a special effort to collect for themselves goods forged in metal: brooches, swords, maces, helmets, rings, kettles, and other such items. From comments made by some of their craftsman adepts, I surmise that they seek some new Discipline of magic that will allow them to combine metal with stone in some new and powerful way.

Yorvak Bronzeclaw, the trollmoot's leader, spends much time researching the trading practices of various villages to determine the likely contents of certain caravans. In this way, he chooses his victims, raiding those most likely to be carrying precious raw metals and finely worked metal goods. He has also stolen from magicians known to work on magic swords and the like.

The Ironmongers' specific interest in metal makes most villages and towns safe from their attacks. Heroes laden with magical weapons, beautiful rings, and a reputation for collecting treasure, however, must guard against Ironmonger drakkars while on the road.

The Ironmongers tend to wear clothes in the colors of metal, and often paint their crystal armor



and weapons to resemble metal ones. The trollmoot numbers 1,200 members, owns twelve drakkars, and lives in the central region of the Twilight Peaks.

A Discourse on Ork Scorchers

Ork scorchers are bands of nomads that travel the lands to the south and west of the Throal Mountains. Divided between cavalry and raiders, all ork scorchers travel mounted on all manner of beasts, including horses, thundra beasts, and large, horned animals called stajian. Most ork scorchers warriors are also skilled adepts, capable of performing complex acrobatic feats and specialized attacks while riding. Both types of scorchers regard each other with deep animosity. The cavalry scorchers find the undisciplined, randomly violent lifestyle of the raiders embarrassing, partly because many Barsaivians make no distinction between the raiders and scorchers cavalries. As for the raiders, they detest what they consider the affectations of discipline and directed violence the cavalry scorchers have adopted.

Scorchers cavalry and raiders both spring from orks who escaped slavery in the centuries before the Scourge. These escaped slaves banded together into small tribes, living as nomads in order to avoid recapture. Many orks found themselves surprisingly skilled at taming wild beasts and used this gift to create herds of animals trained to carry the tribes on their travels. The ork tribes raided isolated villages and farms for enough supplies to keep them going from day to day, sneaking in to take what they needed when discovery seemed least likely. As the tribes grew larger, these raids grew bolder and more devastating to the victims, because the orks' need for supplies became greater.

As the orks grew stronger, they began to believe that they could resist any attempts to return them to slavery. Their supply raids changed from desperate acts of survival to punishment inflicted on all other Namegiver races for the injustice the orks had suffered. As the centuries passed, even this justification gave way to the sheer pleasure of destruction and the desire to deprive the privileged of their prized possessions. The ork culture became a constant round of violence and wild celebration of successful, devastating raids. Their lightning attacks cut

a wide swath of death and destruction, and their victims called them scorched for the barren lives they left behind.

During the Scourge, each scorcher tribe established a separate kaer. No longer able to perform glorious feats in battle, the scorched kept their traditions alive through legends of their great heroes. The first scorched to leave the kaers found little worth raiding, but immediately took up the lives of their ancestors and waited for Barsaive to rebuild.

On Scorchers Cavalry

Shortly after the united people of Barsaive defeated the Tharan Empire and ended the Tharan War, the leader of the Thunderers scorcher tribe decided that his people should earn their way in the world by offering their finely honed fighting skills to other groups. Though the tribe resisted, their leader had seen the coming importance of trade to Barsaive, and eventually prevailed. Other tribes followed in his footsteps; they abandoned raiding and instead formed cavalries, selling their skills to the highest bidder. From their earliest days, some ork cavalries lived by strict rules that pledged each rider's loyalty to one side of a conflict, while others changed sides from one week to the next. This dichotomy remains in our own day.

Ork cavalries range in size from ten scorched to 100, built around groupings of nine riders and one sergeant. Overall command of larger forces falls to a captain.

Individual cavalries identify themselves with symbols such as bloody teeth, torn pennants, or bloody horns affixed to their shields, breastplates, or helms. This particular custom is one they share with the scorcher raiders, though in general the cavalries wear well-kept armor and maintain their weapons in good repair. As they travel, they often adopt the clothing styles of the towns and cities they encounter, adding robes, fine leather boots, and other luxuries to their wardrobes.

Only a rare few scorched read and write, though many units contain adepts whose Disciplines includes this talent. Because an ork leader may not have this ability, contracts are sealed verbally after negotiations. The cavalries offer a unique service, and so most prospective allies agree to even the most outrageous demands.



Because they love combat above all other things, scorcher cavalries usually attach themselves to front-line troops and wait for the first volleys of enemy arrows and spells to cross the field. Then, armed with thick lances and riding their powerful mounts, the orks race across the battlefield to engage the enemy, running down anything in their paths. The mere sight of charging ork cavalry is often enough to break the opposing army.

Families travel with the cavalries, taking care of such day-to-day concerns as repairing weapons, cooking food, and tending the wounded. Once a cavalry has fulfilled its contract, the riders and their families camp outside the walls of major cities, using this excellent vantage point to sniff out political conflicts that might provide more work. Whenever they learn of battle brewing, the cavalries break camp and ride to the battlefield. Because all cavalries find work in the same way, the cavalry that arrives first has the best chance of winning the assignment. When work is particularly scarce, cavalries fight each other for contracts.

Cavalry units obey their own code of law. Warriors by profession, they treat other warriors as they themselves wish to be treated. Prisoners taken are held until the end of the conflict, when they are ransomed or simply returned to their army. Anything of value captured during battle goes to the winner. Once hired, most orks throw themselves completely behind the side that is paying them. Though some can be bribed to change sides, most scorcher cavalries units only abandon their employers when ordered to engage in suicidal attacks, or if the conflict escalates beyond the terms of the original contract. Should this happen, employers who refuse to renegotiate will swiftly lose their fine ork soldiers.

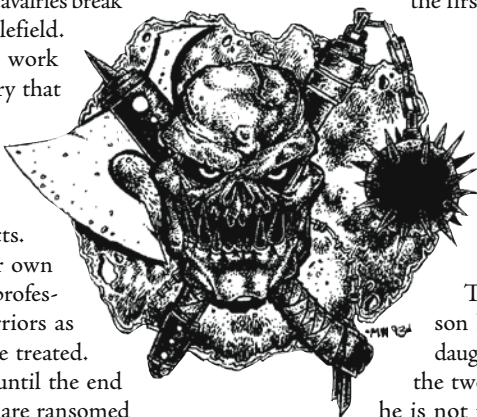
On Three Famed Cavalries

I describe the three most famous (or infamous) scorcher cavalry units in Barsaive below. Note that the first number given represents both the cavalry and their families; the approximate number of warriors within that total appears in parentheses.

Terath's Chargers

One of the largest ork scorcher tribes in Barsaive, Terath's Chargers is second in size only to the Thunderers. Led by Terath the Contemplative, the tribe comprises 1,600 (400) orks, though the cavalry is usually split into two groups of 200 each to allow Terath's Chargers to fight twice as many battles. The entire cavalry regroups only for particularly challenging contracts, when they believe their full strength is needed.

For the past four years, half of Terath's Chargers have defended King Varulus III's lands against attack from the Skull Wharg raiders. The presence of orks defending dwarf interests against other orks has roused the anger of Karak Bloodeyes, the Skull Wharg chieftain, and he has sworn to kill Terath at the first opportunity.



It should be noted that there are few leaders in Barsaive that Karak has not sworn to kill.

—Ardinn
Tero, Scholar of the
Library of Throal

Terath's two children, his son Earal Bloodstroke and his daughter Zarass Icethought, lead the two halves of his army when he is not present. Earal commands the cavalry employed by Throal, and Zarass leads the half that roams Barsaive seeking employment. Terath rides between the two groups, keeping his authority firmly established. Because Terath spends only half his time with the cavalry attached to Throal, he has so far dismissed reports that Earal's people are becoming fast friends with the people they have sworn to protect.

Terath's Chargers wear uniforms of deep blue, relieved only by silver buttons. Terath frowns on cavalry members who ornament their uniforms, but allows the occasional bone-pattern held in place with heavy thread.

...Not long ago, I visited the camps of Earal Bloodstroke. Large, dome-shaped tents made of tanned animal hides were set up in six-tent circles, with a bright



fire burning at the center of each circle. As I believe is their custom, the scorcherers were gathered around the fires telling stories of the battles they had fought and recounting ancient legends of the times before the Scourge.

I was particularly struck by the number of dwarfs, elves, humans, and other races from the farmlands gathered around the fires as well. Judging by the stories being told, such behavior was unique to this scorcher camp. I can only guess that because this cavalry has lived and fought in the same place for more than a year, they have become (in a sense) part of Throal. I spoke with many of the ork families under Earal's command, and they obviously believe that Throal has agreed to a contract for an indefinite time. When I told them that the contract is renewed and renegotiated each year, that news surprised them. If a time comes when Terath chooses to move his Chargers out of Throal, he may find his forces permanently split.

—From the journal of Gernol
of Throal, 1505 TH

...Our meeting with Zarass Icethought clearly showed dissent among Terath's Chargers. Zarass has repeatedly demanded that her father Terath rotate the two halves of the cavalry in and out of Throal each year. She claims that her brother, Earal, feels affection for the people he protects, an attitude foreign to the very fabric of an ork scorcher's being...

—From the journal of Jonam
Swordarm, 1505 TH

Though Terath seems to know of the rivalry between his children, he has yet to act. Some say that Earal counts his sister's arguments by pointing out that his cavalry is experienced at defending Throal and so should remain there. Though this argument may have truth to it, by allowing his units to fraternize with the people of Throal he jeopardizes the scorcher way of life. Terath appears willing to wait on events, allowing Earal and his cavalry to draw ever closer to the citizens of Throal they defend; in this way he avoids forcing his people to choose between him and Throal.

Herok's Lancers

Herok's Lancers, more commonly called the Lancers, are regarded by other cavalries as little better than a scorcher raider tribe. Though they work for

contracts and keep their word as scrupulously as any other cavalry group, they cause as much injury to their opponents as possible, and looting is one of the Lancers' favorite pastimes. On occasion they attack communities without being paid to do so, then later invent a creative reason for the strike. However, their fighting prowess convinces most prospective employers to overlook these infrequent lapses into lawlessness. The tribe usually numbers about 8,000 (2,000); their loose organization allows families to join and leave the Lancers easily and with little notice.

Herok Shatterbone, a sturdy, capable ork who interprets a contract in his own way, leads the Lancers. Unexpectedly literate, Herok often makes changes to contracts even after signing. Though these changes are always small and rarely come to light, Herok always offers to clear up any misunderstanding through a fight.

Employers who hire the Lancers buy fierce soldiers on the battlefield, but may receive a surprise or two in the negotiating room. Because the Lancers seem to sell themselves cheaply, many cities and political factions in need of an army will gladly hire them. Once he has won the battle, however, Herok often demands a higher fee than the one negotiated or a reward of another kind. Those who hire the Lancers are rarely in a position to dispute with an army of orks and pay whatever the scorcherers ask.

Through years of experience, Herok has learned just how far to go with his extra demands. In most cases, he asks for only 20 percent over the original fee. If he desires an extra reward in something other than coin, he tends to request obscure and seemingly valueless objects that apparently hold some meaning for Herok and his people. In the past he has collected minor magic items, swords, and ancient texts. Some believe that Herok or someone else in the Lancers is working toward the same goal as the living legend cults, but no one can prove this contention.

The Lancers dress in a ragtag collection of bits and pieces taken from the uniforms of defeated opponents. Every Lancer wears black or red, along with many other colors. The true mark of Herok's Lancers are the unique spears and lances these orks carry. They paint the weapons black, with red stripes. The tips of the weapons are bright red, and the Lancers festoon the last third of the handles with small bones, fixed in place with adhesive paste.



Thunderers

The oldest ork scorcher cavalry, the Thunderers began selling their services more than 30 years ago, shortly after the Theran War. The Thunderers' leader, Zrack Lone-Roar, one day gathered together his raider tribe and declared that beginning at sunset, they would no longer raid at whim, but would commit acts of violence for pay from any who wished to employ them. At first his people balked at what they saw as servitude, accusing Zrack of betraying the foundations of their society. Zrack, however, showed wisdom in recognizing the growing influence of trade in the world. By hiring out, his people took advantage of that influence to prosper.

During the first few, hard years many people refused to believe that lawless raiders would abide by a contract. By performing their duty well and honorably time and again, the tribe belied the skeptics and built a reputation. Accepted as honorable orks, Zrack's tribe could eventually choose between bidders, and their success inspired other scorcher tribes to follow suit.

Titanstroke Greybeard, Zrack's son, now leads the Thunderers. They number some 2,000 (500) orks, and enjoy a reputation as the most professional of the scorcher cavalries, rivaling the Therans in discipline and prestige. Even General Crotias of Sky Point has acknowledged the Thunderers' expertise by inviting Titanstroke several times to become a permanent part of the Theran force in Barsaive, from there traveling the world as an arm of the Theran Empire. Popular legend reports that Titanstroke spit at the general's feet in reply, but other rumors say that the offer tempted him sorely. Joining the greatest militia in the world would make a fine capstone to his father's ambitions, and the opportunity to lead his cavalry into new lands must also have held appeal.

Whatever his private thoughts, Titanstroke repeatedly declines the offer, a testament to the strength of his hatred of slavery. Though he respects the Theran sense of order, he cannot abide their enslavement of others. He has declared that the Thunderers will never accept work that furthers the cause of slavery, and his cavalry lowers its fee when fighting opponents involved in the slave trade. For this reason, King Varulus often hires the Thunderers to fight campaigns in southern Barsaive, where they can

apply their discipline effectively against the formidable Theran army.

The Thunderers wear the most distinctive uniforms of all scorcher cavalry, midnight blue decorated with gold braid.

...As we traveled across the lands near the ancient kingdom of Landis, we came upon a massive ork tribe camped for the night. Spotted by their sentries, we were escorted to the leader's quarters, where we met Titanstroke Greybeard. He cordially invited us to rest with the Thunderers scorcher tribe. That night we heard many legends of ork battles against Theran armies in which Theran slavers fared worst at the hands of the Thunderers.

Their terrible fierceness against slavers has its origins in our distant past, when orks were the only Namegiver race enslaved...

—From the journal of Freestone's
Fighters, 1505 TH

Scorcher Raiders

Ork raiders live in much the same primitive way that their ancestors did before the Scourge drove them into the kaers. They take pride in their shabby, dirty clothes, their inability to read and write, and the constant squabbling that goes on within and between tribes. They choose victims (whether persons, caravans, or communities) to raid based on known or rumored wealth and treat their victims according to how well they are dressed. Those who look wealthier are more likely to be killed or tortured. Balancing this savagery, the raiders often help the poorer people in society, sometimes aiding rebellions against cruel, wealthy merchants or slave owners.

The raiders travel the land in tribes numbering from 50 to 300 orks. Like the cavalry scorchers, their prominent warriors are riders. Their nomadic life with its constant travel allows them to take what they want from anyone they meet. They rarely stop for more than seven days, pitching their conical tents and feasting and dancing around huge fires until dawn.

Fierce warriors, the scorcher raiders take pride in their physical prowess and skill in combat. Even their games often involve hitting, biting, clawing, and other physical attacks. One popular pastime, tossball, requires players to move a ball (made from



an animal's skull wrapped in cloth) up and down a playing field. The players use heavy poles measuring some six feet in length to manipulate the ball, but can also use the poles to hit anything else on the field, including other players. Tossball is bloody and sometimes fatal, but the raiders laugh throughout the game. In a well-played game, every player suffers serious bruises, and serious wounds are seen as a badge of honor.

Most raiders wear furs and unfinished leathers, decorating their clothes and hair with bones and feathers. They wield crude weapons and often their first goal in a battle or raid is to acquire better ones.

On the Most Infamous Tribes

In the following pages, I describe everything we know about three of the largest ork raider tribes in Barsaive.

Broken Fang Tribe

The Broken Fang tribe roams the lands between the Twilight Peaks and the Liaj Jungle. Some 5,000 orks strong, the tribe is divided into smaller clans of 500 to 600 raiders. All the villages and hamlets between the jungle and the mountains hold dark memories of Broken Fang attacks. Most villages and towns raise as many of their children to be warriors as farmers; a number of these warriors leave their villages to travel the world in search of magic and artifacts that might help protect their people against further scorchers raids.

Members of the Broken Fang tribe tattoo their flesh and paint broken, bloody fangs on their shields. They wear red armor trimmed in black feathers. Loyalty among the Broken Fang tribe is so strong that all attempts to destroy individual clans have failed, thwarted by the arrival of the rest of the tribe. Because the clan rarely stops for more than three days at a time, few have successfully tracked them. When cornered, Broken Fang raiders fight with the ferocity of rabid animals, angered by a shared belief that no one dares attack them. Punishment for challenging this belief is swift and terrible.

The Broken Fangs' leader, Charok Redhand, has reached an age where he might well die before too many more years pass. His son, Tarjak Stormcloud, has been urging his father to choose a side in the Theran-Throalic conflict. Apparently Tarjak cares

not which side Redhand chooses. The truth is that he simply wishes his people to have a friend, should full-blown war with the Therans break out.

Most of the tribe disagrees with Tarjak, preferring instead to watch the factions of power in Barsaive battle themselves to a standstill. If he is allowed to assume his father's place, Tarjak faces an uphill battle to keep it. Though the eldest son normally assumes the father's place of power in the Broken Fang tribe, in some cases a council of clan leaders chooses the new tribal chieftain, but usually only when the son and heir has died.

Rumor claims that the Therans once approached the Broken Fang Tribe to form an alliance, but the orks slew the ambassadors. Given their fierce independence, I should think an alliance between the Broken Fang and anyone at all is impossible.



—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Witnesses also say that he has met several times with Tresgg Heatsky, daughter of the chieftain of the Metal Fist scorchers tribe, to discuss an alliance of some sort.



—Jerriv Forrim, Scribe and Scholar of the Library of Throal

Metal Fist Tribe

The Metal Fist tribe numbers some 8,000 scorchers, though they rarely gather in one place. Scattered throughout Barsaive, they make their homes in the foothills of the mountains. Remarkably, this tribe can ride their beasts up and down mountainsides at will, sometimes taking advantage of this skill to raid crystal raider trollmoots. Only breeding, training, and extraordinary empathy between rider and mount makes this feat possible.

The tribe is divided into a dozen clans, two or more of which often raid together. The scorchers wear a spiked or studded black metal glove on one hand at all times and occasionally on both, usually when riding into battle.

The tribe has sworn to destroy the Therans, for the orks have lost many members to slave raids. In order to better defend against these attacks, the Metal Fist tribe has begun to adopt scorchers





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cavalry organization. They wear red- and purple-dyed furs to mark their tribal allegiance, often adding colorful feathers.

Even their personal war with the Therans cannot force the Metal Fist tribe into an alliance with Thera's other enemies. As with other raider tribes, their sense of independence prevents them from working with others to reach a common goal; they know only how to be enemies, not friends.

The tribe's chieftain, a master tactician known as Bronze Eyes, uses his tribe's vast numbers to significant advantage. He rarely wastes his strength attacking small villages, instead looting larger towns and heavily guarded caravans. He seems to believe that anything not well-protected is not worth the taking. A few foolish merchants have tried to protect themselves from the Metal Fists by hiring a light guard and thus disguising the value of their goods, only to fall prey to common thieves.

At the moment, the tribe is closely watching Tresgg Heatsky, daughter of Bronze Eyes. Members of the tribe have seen her with Tarjak Stormcloud, son of the Broken Fang tribe's chieftain, and all concerned feel alarm at what this contact between them might mean. Bronze Eyes has forbidden his daughter, who by hereditary right is the next Metal Fist chieftain, to meet with the Stormcloud whelp again, and she appears to be honoring his wishes. Her father's most faithful warriors believe her compliance genuine, but in a world so rich with magic, even the most trained observers can be easily deceived.

Skull Wharg Tribe

The Skull Whargs raid the lands around the Throal Mountains, creating constant trouble for King Varulus III and his citizens. Led by Karak Bloodeyes, the tribe numbers 4,000 members, divided into eight clans. These clans regularly raid dwarf caravans, farming communities near the Throal Mountains, crystal raider trollmoots, and the docks along the Serpent River.

The Skull Whargs wear hides sewn together in a patchwork pattern; the more colors and textures crammed into a jerkin, the better they like it. They paint their shields with ludicrous white skulls—I can find no better way to describe this supposed artistic effort. Some of the skulls clearly belong

to orks, humans, or beings such as dragons. Others represent heads that only a mad person would recognize.

Thearasi, an elven scholar of physiology, suggests that the skulls are representations of Horrors, their descriptions passed down through generations. I rather think they are wild fancies of misapplied paint that the raiders are too lazy to correct.

—Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records

The Skull Wharg tribe hates Throal, everything it stands for, and all who ally themselves with it. Their own peculiar mythology states that orks were the first Namegiver race and thus are Barsaive's true inheritors; the increasing power of the dwarfs threatens this belief. These scorchers often raid traders or settlements with ties to Throal, less to loot than to destroy. When they strike, they leave behind nothing but the charred remains of bodies, homes, carts, and trade goods.

The Skull Whargs continually campaign to enlist Barsaive's other scorcher tribes in their private war, but so far have met with limited success. Two clans from the small Blood Spear tribe defected to the Skull Whargs two years ago, increasing the latter tribe's membership to 4,000. Other scorcher tribes, however, apparently consider the Skull Whargs' goal of toppling dwarf power too ambitious.

Karak Bloodeyes has sworn repeatedly and publicly that he will someday personally lead a vast army of orks into the mountain kingdom of Throal, kill the king with his own hands, and raise his head on a spear. Many rumors claim that his ranting drew the attention of the Keys of Death cult, and that the two groups have begun planning a joint campaign against the kingdom of Throal. I believe that Thera would gladly join such an effort, did it exist, but have heard no hint of Theran involvement in these plans.

On T'skrang River Villages

Many t'skrang villages line the banks of the Serpent River. In these villages live the t'skrang crew covenants, that race's form of extended family. The crew covenant serves many functions for the t'skrang who live in these riverside villages.

Unlike the troll crystal raiders and ork scorchers, members of which attempt to join the rest of Barsaivian society, all t'skrang consider themselves members of their crew covenant first and citizens of Barsaive second. Also unlike the first two groups, the t'skrang rely on trade rather than raiding for their livelihood. T'skrang pirates do exist, but the honest traders far outnumber them.

On the Villages as Permanent Homes

Though t'skrang sailors love to travel up and down the river, they also enjoy long stays in their villages. The t'skrang love of children and their strong family ties make them value a safe haven in their riverside communities. T'skrang villages are made up of four to twenty extended families, called foundations because they are the base on which t'skrang society is built. Each foundation is ruled by its oldest female elder, called the lahala.

These villages lie partly buried under the muddy bottom of the Serpent and rise slightly above it. Constructed of stone and shaped like domes, t'skrang homes are connected by underground tunnels. The domes vary in size, with at least one dome in every village large enough to hold the entire population for meetings and celebrations. Each foundation also builds a dome where its members communally eat and sleep. For every foundation formed, another dome must be built.

The t'skrang love to climb and swing on ropes. Where space permits, foundation members string ropes along walls and ceilings, forming some into ladders and dangling others from high ceilings. The play of t'skrang children consists almost entirely of chasing each other around on these ropes.

On the Building and Function of Towers

In every t'skrang village, large, thick spires extend upward from the river floor, usually four to twenty per village. Each of these towers belongs to one of the village's foundations. Rising above the surface of the Serpent, the towers resemble round rocks with flat tops from the shore. The towers are sturdily made to withstand the powerful, fast current of the Serpent and the constant pounding of the waves against the upriver face of the towers. A steady spray of water boils off the face of the tower and crashes back into the river, making for an interesting hazard when sailing.

These towers serve several purposes. They allow easy access between the village and the surface of the river, serve as docks for t'skrang riverboats, and protect the village from pirate attacks.

To defend against attack, the t'skrang mount on the towers the same fire cannons used on the riverboats. They also erect magical barricades called refs that radiate from the towers. Lying invisible just below the surface of the water, refs consist of elemental water shaped into thick spikes that can tear open the hull of any riverboat passing above. Tower sentries raise and lower the refs to allow friendly riverboats to pass safely and covenant boats to leave or approach the tower.

Because all towers are surrounded by refs, all riverboats steer clear of tower tops unless invited in by the towers' crew covenant.

To raise and lower the refs takes five minutes or so, leaving the village exposed to hostile riverboats for that length of time. Before lowering the refs, guards scan the Serpent carefully for unknown ships. Because the Serpent meanders in gentle curves, the tower guards can see farther than a ship can travel in five minutes, making it unlikely that an enemy ship can reach the village before the refs go down.





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Extraordinary as it may seem, however, more than one t'skrang captain has managed to bypass the refs of another village. Captain Patrochian of the Breeton accomplished this feat by arranging for a powerful spell of invisibility to be placed over her ship and waiting only yards away from a tower while the refs were lowered. Another captain, so the story goes, fueled his engines with so much elemental fire that he was able to charge down the Serpent from his hiding place around a bend in a scant three minutes. His engines exploded as he reached the village, but his story is remembered because he successfully passed his riverboat over the refs.

The t'skrang place especial importance on protecting the towers furthest upstream from the village, because ships that control those towers control access to the village. Once docked at a tower, the crew of a hostile ship can storm it and from there make their way to the helpless village. Because the village's best fighters and sailors go with the riverboats, the village is at its lowest strength when the village boats are out on the river. A raided village can only surrender, hope for rescue, or die fighting.

Allowing enemies to control even one tower gives them access to the rest of the village, and the t'skrang have few choices in such dire straits. Though they are uniformly good swimmers, the river is swift and strong; few t'skrang can leave their village from the riverbed, swim to the surface, and end up where they wish to be. Of course, enemy t'skrang who try to reach a village by swimming rather than through the towers face the same obstacle. If hostile ships control all of a village's towers, its citizens may starve to death. Most supplies come from the village's riverboats, either through trade or piracy. Those supplies move from boats and the shore to the village through the towers.

A Description of a T'skrang Community

Society within each village is matriarchal. When two t'skrang marry, the man enters the woman's foundation. Decisions within each foundation as to the sharing of food, clothes, novelties, and so on are made by a council comprising the women of the foundation, led by its lahala. Men do not attend these meetings, but their wives and sisters usually solicit their opinions before the council meeting.

All members over the age of 15 have a voice in making decisions affecting the entire crew covenant (that is, the entire village). Monthly meetings take place in the large dome at the center of the village, though the council may call an unscheduled meeting if an emergency warrants it. The meetings reflect the nature of the t'skrang themselves: loud, boisterous, energetic, and full of motion. Impassioned t'skrang often climb the ropeworks of the dome during a meeting, scrambling over each other to reach the highest points in the room and shout each other down.

On Village Prosperity

The t'skrang livelihood depends on trade. The ships that ply the river over the villages conduct trade (and sometimes piracy), while the village produces the many goods that the ships trade for others. The backbone of the t'skrang livelihood is a specially prepared fish that only they produce. Though the subtleties of taste and texture vary from village to village, this delicacy is always in demand. The t'skrang catch fish from the Serpent using elaborate mazes of nets strung across the riverbed between a village's domes. The nets trap any fish that swims into them, because all directions within the net maze lead to dead ends.

Every few hours t'skrang fishermen and women work their way along the nets and harvest the trapped fish, gathering them in large rope sacks. The t'skrang designed the nets to capture fish of a certain size; those small enough to escape simply grow big enough to be caught later.

Every member of the village helps to prepare the fish. The secret t'skrang recipes use unique spices collected from the river bottom, and both spices and recipes differ from village to village. Preparations combine spices with magic, creating a mouth-watering delicacy that retains its taste and freshness anywhere from two weeks to two months.

Though t'skrang crew covenants often fight among themselves and steal from one another, no circumstance could ever prompt a t'skrang to reveal the secrets of preparing fish. Such an offense is punishable by death according to t'skrang law, but this threat is a mere formality. The t'skrang possess too much racial pride and loyalty, and need the support of their fellows too much, to ever betray their own people in this way.



On many occasions, usually as a guest at the court of King Varulus, I have had the pleasure of eating fish prepared by the t'skrang, and I believe it is the most wonderful food I have ever been privileged to taste. Ork scorchers and other bandits often attack caravans rumored to carry t'skrang fish, simply to savor that delicacy. Vicious rumors allege that the t'skrang spices and magic actually make the fish addictive; the t'skrang vehemently deny this, and I refuse to believe it.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

The t'skrang willingly sell the spices harvested from the plants that grow on the river bottom; these spices are among their most profitable trade goods. The plants yield leaves and seeds that the t'skrang prepare in several forms, using some to produce their prepared fish and selling the rest. Though the spices alone do not produce the same extraordinary taste one finds in the t'skrang fish, cooks throughout Barsaive consider t'skrang spices the finest available. Reliable sources claim that Overgovernor Kypros sends agents north from Sky Point to purchase the spices from the t'skrang for use by his personal kitchen staff.

Talented craftsmen, the t'skrang produce extraordinary works of art using elemental water and earth. Statuettes of water, earthenware necklaces that change shape, and bracelets that flow up and down the wearer's arms are among the marvels that the t'skrang create. Like their fish, their jewelry and art is justifiably famed and sought throughout Barsaive.

On the T'skrang Love of Riverboats

The discussion of the villages above might imply that the t'skrang are a sedentary people, content to fish, create art, and cook. Nothing could be further from the truth. Though their underwater villages provide them shelter from all sorts of attacks, including Horror assaults during the Scourge, most t'skrang feel trapped if they stay too long inside the stone domes. Creatures of sweeping motion and intense passion, the t'skrang long for the chance to serve as crew members on the village's riverboat and travel the wide expanse of the Serpent. Larger villages support several riverboats, allowing even more of the village's citizens to travel the rivers.

T'skrang villages and communities exist to sail the Serpent; the crew covenant reflects the importance of the riverboat in their lives. To have a ship and sail upon it is all a t'skrang truly desires from life. Even the t'skrang cannot explain this overwhelming desire, but if one considers their love of motion, their amphibian nature, and the complete safety offered by their underwater villages, it seems clear that the riverboat has given them a way to balance their desires against the need to raise children in safety.

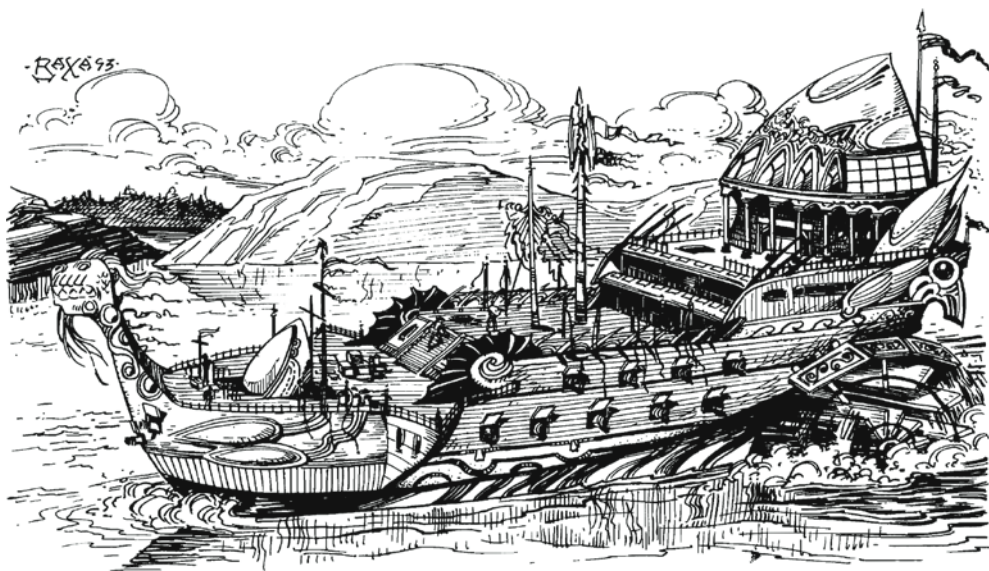
Though the foundation is matriarchal, crewing assignments for a ship are shared equally among the entire crew covenant. The actual assignments vary, depending on the size of the village and how many ships are available. The captain is chosen by the entire crew covenant, based on ability, experience, and more than a little politicking. The vote is seldom unanimous, but if two-thirds of a crew covenant agrees on a candidate, the choice is made. Chosen for a single season, the best captains often serve in that capacity for life. Incompetent captains lose their position at the end of a season, or may be voted out mid-season.

The Occurrence of Mutiny

The captain of a ship provides stability among the crew covenants, but can also become the target of jealousy among those rejected for the position. Though most crew covenants are too tightly knit for such feelings to surface, occasionally an overly ambitious t'skrang leads a mutiny against a captain, usually taking the position of captain himself. Particularly calculating t'skrang sometimes prop up a crew member they can influence as the captain so that if the mutiny goes badly, the true mutineer will suffer less heavy a punishment than his dupe. Usurpation of a captain's authority is punishable by death, and co-conspirators often die as well.

If their mutiny succeeds, the crew can either sail back to their village and attempt to force their will on the rest of the crew covenant, or find another village willing to accept the ship in its fleet. Though many villages might welcome another ship, most t'skrang consider it risky to invite mutinous sailors into the crew covenant. If a crew has mutinied once, it may well do so again. In most cases, a village that accepts a mutinous crew most likely struck a prior bargain with that crew. In such cases, the village interested





in acquiring the ship may aid the mutineers by attacking the ship when the mutiny begins.

On the Business of Trade

The t'skrang use their riverboats mainly for trade. The ships carry goods produced by t'skrang villages up and down the river, selling them to villages and towns on the fertile banks of the Serpent or to merchants, who buy them at docks along the river and carry them throughout Barsaive to sell at a profit.

The t'skrang owners of the goods sometimes travel with their merchandise, selling it themselves when the riverboat docks at a likely market. Sometimes merchants hire t'skrang to carry their goods to the other side of the river, a nearly impossible feat without a riverboat. Occasionally, the t'skrang crew purchases goods along their journey and sells those goods elsewhere, effectively acting as merchants.

Some crews without the patience for trade and careful bargaining turn to stealing from other riverboats. Piracy is not common along the entire Serpent, but certain stretches are regularly plagued by pirates.

...The first time I laid eyes upon the Serpent River, I watched one t'skrang riverboat attack another. The immense size of the Serpent had stunned me, and the strange vessels floating on its surface surprised me even

more. A blue and green riverboat, smoke billowing from its two chimneys, moved upriver, its massive paddle wheel pushing it forward. Another ship, covered with gold and red, sailed downstream toward it. Suddenly the gold and red riverboat turned to starboard and unleashed a volley of fireballs from its fire cannons. The red balls of fire, trailing plumes of flame behind them, arced over the intervening water toward the blue and green ship. Some of the fireballs crashed into the water, sending pillars of steam dozens of yards into the air. Others smashed into the upper decks of the riverboat, sending t'skrang sailors scrambling for buckets of water to quench the quickly growing fires. Their garments, sometimes a dozen colors of clothing scraps thrown on haphazardly, caught the sunlight and shimmered like iridescent flowers—green vests, red bandannas, wide-legged scarlet pants, and such. In the fiery light of their burning ship, their scales glowed bright emerald.

The blue and green ship turned to face the gold and red ship, smoke billowing thickly from its chimneys. As it charged forward, the red and gold ship continued to fire. However, because the blue and green ship faced the red and gold ship head-on, it offered a narrower target, and the fireballs fell to either side of it. When the second volley had passed, the blue and green ship turned hard to port. The red and gold ship could not fire, because the crew was still working hard to reload



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the fire cannons from the last volley. The green and blue ship, now almost on top of the red and gold ship, its starboard side lined up against the port side of the other ship, let loose its own barrage of shots. The fireballs slammed into the red and gold ship, sending flames racing along the upper decks.

Badly damaged from the fight, the red and gold ship wheeled away. On both ships, dozens of t'skrang armed with swords shook their fists at each other and swore oaths of vengeance. I know now that if the ships had

passed just a few feet closer, sailors from both ships would have grabbed ropes and tried to swing over to the enemy ship to engage those crew members. But the red and gold ship turned around and headed toward the shore. The captain of the blue and green ship, not willing to risk additional damage to her craft, continued upriver.

—From the journal of J'role
the Honorable Thief

ON TOWNS AND CITIES

The task of describing the places in which the people of Barsaive live fell to me. In some respects, I found my task an easy one; many people have visited our laud's great cities, and most were eager to describe them for anyone willing to listen. In fact, we received so much information about Throal alone (and, of course, knew it intimately ourselves) that we have written of the dwarf kingdom in a separate chapter. However, this still left me with a plethora of information on Barsaive's other sites. Because this information could have filled an entire volume by itself,

I have chosen only the most important or best-known of each city's or town's features.

The reader should also note that the descriptions provided here can serve only as an introduction to the cities and towns of Barsaive. More exhaustive information is available in the Throal Encyclopedia, 1505 TH.

8—Written on the Eighth Day of Raquas by Kern Redhand, Historian of Throal

ON VILLAGES AND TOWNS

Hundreds of villages and towns dot the landscape of Barsaive; this volume will describe them only in general terms. The only difference between villages and towns is the number of people living in them. Though no hard and fast rule exists to determine when a village becomes a town, as a rule of thumb, a settlement whose population numbers tens or hundreds is considered a village, while one numbering in the high hundreds to the thousands is considered a town. Some feel that the distinction has less to do with numbers than with the way in which each settlement sees itself.

The discourse in these pages refers mainly to Barsaive's villages, towns, and a few nomadic groups that have ties of trade and politics with other settlements. As part of the devastating legacy of the Scourge, most towns and villages scattered throughout the jungles and hills of the province show little interest in their neighbors—except when attacked, of course. Those settlements that fall victim to attack do their best to rebuild and return to the life they lived before catastrophe befell them.

In fact, most people in Barsaive live their entire lives in the communities in which they were born, never having the need or desire for trade or travel. They learn a trade, which is usually farming, grow to adulthood, marry, and raise children. They teach their children the knowledge they accumulated in a lifetime, grow old, and die.

For villages and towns engaged in commerce, even if only that of hosting travelers in settlements that lie near roads, a select few townspeople usually deal with the outside world. Their fellow citizens consider travelers quite brave, though somewhat suspect, for to leave home one must abandon for a time one's family, village, and magical protections. Those with an aptitude for dealing with strangers often establish inns, creating a gathering place for the community and providing a few rooms for travelers to rent for a small fee. An inn allows those few individuals who are curious about the outside world, hungry for tales of strange places and peculiar adventures, to satisfy their curiosity in a relatively safe manner. Most villagers shun travelers, however. The Horrors still live in the world, and if even a trusted friend can become



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an enemy without warning, how can an unknown visitor be trusted?

I and others I know believe that gathering with other people represents the best means to secure safety, but common sense comes in many forms. To each his own.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Towns and villages that engage in commerce can be distinguished by their accessibility to and interest in the larger, outside world. Settlements that lie along major trade routes, or are connected to major roads by trails usually conduct at least a little trade with travelers and other communities. Occasionally, people from neighboring villages or towns marry, but only if relations between the communities are very good.

Most towns and villages lie far from established roads, many isolated ever since the time of the Scourge. When the Scourge ended, the people who left their shelters sought above all a place in the world safe from danger. Beyond that, they wished for nothing else. Even today, nearly a century later, some still believe that cutting off all ties with the rest of the world is the best means to guarantee their safety.

Though no town or village can depend entirely on trade for its survival, those communities accessible to regular trade routes often possess a greater variety of trinkets and clothes, and have more interest in strangers than do many more isolated farming communities. They also have a greater appetite for new ideas and trade goods, and show interest in novelties from far away (or not so far away, depending on the inhabitants' definition of distance).

In contrast, farming communities usually keep to themselves. The people farm the hilly land, producing rice, fruit, and vegetables, and raise livestock, including sheep, cows, and goats. Because wide expanses of flat ground are rare in Barsaive except in the lowlands, many farmers plant crops in a series

of irrigated ledges that follow the contours of the hills. The ledges resemble large, wet steps.

Most villages and towns build their houses on the ground, using stone, mud, and wood. Others are more exotic. Some villages in Barsaive build their homes on stilts that raise the buildings several feet above deep ponds and lakes. In these settlements, the villagers use canoes or boats to travel around the village. Other towns and villages build their homes in the trees. Many such tree-houses become quite elaborate, their massive structures connected by rope bridges spanning hundreds of feet between trees.

A word of warning for the cautious traveler: as the following journal entry shows, many isolated communities prefer to remain so. Keeping this in mind, the traveler should remember that many people in Barsaive still regard strangers with extreme hostility, despite the visitor's good intentions. An explorer will

improve his chances of surviving the adventures that fall his way by making his first contact with isolated villages very cautiously.



...I'll not go adventuring again. Mad for it, we were—my brother M'kael, our cousins D'nal and Rekera, and me, Melias.

Runt of the litter, they called me. Funny, isn't it? In a tippy boat that D'nal had built from the memory of a t'skrang riverboat he'd seen once, we set out down the river our folk call Twistwater. Above our village it goes through bends and even rapids, and so we headed downriver toward calm waters. Safer there, we thought.

All we wanted was a little adventure, something to tell grandchildren by the bonfire on the village green... But the story turned out much differently.

A storm blew up one night, sending us down a river channel none of us knew. Morning saw us drifting among tall, thick reed beds, where the water smelted of hot sunlight and rotting weeds. We paddled around a bend and saw a little village, twenty round houses on stilts with a little canoe tied up by each one. A sudden wind brought us the scent offish roasting, and we paddled closer hoping to obtain a bite to eat.

A canoe drifted close, in which sat a ragged, skinny boy cutting reeds with a large knife. D'nal shouted hello. The boy turned, and screamed at the sight of us—the



kind of scream you give when your house is burning down or a nightmare chokes your throat so hard that you must wake or go mad. Then whip-quick, he hurled his knife at D'nal. The point struck D'nal in the chest, taking him down in a shower of blood. The rest of us grabbed oars and tried to paddle away, M'kael cursing as the prow caught in the reeds. Too slow, we were. Too slow. A dozen canoes came after us, the villagers shooting arrows and slinging stones. An arrow took Requera in the throat before M'kael and I went under as the weight of the stones capsize our boat. Poor M'kael never had learned to swim.

Seems they don't like strangers down the Twistwater.

—From the journal of Melias
Mahoaryl of the village of Danadal

ON THE GREAT CITIES

The cities of Barsaive house many more people than do villages and towns, usually many thousands. As in all of Barsaive, each city features unique customs and culture. A common practice in Urupa, for example, may be a punishable offense in Iopos.

In the following pages, I describe the most famed cities in Barsaive. I have organized the information given for each in such a manner as to best express the individual character of each city. In addition, I have also provided a general description of each city and its location, including directions for reaching it from Throal by using Shantaya's sextant and maps, and a brief description of each city's current ruler.

To learn how to use Shantaya's sextant and maps, consult the travel section.

—Merrox, Master of
the Hall of Records

Bartertown

A vast, bewildering maze of a city that 50,000 people call home, Bartertown lies just outside the gates to the kingdom of Throal. Sprawling in front of the three giant arches leading into the mountain kingdom, Bartertown grew out of a bazaar the dwarfs established years ago at the entrance to Throal. Merchants, traders, and visitors gathered there over the years, and the town became a favorite destination for those who wished to take advantage of the dwarf kingdom's trade policies without feeling obligated to pledge loyalty to Throal. Huts and other permanent

structures eventually replaced the open market bazaars and tents and were in turn replaced by larger, more comfortable buildings. As of this writing, it seems nothing can stop Bartertown's growth. During a busy trading season, the city's already large population can double in size.

The closer one approaches to Bartertown, the clearer its ramshackle nature and origins become. Traveling up the Royal Road to Throal, a visitor can see the massive Throal Mountains, at the base of which the three towering arches leading into the kingdom catch the sun's light and glimmer bright gold. These arches seem to stand guard over Bartertown, which tumbles away from the mountains like sharp, angular foothills.

On the Ruler of Bartertown

A magistrate chosen each year by the Council of Merchants rules Bartertown. The right to choose this magistrate became a thorny issue several years ago when King Varulus III of Throal and Bartertown's leading merchants wrangled over the power of appointment. Suddenly realizing how large and prosperous Bartertown had become, the king wished to appoint his own magistrate, presumably to extend his sovereignty over the city. Unwilling to relinquish their power, the merchants waved their original charter in the king's face until he was forced to relent.

To their misfortune, the merchants' stubbornness prompted King Varulus to stop supplying money and military might to support the city. In the last 15 years the city has been forced to impose taxes to build better buildings and provide city guards, but many of the citizens simply ignore or cheat on their taxes, which has made the king's withdrawal of support a matter of serious concern. Bartertown's fate has yet to be determined, but already some citizens want the Council of Merchants to relinquish authority to King Varulus III. Many more citizens believe that pride demands that Bartertown succeed on its own. These good people consider the city their home and want it to become as independent and wealthy as any other city of Barsaive.

Unique Features of Bartertown

Reflecting its origins as an open-air market, Bartertown is unlike the other great cities of Barsaive. Most other cities, built generations ago with the aid





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of the Theran Empire, boast massive stone buildings, towers and spires plated with gold, wide domes that glow the blue of a beautiful dusk, and intricate patterns carved into stone walls laced with gold and silver. Even though the Scourge, the Theran War, and time have reduced many of these cities to ruins, and though the cities still inhabited reflect only a shadow of their former glory, their beauty eclipses the ramshackle streets and lively chaos of Bartertown.

Bartertown boasts no buildings higher than three stories; most stand only two stories tall. Lying as it does next to Throal and the mountains, the city's lack of stonework is immediately noticeable. The buildings of Bartertown are constructed of wood, covered with white plaster, and lack the sense of security that stone shelters provide. Despite the city's size, Bartertown gives more the impression of a small wilderness town that just happens to lie along trade routes. Bartertown owns no airships and maintains a minimal city guard.

The wide, smooth Royal Road bisects Bartertown, providing all visitors with a clear view of the arches carved out of the mountain ahead. Three-story buildings line both sides of the road, all adorned with colorful paint and bright signs proclaiming the sale of various wares, goods, and services. The Royal Road is clean and well kept, creating a sense of order that makes the city seem pleasant, if provincial. As visitors pass beneath the arches, they enter the Throal Bazaar—the dwarf kingdom's official trading area, housed in a huge cavern filled with countless stalls and merchants. Tunnels lead out of the bazaar into the kingdom itself.

Visitors who turn aside from the Royal Road and onto one of Bartertown's roads quickly see the true nature of this city. Its architecture resembles a child's version of a city, hundreds of buildings placed next to or on top of one another. A closer look shows that some shelters consist of nothing more than heavy cloth draped between two buildings.

Visitors who venture further into Bartertown encounter a sea of jostling crowds in the streets and a cacophony of voices. Workers move their wares from craft shops in the inner recesses of the city to shops set up on or near the Royal Road, where traders from all over Barsaive scour the streets looking for bargains. Visiting airships dock at spires, their shadows falling across the crowded streets as their

crews unload goods carried from as far away as towns and villages near Death's Sea or the Twilight Peaks. Pickpockets and thieves work the crowds as well, finding easy pickings among those who become careless in Bartertown's bustle and din.

The city is full of merchant houses busily making fabrics, dyes, magical potions, and every other imaginable good. Even if a product is not made in Bartertown, it can still be found within the city's shops and stalls. Customers seeking specific items must be prepared to spend considerable time sorting through the city's chaotic layout and willing to wait for information if finding the item requires that merchants contact other merchants. Items not immediately available can often be found and brought to Bartertown for a customer, though sometimes the seeker of a rare herb or exotic perfume is simply told in what remote corner of Barsaive he can find the thing he desires.

On the Origins of Bartertown

How did such an unplanned and sometimes ugly city come to lie at the gates of the magnificent kingdom of Throal, itself a testament to planning and order? This question plagues the dwarfs, for it suggests that chaos can triumph despite their best efforts and that all their grandest plans may yet come to nothing.

The nature of the dwarfs themselves, so well-suited to planning and organizing, gave Bartertown its beginnings. Many traders and visitors simply wanted a place where they could trade and otherwise deal with the dwarfs without being subject to the laws of Throal. To fulfill this desire, King Varulus III granted a charter of land to a few merchants in order to create a community of merchants and traders outside of Throal. He wanted to encourage the presence of traders, but recognized that Throal's might could well frighten away the timid or those suspicious of any great power.

The other force behind Bartertown's swift growth came out of the physical nature of the dwarf kingdom. Many visitors to Throal, especially those of younger generations, simply disliked the idea of sleeping under a mountain. Though hundreds of thousands of people came—and still come—to populate the cities the dwarfs built within Throal, many others wished to be near the kingdom, but



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not of it. For these people, Bartertown provides the perfect home.

King Varulus gave the city only its charter, nothing more; he pledged it no support or defense. Nonetheless, it continued to grow unchecked. Even the merchants who received the original charter intended to establish only a few trading houses, never envisioning the development of such a vast city. Because half of Bartertown's population at any given time is transient, the city still lacks a true sense of community, and permanent residents are in the awkward position of serving as an adjunct to Throal. Bartertown is neither a truly separate power, nor fully a part of the dwarf kingdom.

Haven

Haven lies some 21 days walking and 13 days riding from Throal. A small, rough town, Haven lies in the southeastern corner of the ruins of the Forgotten City of Parlainth. Ork and troll adventurers led by the famed troll Torgak founded the town of Haven 15 years ago, after spending three years carefully exploring a small corner of Parlainth's ruins. After ridding that area of monsters and Horrors, the adventurers set up a permanent settlement from which to conduct further explorations. Other adventurers traveling to the Forgotten City began stopping in the safe area, by this time known as the Haven, to ask what portions of the city had yet to be explored and to hear the most current rumors of monsters and Horrors living in the ruins.

Eventually abandoning their own treasure-hunting efforts in favor of providing services to other adventurers, Torgak and his fellows rebuilt certain ruins into an inn they named the Restless Troll, and later a trading post called Torgak's Supplies and Goods. Because the ruins themselves are so impressive, the Restless Troll and Torgak's are spectacular establishments, featuring high ceilings, wide corridors, and marble steps down to the street; in many ways, they rival some of the buildings in the kingdom of Throal. Their opulence provides an incongruous contrast to the rough-and-tumble spirit of Haven.

At this writing, Haven boasts a permanent population of just over one thousand, including several dozen families. As many races live in Haven as in Throal, peacefully and amicably. Most trouble in Haven comes from outsiders. Of course, outsiders

constantly travel to Haven, and so opportunities to stir up friction abound.

A few years after the town achieved a stable population, other people interested in the opportunities to make a profit in Haven built onto the town, expanding away from the ruins. The first neighborhood constructed during this time is now known as the Old Neighborhood, though several sections of the town predate it.

On the Ruler of Haven

Haven is ruled by Torgak, founder of the trading post. A benevolent dictator, Torgak can use the strength of well-armed orks and trolls to enforce his will when necessary, but he has rarely needed to resort to this measure. His chief concerns are to increase trade and traffic through Haven and to keep the peace. Now that Torgak is getting on in years, he longer craves adventure or the possibility of encountering violent situations. Outsiders who come to Haven intent on brewing trouble are often hauled before Torgak for a lecture; sometimes, he gives them a beating as well.

Despite Torgak's personal desire for peace, Haven still reflects the nature of the ork and troll adventurers who founded it. The town is noisy, rowdy, and rough, and both visitors and citizens alike can indulge in much brawling or other violence before anyone interferes to stop them.

The Defense of Haven

Given the quarrelsome nature of many of its inhabitants, only a town full of warriors ready for a fight could enforce the law in Haven. And despite its peaceful name, the community sits on the edge of a ruined city whose shadows hide countless dangers. Beneath the ancient cracked and bleached-white structures lie dark cellars and long, empty corridors in which monsters prowl and Horrors nest. Indeed, masses of monstrous creatures have attacked the city several times each year since its founding. The circumstances behind such coordinated attacks remain a mystery, but most Haveners suspect that one or more Horrors are behind them.

The Horrors living in the ruins are those powerful enough to remain on our plane after the drop in magic that forced most of their kind from our world. Many are intelligent enough to make mental attacks





so subtle that they can cause untold damage before being detected. Horrors can compel people to kill friends and family in their sleep, possess individual members of adventuring bands so that the pawn will lead his companions into a trap deep within the ruins of Parlainth, and perpetrate other unspeakably dreadful acts.

On Haven and Other Communities

Citizens of Haven have begun to develop working relationships with representatives of both Throal and the Blood Wood, currently the two largest political powers near Parlainth. Both King Varulus and the Blood Warders of Blood Wood hunger for artifacts, information, and magic from the ruins, and will pay well any adventurers who can secure such items. Both the elves of Blood Wood and the King of Throal will often hire adventurers to enter and search any ruins rumored to contain an ancient treasure. Would-be heroes venturing into Parlainth from Haven must often contend not only with the monsters, Horrors, and ancient magical traps scattered throughout the ruins, but also other adventurers racing to claim their prize.

Rumor says that Haven also houses Theran spies and informants who look for ancient Theran treasure that remains in Parlainth and report any unusual activities within the Forgotten City to the Overgovernor at Sky Point. This rumor seems likely to be true. Parlainth was once a Theran city, and probably holds many secrets of Thera's past.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Iopos

Iopos lies some 38 days' walk and 23 days' ride from Throal. Crouched on the northern edge of the province, Iopos presents the greatest internal threat to the power of Throal (the Theran Empire is, of course, the greatest external threat). The city is ruled by a family of magicians Named the Denairastas, an ancient bloodline whose members governed the city through the Scourge. Their success in keeping the city safe bound the loyalty of the city's people to their magically gifted overlords. To this day, the Denairastas can do

whatever they please with nary a word of complaint from the populace.

Those few who dare protest are quickly crushed by the Holders of Trust, retainers loyal to the Denairastas who serve as both guards and informers. The guards of the Holders of Trust wear silver armor and carry large swords, presenting a visible and constant reminder of the family's power and authority. These guards will punish any accused dissenters brought to them by their spies. Charged with seeking out dissent, these spies are not formally identified as Holders of Trust, but walk as ordinary citizens among the people, ever alert for signs of complaint or dissatisfaction with the rule of the Denairastas. At a word from the informants, the guards move swiftly to arrest or kill all known or suspected dissidents.

To see this city is to see what our world would look like if the Scourge had never befallen us. The buildings seem to sparkle in the sunlight; the streets are clean, the people happy. No one speaks ill of anything, and all extol the grandeur and beauty of Iopos over any other place in Barsaive. From its outward appearance, Iopos seems a city in which the Passions dwell.

As pleasant as this city seems, a darkness lies beneath its shining surface. As you know, I am nothing if not cautious. I have more than once felt as if someone were shadowing me, which is most strange, for I have done nothing but act the role of the rich merchant. By neither word nor deed have I behaved in such a manner as to arouse suspicion.

The Holders of Trust—the city militia, army, and secret police—are everywhere. All on the same day I saw two visiting merchants arrested, tried, and beheaded in the city center for not observing the law that one must give one percent of all profits to city leader Uhl Denairastas with the pledge, "Uhl is our leader, our beacon, our all." They gave the money gladly, but refused to make the pledge. And it was one of their own workers who turned them in. These merchants came from Jerris and have never been to Iopos before! I tell you, I have not seen such brutality in the guise of order since the dark days of Theran rule!

—From the last missive of Slock, Thief Adept and spy of the city of Kratas



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The Holders of Trust have few occasions to punish offenders, however. Most citizens of Iopos feel loyalty to the point of fanaticism for their rulers; people commonly compare members of the Denairastas family to the Passions. When outsiders question this exaggeration, the citizens simply smile, as if they alone know the answer to a deep and important secret.

I advise visitors to the city to keep any questions or criticisms of Denairastas family politics to themselves.

The Denairastas willfully abuse the worship of their subjects. Whereas cruel Theran masters whip their slaves to death, the people of Iopos work themselves to death of their own free will. Whatever the Denairastas family asks, the people will give, and the Denairastas demand a great deal. Scores of men and women die while mining magical elements, and the city's army is nearly suicidal in its valor. Parents compete to offer their own children for the Blood Magic rites the Denairastas sometimes practice.

More than one adventurer who volunteered to research Iopos was arrested, tried, and sentenced to death all within two short hours for no greater offense than seeking a firmer understanding of how the Denairastas command such loyalty.

⑧—Kern Redhand, Historian of Throal

The Denairastas have sworn to defeat both Throal and Thera, to take their power for themselves. Because Iopos lies so far from Theran influence, the city has turned its attention to disrupting the trade and state negotiations that King Varulus' agents are conducting in his effort to unite Barsaive. The Holders of Trust form Iopos' front line in this effort, going into communities across Barsaive and sowing discontent through murder and destruction. They are skilled at disguising their work to look like the random violence of ork scorchers or crystal raiders, and choose their victims carefully.

The Denairastas' special interest in magic leads some Throalic scholars to speculate that certain living legend cults may be fronts for the family's goals, by which the Denairastas draw unwary people into their scheme of acquiring lost artifacts and knowledge. Iopos possesses a rich reserve of magical

elements, collected by airships sent across Barsaive to mine elemental fire from Death's Sea and elemental air from the skies. The city's supply of elemental earth and wood hints at secret expeditions into Blood Wood, though I dared not seek proof for fear of arrest for asking the wrong questions.

More than 100,000 people live in Iopos. The city's fleet of airships consists of three galleys and six drakkars. Three shipping companies also do business within the city, giving Denairastas another additional six drakkars should he require their services.

I saw dozens of workers collapse from exhaustion while building a new palace for Uhl Denairastas. I learned later that two of them had actually died in service to their ruler.

—J'role the Honorable Thief

Jerris

The city of Jerris lies some 38 days' walk or 23 days' ride from Throal. Jerris occupies a peculiar place in the physical and spiritual geography of Barsaive. Located at the western edge of the province, the city huddles between the edge of the vast Wastes that cut us off from the rest of the world on one side and a huge, unexplored jungle on the other. Because the city borders on so much unexplored land, many people wonder if Jerris marks the border of Horror-filled lands, or perhaps actually lies within them.

The dark smoke that blows from the Wastes swirls perpetually through the streets of Jerris, rarely allowing the sun to shine brightly upon its citizens. The smoke looks and feels ashy, though no one has yet discovered its true nature. Visitors to Jerris who walk through the shadowed streets quickly discover an odd taste on their tongue, as if they had eaten cinders.

To me, the taste suggests something indefinable—perhaps the taste of nightmares.

(This observation lacks any real relevance to the discussion of ashes, I know, but there it is.)

⑧—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

The people of Jerris are a brooding, temperamental lot. As in any other city, the streets of Jerris are usually filled with people, but unlike the throngs in

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other cities, the people of Jerris walk silently with their gaze turned toward the ground. This habit seems to infect everyone who stays too long within the city's walls. An air of listlessness seems to hang over the city, but make no mistake: however tired the people of Jerris may appear, they are easily moved to extremes of passion. Tears flow freely, whether of sorrow or joy. Blades are drawn easily and blood swiftly spilled, whether for money or love. Oddly, these passionate actions rarely inspire the slightest interest from people witnessing such outbursts.

Many scholars, and certain less-educated groups, have suggested that the city is cursed in some way. According to one rumor, the Hand of Corruption believes that the city rests on a wound in the earth and is

a physical manifestation of a spiritual illness in our world. The Seekers of Pure Flesh, a gruesome living legend cult, agree with this theory. They suggest that the city can be saved by gathering bits of flesh from those who died for love. The

Seekers have brought bucketfuls of flayed skin to Jerris, where it is stored in a pit under the town hall. So far, however, the magistrate of Jerris has refused to allow them to perform their homespun ritual.

Those of a more pragmatic bent believe that the ash filtering over the city from the Wastes has blighted the people's hearts. None of these theories, however, can tell us what the ash is or from where it blows among the Wastes.

8—Kern Redhand, Historian of Throal

Common wisdom in Barsaive says that strange creatures—perhaps Horrors—roam the city's streets at night, unnoticed by the people of Jerris, who cannot see these creatures through some strange effect peculiar to the city. Strange incidents support these stories. For example, certain tales say that every week ten people simply vanish in the night. Though such a claim is undoubtedly an exaggeration—the city

would soon be empty if it were true—it is an exaggeration of truth. People do vanish in Jerris. Yet another mystery shrouds those rare occasions when someone is found murdered in their sleep, torn apart with what appear to be sharp daggers—or claws.

Why do people live in Jerris if they must suffer such miseries? In a word, money. Despite its grim aspect and filthy appearance, the city is home to wealthy merchants and airship builders. Though far from Barsaive's main trade routes, the city transports many goods from place to place throughout the province. Because strong air currents pass over Jerris, a merchant's ships can reach stops on the main trade routes quickly. This advantage allows the merchants of Jerris to serve both the t'skrang and the kingdom of Throal as hired shipping agents. The air-

ship builders also sell drakkars to towns and private merchants throughout the province. The city also makes considerable profit mining elemental air.

Not everyone is content with business in Jerris, however. The trading houses seek to stop the airship builders from selling drakkars outside of the city, fearing (with reason) that if airships become commonly available elsewhere in Barsaive, no longer will their services

as shippers be in demand. The city's elemental air mining operations face constant threats from crystal raiders and the Therans, though the Therans are the greater threat of the two. Rather than simply raiding for cargo, the Therans try to sink new airships as soon as they float, most likely in an attempt to control Barsaive's ability to defend against or attack the Theran armada. The Therans recently launched several air attacks against Jerris, to which the city responded by imposing a new tax on its citizens to finance construction of an airship fleet designed to protect the city.

At this writing, the city's fleet consists of one galley and four drakkars. The merchant fleets total another 15 drakkars, which the magistrate can command to defend Jerris. The total population of the city numbers 80,000.





Kratas

Kratas lies 15 days' walk or 9 days' ride from Throal. Located in the center of Barsaive, the city of Kratas serves as a crossroads of information and stolen goods. Despite its location near almost all major trade routes, few honest merchants pass through the city, for Kratas is ruled and run by thieves. Its people are the clever and desperate, the illegally wealthy and the horribly destitute of our province.

The site of an ancient citadel that fell to the Horrors during the Scourge, Kratas was crammed with treasures both magical and mundane when adventurers rediscovered it, empty of survivors, soon after the end of the Scourge. Rumors of its treasures led countless expeditions of heroes and treasure-seekers to scour the ruins bare of wealth and monsters. Within a few years, the dark buildings became home to bandits seeking a home base between their raiding activities. Over time the bandits and thieves began to feel themselves a community, though a true government did not form in Kratas until the outbreak of the Theran War.

In the early days of the occupation, the Theran army demanded obedience from the thousands of thieves and cutthroats that called the ruins home. When Throal organized the resistance that routed the Therans, the famous ork thief adept Garlthik One-Eye called together an army of his fellow thieves and chased the Therans out of Kratas. In their place, he appointed himself the city's ruler and has served the city well despite his unconventional rise to power.

The self-interested nature of the criminals that populate the city prevents Kratas from taking advantage of its accessibility to trade, and thus keeps it from developing into a true political power. Though the citadel of Kratas could easily hold some 100,000 people, Kratas' population remains at roughly half that number. Bands of thieves conceal their activities by constantly moving between empty neighborhoods, and only about a fifth of the population lives in fixed residences.

Kratas' streets are dirty, shadowed by cracked and leaning stone and wood buildings. Though the city is inhabited by tens of thousands of people, the secretive nature of Kratas' citizens often make the streets look deserted. Travelers can walk or ride hundreds

of yards in the middle of the day and see nary a soul, yet experience the eerie feeling that the shuttered windows and dark doorways have hundreds of eyes.

A strange loyalty binds the outlaws of Kratas together and directs their mistrust and deceit against the rest of Barsaive. Odd as it may seem to honest citizens, most inhabitants of Kratas live there because it is the only place in Barsaive where they feel safe.

Besides the city's many thieves and mercenaries, numerous craftsmen, merchants, and artisans also live in Kratas. These more law-abiding citizens live in fear of attacks that rarely come, but remain there despite the dangers because their services are more amply rewarded in Kratas than in other cities. The thieves of Kratas recognize that their city needs these people to sustain itself, and so they leave these honest citizens alone in their fierce competitions for control over the city's neighborhoods. Merchants and craftsmen must remain carefully neutral in their dealings, however. More than one unfortunate ally of a bandit leader or witness to a terrible deed has ended his days lying in a dark back alley with his throat slit.

Some evidence hints that the leaders of the Keys of Death make their home in Kratas. No one can confirm this rumor, but anyone seeking the services of an expert assassin begins in Kratas. The city also supports a thriving black market for secrets and for stolen goods, especially elemental magic items. Spies who report to the leaders of Kratas are everywhere. Indeed, it is often said that "every secret in Barsaive is gossip in Kratas." The only trade not permitted in Kratas is slavery.

...Today we entered Kratas, a miserable den of ruffians. I can scarce believe that I have come to this place, where tumbledown shacks lean over the litter-ridden streets like crippled old men and the very air smells of deceit. Did I not have a debt of honor to settle, I would ride straight home to father. But then again it is likely my hired "companions" would follow me and kill me for my purse unless I pay them.

We rode through an iron gate set in crumbling walls of lichen-eaten stone, paying ten silver pieces each for the privilege. That princely sum, of course, came from my pocket. The dirty streets smelted of rotting food. I saw a band of urchins splashing in the filthy sluice that ran down one side street; another band ran after us, shouting for coin. One grabbed my horse's saddlebag and





tried to swing herself up behind me, but lost her grip and tumbled to the dirt. When she sat up, I saw she was laughing. The scrofulous little beast shouted something after me, though I know not what. I swear they picked my pocket; I am missing a purse full of copper. I have scarce enough money left to pay the innkeeper, a surly sort who looks like he would as soon murder me as breathe.

Someone is at the door. Catulla the windling? Surely not—he cannot know that I have come to pay my debt. Who would dare disturb a gentleman at this dead hour of the night?

—From the journal of Shiellen Woodsong, eldest son of the Second Magistrate of Travar, found dead in the Drunken Dragon Inn

A pragmatic thief, Garlthik One-Eye rules his city in a pragmatic fashion. When it suits the city's purposes to help Throal, Garlthik supplies whatever is needed. If it better suits their purposes to rob a dwarf caravan, Garlthik's subjects gladly loot and pillage.

Many gangs of thieves live in the city, some using it as a safe headquarters from which to raid the surrounding lands. Others steal only from those living within the city walls. Because it is their nature to covet what their neighbor has, gangs of thieves draw boundaries for territory that they claim as their own, denying others the opportunity to steal or operate within those boundaries. Outsiders may wonder at territorial wars fought within a half-deserted city, but violent disputes break out regularly. The two most powerful gangs of thieves in Kratas are the Force of the Eye and Brocher's Brood.

Force of the Eye

The most influential gang in Kratas, the Force of the Eye owes its existence and allegiance to the venerable ork thief, Garlthik One-Eye. Garlthik uses his gang to maintain the upper hand in Kratas; his anti-slavery, anti-Theran policies only carry weight because he has the strength to back them. Though none openly oppose Garlthik's decrees, many traders in Kratas would undoubtedly welcome the chance to reap the awesome profits of the slave trade.

The Force of the Eye has nearly 1,000 members, made up mostly of orks and elves, though it also includes members from all the Namegiver races. Garlthik regularly assigns a quarter or so of his gang

to work for him. elsewhere in Barsaive, but retains several hundred informants throughout Kratas. These spies hold no official position in the Force of the Eye, but their ability to slip in and out of the city's many criminal factions makes them useful.

Garlthik's chief counsel is Terricia, a windling thief adept rumored to be responsible for the recent deaths of several of Garlthik's most strident opponents.

Brocher's Brood

A particularly bloody gang of thieves, Brocher's Brood is Garlthik's chief rival for control of Kratas. Led by Vistrosh, a corrupted elf and former Blood Warder to the Elven Queen Alachia, this gang heads the illegal slave market in Kratas. The Brood numbers some 600 members, each of whom must swear an oath of personal loyalty to Vistrosh. The gang is rife with assassins, and few who dare to cross the Brood will escape its relentless pursuit.

Travar

The city of Travar lies 22 days' walk or 13 days' ride from Throal. Travar is a beautiful city, full of gleaming white buildings, towers, and spires. Of all the cities in Barsaive that survived the Scourge, Travar alone still possesses its original splendor and grace. Its golden roofs catch the sun's light, reflecting its brilliance in all directions. Its location on the Byrose River gives Travar access to the t'skrang traders of the Serpent River and to the kingdom of Throal. Its proximity to Death's Sea and the Servos Jungle allows easy access to both mundane goods and magical supplies. Travar builds most airships sold in Barsaive, and its own fleet now boasts four galleys and six drakkars. As the wealthiest city outside of Throal, Travar and its citizens enjoy the prosperous lives that accompany brisk trade and wise leadership.

On the Rulers of Travar

A council of three magistrates rules Travar, each magistrate serving for three years. Every year one magistrate steps down from his position, and those interested in serving as magistrate must hire a champion to compete in a tournament called the Founding. If a magistrate wishes to hold his post for three consecutive years, his champion must win the Founding. Magistrates often lose their position by losing the tournament, but regain the office in a later year.





CHAPTER 2: BARSVAIVE

On the Unique Features of the City

The Founding is one of the most peculiar political institutions in Barsaive. Each year a group of magicians known as the Body of Five devises a spectacular tournament involving magic, wild beasts, puzzles, and traps. This huge affair lasts more than two weeks, when the citizens of Travar crowd into a great arena at the center of the city. Seating is limited, and the city's best efforts to control ticket distribution are always swept aside by theft, bribery, and skyrocketing prices. Games of finance are the principal sport of Travar, and lie at the heart of the Founding. Why should tickets for the Founding be exempt?

Persons who want to become magistrates must hire a champion to represent them in the Founding. Every year, candidates secure their champion(s) of choice months before the tournament and spend the intervening time on rigorous training and instruction. Champions come from the ranks of adepts, for the Body of Five creates difficult and subtle tests. No one can predict from year to year what skills and abilities will be needed in order to succeed. Because of this uncertainty, most who seek the magistrate's office hire more than one champion, often choosing several who possess a variety of abilities.

The champions compete against one another and against the puzzles created by the Body of Five for two weeks without rest. The crowd watches every event with unbridled glee, always waiting for the contests to reach greater heights of humiliation. Invariably, they do.

Having resided in Travar during the Founding, I have witnessed some truly bizarre contests. With my own eyes I have seen combat fought with unusual weapons of magical origin; contests fought from the backs of huge, greased pigs; competitions played out on long logs strung over pits of molten lava drawn from the Death's Sea; races through elaborate mazes formed from whirling walls of flame; games of strategy where the champions are living "pieces" on a large playing board; riddle contests; tests requiring the champion to create an impromptu song on spontaneously chosen themes; and many more.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Though the outcomes of these contests never depend on bloodshed, little can be done to stop overzealous competitors from harming or killing their opponent once the contest has begun. The Founding allows competitors a sanctioned opportunity to give in to their fiercest instincts, should they choose to.

Every year, 50 or more men and women vie for the office of magistrate. Because training and paying champions is expensive, only the wealthy citizens of Travar can afford to run for the office. This expense, however, deters few; a magistrate exerts great influence over the city's trade and tax laws, and a crafty magistrate can double or quadruple his profits within a year's time.

Approximately 150 adepts register as champions each year. By a clever provision in the law governing the selection of magistrates, all officially registered champions must make themselves available to serve the city at all times. This creates a veritable army of heroes drawn from a broad range of talents standing ready to defend the city's interests. Because individuals support each champion, the citizens are spared the expense of supporting an army, and even ork scorchers or crystal raiders are unwilling to attack a city so well defended.

The city's population hovers somewhere near 95,000 citizens, ranging in wealth from those rich enough to wear robes made of gold even to bed to those who sleep in the city's back alleys with only a few utensils and a dirty mat as possessions. Nowhere else in Barsaive do so many craftsmen and merchants gather as in Travar, and even among the poor are many skilled artisans and merchants who have not been fortunate enough to crack the city's market.

Like wealthy people everywhere, the citizens of Travar desire peace. Unfortunately, only the wealthiest members wield the clout to demand peace, and they often choose the terms and definition of that peace. Often, it seems to come at the expense of justice for the less fortunate. Despite the city's close ties with Throal, the magistrates continue to keep Travar's government separate from that of the dwarf kingdom, perhaps because some citizens are unwilling or unable to accept the equal justice that King Varulus III promises to bring to the world.

The people of Travar are merchants by nature; they will sell anything, procure anything, buy anything as long as they believe that by doing so they



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are getting the better end of the bargain. The city's energy is infectious. Visitors who walk its streets suddenly quicken their stride, gain a sense of purpose, and begin to act like someone not to be trifled with, even when they have no purpose and are more than willing to be trifled with! This is the marvelous illusion of Travar: everyone in the city believes himself destined for greatness, even when the truth shows only enough room at the top for a few of the city's people.

Urupa

The city of Urupa lies 23 days' walk or 15 days' ride from Throal. Situated on the shore of the Aras Sea near the end of a tributary of the Serpent River, Urupa stands alone among the cities of Barsaive. A relatively new city, Urupa was founded almost 90 years ago, shortly after the end of the Scourge.

The residents of seven small kaers and citadels located along the shore of the Aras Sea established Urupa, believing that safety lay in numbers. Each community had reached this conclusion independently during the Scourge, and so readily pooled their resources and moved north after the Scourge toward the current site of the city. Intending to create the most advantageous trading arrangement possible, they positioned their new city on the coast of the Aras Sea and near a tributary of the Serpent River, planning that has brought them much good.

The city lies at the base of a high, sheer cliff, on a peninsula between the shores of the Serpent River and the Aras Sea. The 1,500-foot cliff discourages attacks on the city from above, and a twenty-foot high wall broken by five watchtowers helps defend against all other attacks. Part of the city's militia of 2,000 troops serves as crew for an airfleet of three galleys and five drakkars. Though these ships

double as trading vessels, five are always docked along the southern wall of the city, near the city's shipyards.

Urupa also boasts a fleet of five sea vessels that serve as both trading and military ships. The city maintains a regularly scheduled trade route to several ports along the shore of the Aras Sea, both in the known regions of Barsaive and along unexplored stretches of the sea's distant shores.

On the Rulers of Urupa

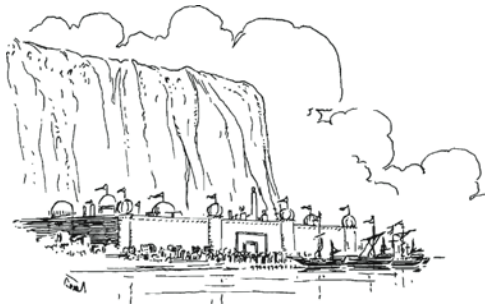
A seven-member Leadership Council, created by the city's founders, governs Urupa. The first council consisted of the leaders of the seven towns and villages that banded together to found the city. Every two years the council elects a leader, called the chief councilor, who oversees the council's activities. At the end of a term, the council may reelect the current chief councilor to another term. It is a tribute to the Council's wisdom that the chief councilor rarely loses his office. A serious political or financial blunder or unwarranted action against another councilor has on occasion forced a chief councilor to lose the support of the remaining councilors and so be enjoined to step down, but most chief councilors have served in that office for life.

The present chief councilor, a woman named Fellidra Jer, has been head of the Leadership Council for the past eight years and still enjoys the popular support of the city's residents.

...and as the river wound around the rocks, we came in view of Urupa, nestled between the shores of the Serpent River and the Aras Sea. Our riverboat pulled up along the docks on the Serpent side of the city, where the t'skrang boatmen docked the ship to unload cargo. As we looked across the city, we could see the tall masts of the water ships moored at the sea docks.

We walked through the heart of the city until we came to the docks, as busy as any on the Serpent. Many water ships of all sorts and sizes were moored there, bearing flags of Urupa as well as places unknown to us.

We spied a caravan moving toward us from the dock, heading for the residential section of the city. At the head of the caravan walked a huge obsidiman, wearing ornate attire and attended by nearly a dozen servants. I and my traveling companions watched in





fascination as he led his entourage through the city. Here, we realized, was a citizen of power and wealth.

—From the journal of Loran Redstone, 1506 TH

The alliance between the kaers that founded Urupa marks the city as unique in Barsaive. Whereas most Barsaivians emerging from their kaers and citadels could barely set aside their suspicions long enough to help themselves and other communities rebuild, the people of Urupa emerged determined to find like-minded souls and create a new, safe haven. With the exception of the final resistance effort by which the people of Barsaive defeated the Therans and ended the Theran War, the races of this province have never before shown such mutual trust.

Because of its location, Urupa enjoys the distinction of being one of the only cities to regularly welcome people from outside of Barsaive. Trading ships travel to Urupa across the Aras Sea twice annually, with every journey introducing unique goods and treasure to Barsaive.

The kingdom of Throal has recently decided to send envoys across the Aras Sea in hopes of contacting those who live outside of Barsaive, and so lie beyond the reach of the Theran Empire. King Varulus hopes that these people will look favorably on establishing political ties with Throal. He also hopes to learn how they protected themselves from the Horrors during the Scourge. The king's magicians are especially curious to learn how the Scourge affected other areas of the world, and perhaps to learn non-Theran forms of magical protection.

⊗—Kern Redhand, Historian of Throal

Vivane

The city of Vivane lies 49 days' walk or 29 days' ride from Throal. Isolated in the southwest corner of Barsaive, Vivane represents Thera's greatest conquest.

Decades ago, Vivane was the most beautiful city in the province. When the Therans returned to Barsaive following the Scourge, Vivane surrendered to the invaders, hoping to save the freedom and wealth its people enjoyed. Pleased by the picture of wealth and beauty that Vivane's bright blue spires

and golden domes created, the Therans made the city their new provincial capital, bringing their slave laws with them. Vivane's bazaars soon filled with prisoners from throughout Barsaive, all torn from their homes by no law but greed.

During the Theran War, Vivane was a primary target. As the heart of Theran slave trade, it was also home to numerous Theran officials. Many airships and fire cannons fought the battle for Vivane, and much of the city's beauty was destroyed as its proud towers and spires crumbled to the streets. An underground resistance supported the air war, and the Therans were routed from the city.

Though Vivane enjoyed a brief period of freedom from Thera almost 60 years ago, the Therans refused to accept defeat and have since reclaimed the city. However, they do not take their control of the city for granted. Overgovernor Kypros keeps a tight rein on the puppet government, and a well-trained and fanatical militia drawn from the city's population patrols the streets to stamp out even the slightest whisper of rebellion. Overgovernor Kypros often docks the massive airship Ascendancy in Vivane, and other Theran officials view the city as their personal possession.

Only a small corner of the city has been rebuilt since the Theran War. Named the Theran Quarter because Theran money rebuilt it, it will accept as residents only Therans and those Barsaivians most loyal to them. A new wall separates the Theran Quarter from the rest of the city, its single entrance well guarded by the city's militia. Only the Quarter's citizens and those with guest passes can gain entrance. Anyone caught in the Quarter without a pass is immediately arrested and may be thrown in prison or summarily executed.

The rest of the city alternates between solid, well-crafted buildings and the ruins of towers, spires, and homes. Though the rubble was cleared long ago, the remnants of shattered towers and walls still stand, their broken walls reaching toward the sky in a mockery of their former grace.

Vivane has a population of 95,000, of which 20,000 are slaves. The city has no airships, for the Therans dare not risk giving the citizens access to power. Entry into the city is carefully restricted, and the militia stays alert for known agitators. According to rumor, the underground resistance





born during the Theran War still exists, its leaders and operatives hidden too deep for the Therans to ferret out.

...To pick the Fearful Feather's pocket and live to tell the tale! Such a glorious endeavor! Not that Fearful's much to worry on...it's his Theran guard you've got to watch for. Sharp spears, they've got, and a few have sharp eyes and minds to match. Lucky for me, most are thick as posts. Ah, it's grand being a thief.

I spent the morn lurking near the wall between the Theran Quarter and the rest of Vivane, hoping to spot a mark. Not many Therans carry money outside the Quarter any more. Seems even a Theran can learn sense, if you give him long enough. Folk carry money

in, where they can spend it among clean streets, white marble walls, and pretty gold and blue towers and spires. No mess or rubble for the Therans, thank you. They leave that for us, their lessers.

I hoped a visiting merchant might go to see His Hon-orableness (hah!), the Theran puppet governor. Lucky me—after an hour or two Fearful himself came out, ringed by spear-toting Therans and carrying a heavy leather bag. None too tight a grip, neither—guards must make you careless.

I couldn't resist it. Using my Thief magic, I picked my way silent and unseen over the cracked cobbles and followed Fearful's entourage to one of the few shops outside the wall in good repair. Wine shop, as it happened.



A guard stumbled on a broken stone, and I saw my chance. Snatched the bag then vanished before Fearful even felt it leave his fingers.

By the time they raised a shout, I was spending my ill-gotten gains in my favorite tavern, the Dirty Dwarf. Who says you can't make a living in Vivane?

—From the journal of Thysel, Thief Adept

On the Ruler of Vivane

In keeping with Barsaive traditions, Vivane is ruled by a magistrate, the Honorable Quarique

Oathstone. The discontented of the city call him the Fearful Feather, for a feather's weight is the extent of his political power. Appointed ten years ago by Overgovernor Kypros, Oathstone spends his days pretending to be a true ruler, but in reality the only thing he does without consulting one Theran official or another is to choose the menus for his meals of the day.

REGARDING THE LAND AND ITS PLACES

Though my original assignment was only to describe traveling in Barsaive, Master Merrox decided I should also describe the land as well. Though I initially had doubts about the wisdom of this decision, the two topics have indeed overlapped in ways that made both sections easier to complete. Perhaps Merrox is Master of the Hall of Records for good reason after all. Barsaive is full of astonishing sights, some wonderful, some frightening. In the following overview of the most significant of these sights, I chose to include those landmarks and features most often singled out as notable by those who travel our land in search of adventure. Though such a life is not for me, I met many of these interesting individuals on my own journey undertaken to complete my research for this book. In addition to my own travels, I drew heavily from on records of journeys written by many explorers and adventurers in the land of Barsaive.

◆—Humbly presented for the edification of the reader by Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records

Most of the large, untamed land that we call Barsaive has remained unexplored since the days before the Scourge. This record incorporates information on Barsaive's weather, landscape, fauna and flora, and landmarks from many different sources—some contemporary, some hundreds of years old. We have used the older sources for those areas of Barsaive that have not been visited or described by contemporary explorers. Unfortunately, we cannot know whether these regions have changed beyond recognition until the explorers of our time provide us with first-hand accounts that either verify or correct these earlier sources.

ON THE LANDSCAPE AND WEATHER

Hilly uplands, plateaus, and low mountains cover most of Barsaive, giving the province often beautiful and always dramatic scenery. A few exceptionally large mountain ranges interrupt this rolling landscape, most notably the Throal Mountains and the

Twilight Peaks, which rise to heights of more than 15,000 feet above the sea. The hill lands rise to some 2,600 feet above the sea, with plateaus and lower mountain ranges averaging 3,000 to 4,000 feet above the sea's level. The need for constant climbing and forcing one's way through lush jungles and forests makes travel difficult. Barsaive's few finished roads wind up and down hills and around plateaus and mountains, making even journeys along established routes arduous.

Nothing grew in Barsaive in the years immediately following the Scourge, which had the effect of causing dramatic and frequent shifts in temperature and rainfall. Once the people began to emerge from their kaers, however, they used magic to regenerate the world's greenery at a phenomenal rate. Within a decade of the end of the Scourge, Barsaive enjoyed a year-round, temperate climate with moderate rainfall.

Rainfall in most of southern Barsaive is heavier than the 40 to 60 inches common in the rest of the



province, but the area surrounding Death's Sea suffers continual drought. Most of the year's rainfall occurs during the first six months.

The noticeable of absence of a cool winter season is one of the more unusual changes forced on our land by the Scourge. Though ancient records describe winters in Barsaive, contemporary scholars have yet to determine why our weather lacks that season today.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

ON THE FLORA AND FAUNA

Savannas, jungles, and forests cover much of Barsaive. Few people live in or near the woodlands, most of the population having carved out farmlands and surrounding villages on the plains or in the hilly uplands.

On Savannas

Coarse, tall grass covers Barsaive's broad, lowland plains, which become drowned in flood waters during heavy rains. Above the grasses, scattered trees rise like long-necked beasts. Traveling across the savanna on clear days is a delightful experience. The sharp blue of the sky and the touch of the cool wind brushing the tops of the long grass is soothing to the spirit, not to mention that passage through the grasses is much easier than through the tangled brush of the jungle. From all directions comes the constant buzz of insects, and occasionally travelers might catch sight of something larger through the grass—snakes, rodents, and sometimes large animals such as tigers and lions.

During the dry months tribes of herders all across Barsaive stake out ranges for their animals. At this time of year, one often sees plumes of smoke rising out of the grass in the distance, signs of the camps of herders settled in for the season. These men and women must constantly be on the watch for thieves who would steal their cattle or predators ready to rip the herds apart to feed their young.

During the rains, travel across the grasslands becomes unpleasant. With every step, a man's feet or a beast's hooves sink an inch or two into the water-soaked land. Sometimes, travelers find themselves ankle-deep in mud and water. On such occasions it becomes necessary to lead one's animals on foot because the added burden of a rider would totally mire the average horse or mule. The grass stalks droop from the weight of the water, drenching one's skin and clothing with their heavy moisture. While plodding along in cold, wet misery, a traveler could too easily forget to be on the alert for the constant danger of stalking creatures or raving ork scorcher bands possibly lurking beyond the next hill.

On Jungles and Forests

Records show that before the Scourge, tall trees with broad leaves shut out the sunlight from the floor of Barsaive's jungles and forests and so kept them clear of underbrush. In our time, through some combination of magic, intent, circumstance, and natural growth, jungles and forests grow thick with low vegetation that weaves between the tall trees, thriving with or without sunlight. Perhaps in reaction to the barrenness of the Scourge, Barsaive's jungles and forests now teem with animal and plant life. Magicians, Questors, and others endlessly debate explanations for this rampant fertility, but have yet to reach a consensus.

Both jungle and forest flora range from ground-covering bushes to the tallest trees, which soar to heights of 300 feet and are scattered throughout the woodlands. Trees that stand 100 to 200 feet tall form the canopy of leafy branches that blocks much of the sunlight and conceals the ground from the view of airships and flying creatures.

The next tallest trees rise 50 to 80 feet high. Their trunks, branches, twigs, and foliage grow together into an apparently impenetrable mass that sometimes extends down to the ground. Though whole groups of travelers may be able to walk freely



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through some areas of the forests and jungles, at other times the draping vines can conceal someone a mere step away.

The wetter, southern part of Barsaive boasts jungles filled with dense stands of bright, green broad-leaved trees and woody, stemmed vines whose brilliant flowers blossom year round. The abundant vines festoon the trees and snake across the jungle floor, often winding their way through trees for a distance of several days' ride. The dampness also fosters the growth of mosses that hang from the trees and spring from dead plants. The variety of plant life in these jungles is astounding; Questors of Jasprey estimate that thousands of varieties of plants and trees grow within a single day's ride in any direction. In some areas, foliage is so thick that one must hack a path through the vines and small trees growing on the jungle floor. The overgrowth allows only a murky, green-gray light to filter through the thick canopy of leaves, turning the traveler's path into an eerie, twilight journey at any time of day.

Other sections of Barsaive's wooded lands provide easier and brighter passage, but no truly clear paths. As soon as a traveler cuts a passage and leaves it behind, the trees and growth begin crowding in again. Splashes of sunlight, beams of light so startlingly bright that they look like fire burning its

way through the dimness, sometimes illuminate remnants of other explorers' trails.

The dense plant life makes the jungle a dangerous place for Namegivers and all manner of mundane creatures. Large predators often await their prey in branches high above the jungle paths or in the shadow of underbrush. Often, more vulnerable creatures use the abundant flora to hide. The air echoes with bird song, the hum of insects, and the occasional roar of larger animals challenging trespassers or warning off scavengers hoping to share their kill. The temperature is the only comfortable part of traveling through Barsaive's forests and jungles; it is rarely hot, and may even be cold during the rainy season. Among the great trees, travelers can always find a dry spot to wait out the weather.

Farmers and herders all across Barsaive have begun to settle along the edges of the forests and jungles, felling trees and chopping away vines to make room for homes, crops, and grazing land. In clearing the land, they always create a border between the settlement and the thick tangle of the surrounding trees in hopes of avoiding surprise attacks by the predators and monstrous creatures hiding in the leafy green shadows.

ON THE ANIMALS OF BARSATIVE

Barsaive's abundant fauna includes small animals such as mice and frogs that are visible everywhere in the province. More dangerous animals usually stay hidden, sometimes allowing travelers to pass unmolested, other times pouncing at the last moment to take their victim by surprise.

Most creatures in Barsaive pose little danger to travelers or attack only when threatened. These creatures—monkeys, sloths, aardvarks, boars, snakes, parrots, hawks, peacocks, tortoises, and so on—have no magic. Other creatures, both mundane and magically endowed, pose a greater danger: tigers, rhinoceros, lions, bears, wild dogs, griffins, giant snakes, leopards, and so on. Greatest of all threats are the Horrors still roaming the world, of course. As everyone knows, we Namegivers have little natural defense against them.

ON SEAS AND WATERWAYS

Though it may seem odd to refer to seas when discussing a land mass the size of Barsaive, both the



EARTHDOWN GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

Aras and Selestrean Seas are large enough to affect the weather and influence trade in the province. The four main bodies of water in Barsaive include the Aras Sea, the Selestrean Sea, the Serpent Lakes, and the Serpent River.

Of the Aras Sea

The Aras Sea, located on the eastern edge of Barsaive, is a large saltwater ocean that reaches beyond the borders of Barsaive to unexplored lands. The Silverspring, the largest tributary of the Serpent River, flows into the Aras Sea near the city of Urupa, the only city of any size located on the shoreline. The coast stretching south from Urupa also harbors many smaller cities and towns. Traders from Barsaive and from across the sea frequent Urupa and her neighboring ports.

The Aras can become violent without warning. Storms, some magical in nature, occasionally spring up on the Aras Sea and eventually travel to shore, where their destructive power causes great damage.

The sea is also home to abundant animal life, including magical creatures and a few water-dwelling Horrors. Reports of these dreadful creatures are few and far between, but those who journey on the Aras Sea should know that even crossing the waters requires caution.

...After only five days in Urupa, my companions and I were hired by a trading company. It was, oddly enough, the Overland Trading Company, owned by the obsidian we had encountered on our first day in the city.

In the service of our new employers, we were to travel on a water ship over the Aras Sea to a smaller city along its western shore. We were to aid the ship's crew during the journey and work as guards during the trade negotiations. On the second night of our five-day voyage, a drunken sailor stumbled across the deck and fell overboard. Hearing his shouts, the entire crew raced up on deck; a few of them tossed the floundering crewman a rope with which to pull him back aboard. A team of men worked to hoist the crewman out of the sea, but just as the man's waist cleared the water line, a huge tentacle surged up and grabbed him. He screamed horribly, his body pulled in two directions by the creature and the rope. The tentacle briefly loosened its grip, and we thought it might let the crewman go. Then it tightened around him again and gave a mighty

yank that pulled the first five members of the rope crew over the rail. Their screams echoed across the water as the creature fed on them, one by one...

—From the journal of Loran Redstone, 1506 TH

Of the Selestrean Sea

The Selestrean Sea lies far to the southwest of Barsaive, beyond Vivane and Sky Point. Within its waters lies the island of Thera, heart of the oppressive Theran Empire. Fearing Thera's might, Barsaivians have built few cities along the shore where the sea meets the province. The Therans control all the towns and villages along the shore, using these occupied communities as outposts and supply depots for the Theran army and navy at Sky Point.

Within the Selestrean Sea also lies the Chain of Tears, a group of small islands strung between the Barsaive shoreline and the Theran coast. Legend has it that Horrors live on these islands, and grant wishes to those who travel there to do their bidding.

Having had my share of dealing with the Horrors, I cannot imagine what desire would prompt a sane person to travel to the Chain of Tears to find the truth of these tales.

—J'role the Honorable Thief

The Selestrean Sea rarely becomes as violent as the Aras Sea, but legends and rumor both contend that the Therans control the sea through elemental magic. However, not even the Therans can control the many creatures that live in the Selestrean Sea, which doubtless include Horrors.

...during the third month, we faced a huge cyclone of water, seemingly controlled by some unknown force. The strength of the water and wind smashed our ship to splinters, washing us up on the shore of a small island.

At daybreak, we began to scour the island for food; during our search, we found the island's only resident. An old man sat fishing at the edge of a small pond; he turned to speak to us as we approached.

"Welcome to my island. I brought you here, and only I can return you to your homeland. If you do me a service, I will set you free. Refuse, and you will die."

Leanam, ever the skeptic, laughed aloud at the old man's words.



The old man turned to Leanam and snapped his fingers. An unseen hand plucked up the troll and flung him into the pond, then held him under. He struggled to break surface, but to no avail. Rooted to the spot, we watched him drown, not a one of us able to lift a finger to help him.

As Leanam breathed his last, the old man turned back to us.

"You have seen your companion's answer to my offer. How will you choose?"

—From the journal of Gerna
Bloodletter, 1470 TH

Of the Serpent Lakes

At three points down its length, the frantic rush of the Serpent River slows and winds into the calm, clear Serpent Lakes: Lake Ban, Lake Pyros, and Lake Vors. The shores of each lake host settlements of many sizes; the lakes regularly overflow their banks, leaving behind fertile soil for farming, and plentiful fish swim within their waters. Often, the lakeside villages build their huts and other buildings on stilts to raise them above the muddy ground.

Though conflict sometimes erupts between the villages over the rights to farmland and fishing waters, more often the villages band together against the t'skrang pirates that raid them. Relations between villages that abide by Throalic law are polite, but never warm, for the people in each settlement prefer to keep their riches and their disputes to themselves.

Dwarfs, elves, humans, and t'skrang dwell in the lakeside villages. Despite their proximity to t'skrang villages of the Serpent River and to the kingdom of Throal, these t'skrang and dwarfs swear primary loyalty to their villages.

Of the Serpent River

The long, winding Serpent River runs through the heart of Barsaive, dividing it in two. Home of the t'skrang and their villages, the river supports hundreds of tributaries and delivers fresh water to most of the people of Barsaive.

The river received its Name from the dwarfs of the ancient kingdom of Scythia. It begins in the northern mountains well beyond the borders of Barsaive, entering the province near the city of Iopos and winding through the land, passing just south of the Scol Mountains that feed spring water into

the river. From the Scol foothills, the Serpent passes through Lake Vors and winds around the massive Throal Mountains, which also add to its strength with fresh water. The river then flows through Lake Ban before passing through Lake Pyros in the Servos Jungle. It then enters the Mist Swamps, where it meets the molten stone of the Death's Sea.

The Serpent is wide, nearly an hour's crossing by riverboat at most points, and flows with a deceptively strong current. One cannot cross the river and arrive at a specific place without either magical aid or a boat. Swimming across the Serpent is considered an amazing feat of strength; most t'skrang villages hold a yearly swimming contest for those brave (or foolish) enough to attempt such a crossing. According to t'skrang tales, only one or two persons have ever accomplished this deed.

...As our airship cleared the last foothills of the Caucasian Mountains, the cool blue waters of the Serpent River appeared below us, the bright summer sun bouncing off her whitecaps and making them look like jewels. Fields of deep emerald and gold lined the river's gently sloping banks, pressing against her lifegiving waters as if in a lover's embrace.

As we drifted along, following the river's meandering path, two t'skrang paddlewheelers appeared, like gems set in her shimmering blue waters. As we watched, the boats began to close. They spewed tiny plumes of white into the air, the telltale signs of fire cannons. Farther down the river, the fields gave way to small trading ports, where brightly colored barges formed everchanging mosaics along the riverbanks.

For days we followed the Great Serpent, as her blue waters flowed through Lake Ban, then under the dark canopy of the Servos Jungle, until they finally disappeared into the foul darkness of the Mist Swamps.

—From the journal of Yevad,
Troubadour of Tirtarga

The t'skrang villages that trade up and down the length of the Serpent River control the activities of all ships plying the river. Sections of the Serpent lie under the jurisdiction of the great t'skrang trading houses, or Aropagoi, formed by coalitions of several villages along each particular stretch of the river. The villages work together to manage trade and discourage piracy, joining their resources to create



fleets of riverboats that can prevent pirate attacks along their portions of the river.

The strength of the Aropagoi deters pirates from excessive raiding along most of the Serpent. But along sparsely populated stretches, such as through the Servos Jungle, piracy poses a great danger to travelers still.

ON THE MOUNTAINS OF BARSATIVE

Barsative holds far too many mountain ranges to describe them all in this document. Therefore, I describe only the major ranges here. I write a little from my own, limited knowledge, and in many cases also use accounts written by adventurers who traveled in, on, or near each mountain range.

Of the Cauvavic Mountains

The Cauvavic Mountains in the northeast corner of Barsative lie roughly five days walk from Haven and Parlathin. The mountains' Name, derived from the troll word for feral or ferocious, is particularly apt, for the Cauvavic Mountains are the most treacherous in all Barsative. Steep cliffs, deep valleys, and plunging gullies are said to hide all manner of creatures and even Horrors that somehow managed to survive among the barren rocks. The tree line ends only 1,500 feet above the base of the mountains; beyond that point, the terrain is unstable and prone to rockslides and quakes.

According to rumor, the Cauvavics are the home of savage tribes that attack all intruders. These tribes, which are said to be survivors of the Scourge, live in caverns near the base of the mountain range. Though all the Namegivers races can be found among the tribes, most of their number are humans, orks, and dwarfs.

Of the Delaris Mountains

The Delaris Mountains lie near the western border of Barsative, roughly 10 days' walk south of Jerris and 12 days' walk north of Vivane and Sky Point.

The Name of these mountains comes from the elven word for quiet or serene.

Breathtaking in their beauty and tranquility, the Delaris Mountains possess an odd, almost eerie quality. The drowsy peace of the mountains seems to envelop all those within a day's walk of their foothills, muffling all sound. Though animals of all kinds live in, on, and near the mountains, the creature sounds one might expect to hear simply do not exist.

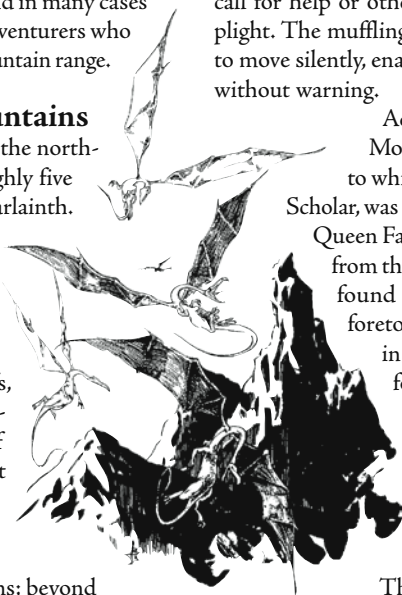
Though a place without sound might seem a wonderful retreat for those seeking solitude, it presents certain hazards for the ordinary traveler. People who lose their way or find themselves in danger cannot call for help or otherwise draw attention to their plight. The muffling of noise also allows creatures to move silently, enabling them to attack their prey without warning.

According to legend, the Delaris Mountains shelter the monastery to which Elianar Messias, the Martyr Scholar, was banished for opposing the Elven Queen Failla's Declaration of Separation from the elven nation Shosara. Messias found the Books of Harrow, which foretold the coming of the Horrors, in a nearby cavern in the Delaris foothills. The legends say that the mountains conspired to give Messias the silence he needed to study the books and so save the world. Regardless of the truth of this tale, the quiet is real.

Though many have tried, no adventurers have yet found the monastery spoken of as the abode of the Martyr Scholar. Many believe it was destroyed during the Scourge; others claim it never existed, and consider the story of the Martyr Scholar nothing more than an excellent fiction.

Of the Dragon Mountains

The Dragon Mountains stand in the far southeast corner of Barsative between the Aras and Death's seas, roughly 10 days' ride from the city of Travar. The southern tip of the region known as the Badlands ends where the foothills of the Dragon Mountains begin.





The Dragon Mountains earned their Name because the great dragon Mountainshadow chose to lair in their peaks. The lair lies in a deep cave adjacent to a large plateau on the tallest peak of the mountain range. In addition to housing the dragon, Mountainshadow's lair is said to also shelter a community of Namegivers whose ancestors sought refuge with Mountainshadow during the Scourge. To this day, their descendants supposedly continue to live under the wing of the dragon. Persistent rumors also insist that a race of shape-changing creatures called drakes live in this mountain range. According to legend, these small, dragonlike creatures can change into the shape of any Namegiver race. The great dragons supposedly created the drakes to serve them, but no record of their shape-changing powers exists in the Library of Throal. Records do, however, offer reports of six- to eight-foot dragonlike creatures lairing in the foothills and gullies of the Dragon Mountains.

The Dragon Mountains are cold as death. I alone am left; the others have all died. Food ran out weeks ago, and these barren slopes hold nothing an elf can eat. I will die soon. 'Tis strange, but of all the things I might wish for as I lie here on the frozen stone, I want most to see a dragon before my last breath.

The intense desire to see one of these creatures with my own eyes is why I set out on this journey in the first place. I thought they lived in the Dragon Mountains, but I have seen nothing living save my companions and a few hardy lichens. These I tried to eat, but their bitter taste galled my tongue and turned my stomach. Nothing exists in these crags but chill mists, bitter plants, and cold stone.

...I scarce have strength to write, but I have seen a dragon! Floating over the highest peak, the one that stabs the sky like an accusing finger, I saw a dragon...

—From the journal of Fomhair Evensong, Troubadour Adept

Of the Scol Mountains

The Scol Mountains lie in northwest Barsaive between the Serpent River and Blood Wood, 10 days' walk from Iopos and 15 days from Jerris. The mountains' Name means ancient, and comes from the troll tongue.

According to troll folklore and legend, the Scol Mountains are the birthplace of the trolls who built and ruled the ancient kingdom of Ustrect. Unfortunately, no one has yet mounted a successful expedition to verify the truth of these legends. The best evidence to support the trolls' claim are the many isolated troll clans currently living in the Scol Mountains who speak a strange dialect of the troll language unknown anywhere else in Barsaive. Though they have little save race in common with the crystal raiders, these troll clans also survive by raiding; they travel on large mounts similar to thundera beasts, but more savage.

The Stoneclaw trollmoot has often attempted to contact these tribes of trolls, possibly to negotiate an alliance, but to no avail. Scouting parties sent into the Scol Mountains always limp out again, with many wounded and dead. From this, it seems that these tribes intend to remain apart from Barsaivian society.

Of the Scythia Mountains

The Scythia Mountains occupy the northern region of Barsaive, lying just north of the kingdom of Throal and southeast of the Elven Queen's Palace in Blood Wood. The Name Scythia comes from the dwarf language, and like the troll word Scol, means old or ancient. Within the Scythia Mountains long ago, the dwarfs built their first kingdom in the land that would one day become Barsaive. The dwarf kingdom of Scythia pre-dates the founding of Throal by many years, having been in existence long before Elianar Messias was banished to the Delaris Mountains.

The Kingdom of Scythia survived the Orichalcum Wars, though its prosperity began to decline with the arrival of the Therans and the establishment of the Theran Empire. Scythia quickly fell to the superior Theran military, and was forced to swear allegiance to the Empire. Though both poverty and Theran oppression weakened the Scythian kingdom, neither was the cause of its downfall.

Perhaps a hundred years before the coming of the Scourge, creatures now thought to be the first of the Horrors began to infest the caverns and passageways of Scythia. In time, these creatures drove the dwarfs from their home. The Scythian dwarfs traveled south to Throal, requesting haven in that kingdom. King Varulus I welcomed them graciously, and none have ever returned to their former homeland.



Long abandoned by the Namegiver races, the Scytha Mountains are now thought to be haunted by the vengeful spirits of the founders of Scytha. Despite these rumors, persistent tales of the vast wealth left behind by the dwarfs in their haste to depart the Horror-infested kingdom continue to draw adventurers to the mountains.

On the origins of Throal...It was from the Scythan kingdom that the founders of Throal came. After centuries of life under Scythan rule, some dwarfs thought it would be fairer if the various peoples of the land had a say in who would rule over them. When the Scythan king rejected their petition, these same dwarfs left Scytha to form a new kingdom that would work to unite Barsaive's Namegiver races under one rule. These dissidents traveled south from Scytha to the Throal Mountains, where they began to build a new home, which would one day become the kingdom of Throal.
—From the *Throalic Encyclopedia*, 1505 TH

Recent expeditions to the Scytha Mountains have brought back reports of strange, dangerous creatures still prowling the caverns of the ancient dwarf kingdom. Every adventurer who returns relates a different description of these creatures; some insist that they are another manifestation of the Horrors, while others say the creatures appear in a guise never before seen.

...at last we arrived at Scytha, the home of the ancient dwarf kingdom. We searched for the evening's shelter and settled upon a small cave.

Shortly after arriving, we discovered that we were not alone in our refuge. A pack of strange creatures attacked us in the night. They stood seven to eight feet tall and had spiny limbs that bristled with sharp hair. After fighting off the grotesque, insectlike things, we explored our shelter and discovered that it led to vast underground caverns beneath the Scytha Mountains. We later learned from harsh experience that the caverns were infested with these foul abominations...

—From the journal of Thom Hammerblade, 1505 TH

Of the Throal Mountains

The Throal Mountains, rising up through the clouds and extending across the heart of Barsaive, seem impossibly large. Indeed, as one approaches the Throal Mountains, their image fills the sight. Maps of Barsaive fail to do justice to the sheer size of the peaks, for maps can show only the width of the mountains. In fact, if the surface area of the range could be laid out flat, it would cover one quarter of Barsaive.

The tremendous wasteland across the surface of the mountains provides a stark contrast to the orderly kingdom of Throal, buried deep within the rocky slopes. The dwarfs devote no time or forces to policing the upper reaches of their mountains, and so the surface remains untamed, much as it was following the Scourge.

Travelers who walk across the mountainous wastes are struck by the cold blue tint of the soil. Myriad small stones cover the ground underfoot, making the trek awkward and threatening one with a turned ankle or twisted knee at every step. Two-thirds of the way up the slopes, the air is so cold that exhaled breath turns to mist, and only thick furs will enable a visitor to survive the night. All manner of strange creatures roam the mountains. Many of them are solitary, like the feather serpents, which seek out food to bring back to their broods. Others, like the ice wolves, travel in packs. The numerous large boulders and tall outcroppings can hide any kind of ambusher. With food so scarce in the mountains, the few living predators and people must constantly struggle to kill for food or die of starvation.

An ever greater danger for travelers are the savages that roam the slopes. Several primitive tribes of humans, orks, trolls, and even dwarfs live on the surface of the mountains, survivors of the Scourge. No one knows how these people lived through the Horrors' reign without the *Rites of Protection and Passage*.

The most oft-told tales say that these tribes made deals with the Horrors, worshipping them as we worship the Passions. If true, some attacks on unwary travelers may be the work of Questors of a Horror, but we cannot verify that these people consider themselves to be such.



CHAPTER 2: BARSAIVE

Of the Thunder Mountains

The Thunder Mountains cover the southeastern area of Barsaive, just north of the Dragon Mountains and a days' walk from Travar. Just south of Travar, the western edge of the Thunder Mountains meets the eastern edge of the Badlands.

The Name of the Thunder Mountains comes from the dwarf word for the thunderous sounds that roll out of the peaks and valleys during the months of Strassa, Veltom, and Charassa. No widely accepted explanation exists for these booming rumbles.

Some legends say that a great dragon was trapped beneath the mountains before the Scourge, and the thunder is his roar. Others suggest that Verjigorm, the Horror also called Hunter of Great Dragons, is trapped beneath the mountains. Still others, among them many Questors, insist that the sounds are those of Death, still imprisoned beneath Death's Sea, calling out to remind the world of his presence.

The last (and most likely) explanation is that the Thunder Mountains lie over a crack between the land masses that make up Barsaive, and the roars are the grinding of earth and rock as the land masses shift.

Other than the distinctive roar that comes from these mountains, the Thunder Mountains have few noteworthy characteristics. Like most mountain ranges in Barsaive, they are home to all manner of wildlife and most likely a few Horrors.

...The Thunder Mountains looked like any others. Rock. More rock than the mind could comprehend. We were five days out of Travar, heading to the Aras Sea. We had heard the rumblings on our first day, but they seemed far away then, like thunder over the horizon. Today, without warning, the rumbling started again. At first it sounded like falling rocks in the distance, then grew to the sound of a million hammers forging a million blades. Under our feet the ground danced.

Anonlic, our overly superstitious swordmaster, shouted, "Death has returned and we are to be its first meal!" Not to be outdone, our archer Mejox screeched, "The Dragon Lord is released!" Those of us closer to the earth realize that neither case was true, yet fear of these tales paralyzed my companions. They shook more than the rock they were standing on. I pulled them aside to keep them from getting crushed by falling rock or swallowed up by the widening crack in the ground. Breaths held,

we waited for the quaking to cease. The roar drowned out my companions' mad cries of doom as we watched the earth open.

As quickly as it had begun, it ended. The dust was choking us. Fearing to move too soon, I made my companions wait. When the dust settled, the Thunder Mountains still stood, though the path we had followed no longer existed. Death did not return, nor did the Dragon Lord. Mercifully, my hearing has not yet returned either. At least for today, I need not listen to my companions whining about the certain death that just barely passed us by...

—From the journal of Caron
Lev, Illusionist Adept

Of the Tylon Mountains

The Tylon Mountains lie almost in the very heart of Barsaive, only one days' walk from Kratas and ten days by horseback from Throal. The Tylons are Named for their improbably tall spires (tylons, in the ork tongue), which rise from each of the twelve peaks in the mountain range. These spires rival the Throal Mountains in height, and pierce the clouds beyond the sight of travelers standing at their foot.

Some slopes and glens of the Tylons are only barren rock, while others are covered with thick forest and brush. Unlike the Caucavic Mountains, which have a very low tree line, the Tylons tree line ends quite high up. Above that point, the terrain becomes craggy and difficult to traverse. The spires, or tylons, serve as the source of many fascinating legends and myths.

Spires of the Passions

According to ork legend, the twelve spires of the Tylon Mountains are the twelve Passions, frozen in time as they reach toward the universe, the source of all that is in the world.

This legend says that when the Passions learned of the coming Scourge, they sought protection for their world. Unable to accept that the Horrors, like all things, were a part of the universe, they pled with the universe to stop the Horrors. Sadly, the universe cannot stop what has begun—all things must occur in their own time, whether good or ill.

Because the Passions refused to accept the way of the world, they were frozen in time and space as they reached in supplication toward the sky, forced





to watch as the Scourge ravaged their world and helpless to aid those who called for their assistance.

This legend suggests that the Passions are no longer active in Barsaive. Ork storytellers, anxious to explain this legend to modern scholars in a way that does not imply denial of the living Passions, say that the story illustrates the pitfalls of relying on others for aid, and teaches us to rely on ourselves. Skeptics believe that the legend originated with an inventive storyteller, who saw the twelve spires and likened them to the Passions to make a good tale.

The legend of the Spires of the Passions clearly reveals the orks' view of the world. The legend's message says that the events of the world will unfold as they will, and even the universe itself cannot change the outcome of those events. This view explains the ork philosophy of living life to the fullest. Because they feel powerless to alter the fate of the world, they are determined to grasp every emotion and opportunity life has to offer while they have the chance.

—Thom Edrull, Archivist and Scribe of the Hall of Records

Why those who call themselves scholars think they can understand others from simple legends and folktales, I will never know. Though it is true that we orks come at life with both hands open, we do not believe that all that transpires is preordained. Such an idea is foolish.

—Frath Sharptongue, Troubadour Adept

Of the Twilight Peaks

The Twilight Peaks lie in southern Barsaive along the edge of the Death's Sea and received their Name for the spectacular view they provide onlookers every twilight. Crystal deposits growing on the far side of the mountains reflect and heighten the glow from the Death's Sea, creating a warm-colored aura that can be seen for miles around the mountains every eve at twilight.

The Twilight Peaks were Named by dwarf merchants traveling from Throal to Sky Point during the years immediately after the Orichalcum Wars. The dwarfs, from their vantage point along the trade route, could see the glowing mountains from miles away, but as they neared the mountains, the

glow disappeared. Further investigation revealed the Death's Sea as the cause of the glow.

Barsaive's crystal raider trollmoots live on the northern slopes of the Twilight Peaks, away from the heat of the nearby Death's Sea. As the trolls discovered long ago, the peaks are Barsaive's largest source of living crystal, which they use in forging their crystal armor, shields, and weapons. The living crystal from the Twilight Peaks is vastly superior to that found in other mountain ranges. Though no one has been able to explain why this is so, many weaponsmiths claim that the intense heat of the Death's Sea tempers the crystal, making it stronger and more durable. Others insist that the Twilight Peaks are also rich in elemental earth, which gives the crystal its special qualities.

Though most of the crystal mined from Twilight Peaks is taken from caverns far underground, the numerous surface deposits on the far side of the mountains near the Death's Sea can also be gathered by particularly enterprising adventurers. Taking crystal from the mountainsides is hazardous, however. The heat of the sea of molten lava can burn or sicken those who come too near it, and many strange and dangerous creatures lair in the crystal caves.

ON NOTEWORTHY WILD LANDS

Though forests and jungles cover much of Barsaive, some of the most unusual ones deserve special mention in this work.

Of Blood Wood

At the northern border of Barsaive lies Blood Wood. Once called Wyrn Wood, the forest suffered horrible changes during the Scourge, among them the self-corruption of the Elven Court. The wood now takes its Name from the blood of its elves. Blood constantly drips from the thorns that tear through the elves' skins, and soaks into the ground.

Within Blood Wood is the Court of the Elven Queen, once the heart of elven culture. The Court lost this status when Queen Alachia refused aid from the Therans and chose to face the Horrors without the Rites of Protection and Passage. The elves built natural kaers, strengthened by elemental earth and wood, but the failure of these kaers





forced the Court to take desperate measures to protect themselves from the Horrors. Driven by dire need, they created the Ritual of the Thorns, which caused thorns to grow from the bodies of all elves in the Elven Court. The constant pain of the thorns kept the Horrors at bay, but at a terrible price. Most of the world has now stigmatized the elves of Blood Wood as a visible, lasting sign of the corruption that the Horrors wrought on this world.

Blood Wood itself abounds in lush growth, overpowering the unwary with its rampant plant and animal life. Though others in Barsaive also used magic to revive their forests and fields, the blood elves' corrupted magic seems to have brought an almost menacing fecundity to their forest home.

Additional information on Blood Wood and its inhabitants appears in the section of this book titled **On Blood Wood** (p. 115).

Of the Liaj Jungle

The Liaj Jungle, dense and sparsely populated with Namegiver settlements, presents three distinct dangers to those who enter it. The first is Usun, one of the three known great dragons. No one knows the precise location of Usun's lair, but most people avoid the area entirely because the dragon is rumored to prowl the entire jungle looking for prey.

The second danger is the jungle's large, predatory animals. Within the thick stands of trees and layers of green, leafy vines live tigers, lions, bears, and giant snakes. Though the great dragon Usun strikes more fear into the heart, these more

mundane animals pose the greater immediate danger. The third danger is a tribe of humans and elves, some 200 strong, that have broken with civilization and instead roam the jungle. They call themselves Tamers, a Name that refers somewhat to their ability to bond with the jungle animals, but more strongly proclaims their own victory in refusing to weaken themselves with civilized living.

The Tamers have no permanent home and live by foraging for edible plants and small animals. Usun has not given them permission to live in his jungle, and they must constantly watch for the dragon's presence. The tribe boasts many beastmaster adepts, as well as several Questors of Jaspre.

The Tamers reject clothing, tools, and trade goods, instead modeling their lives on the animals with which they live. They trust no one from outside the jungle, and deliberately lead in circles anyone who tries to enter Liaj, eventually leaving them on the edge of the jungle.

Those who wish to speak to the Tamers must first prove themselves worthy of respect in the tribe's eyes. Earning Tamer respect requires that one adopt Tamer ways, forgoing all luxuries of everyday life. This respect is not easily earned, but once given it is not easily lost.

...We set out at dawn, heading east from Jeris. At the end of the first day we had reached the edge of the Liaj Jungle, where we pitched camp for the night. After all, only the very brave—or foolhardy—would dare enter the dark recesses of the Liaj after nightfall.

Soon after the last rays of the sun had disappeared, the jungle came to life. Far in the distance, the lone roar of a brithan pierced the air, followed by the sudden high-pitched cries of a crakbill flock. Just below these sounds was a low hum that seemed to emanate from the jungle itself, the song of her countless insects.

Most disturbing were the rustlings we heard just outside our camp, which called to mind the nocturnal predators prowling under the thick canopy of the Liaj—storm wolves, lightning lizards, giant serpents the size of airships, as well as more mundane but equally deadly beasts such as tigers and bears. Even worse, somewhere in the blackness lurked the dragon called Usun, a fearsome beast with a taste for the flesh of men.

Suddenly our campfire seemed very small indeed.

—From the journal of Aicila of Iopos

Of the Mist Swamps

The Mist Swamps form where the Serpent River pours into the Death's Sea. Though not as deadly as the Death's Sea, the swamps still pose considerable danger for travelers.

The steam rising off the swamps can be seen for miles. As one approaches, the air grows thick with water, the moisture combining with the rising temperature to suck the energy and curiosity from the foolhardy adventurer. Those who continue on into the swamps suffer worse conditions. The mist becomes so thick one can barely see ten feet ahead. The knee-deep water maintains a scalding-hot temperature, actually boiling in some spots, with only a few islands of solid ground providing relief. Adventurers planning to travel through the Mist Swamps must wear clothing that can resist heat, or at least allow their skin to breathe. Only the suicidal and foolish would wear metal armor in this terrain.

Rumors and vague directions on old maps hint that an ancient city once stood on the site covered by the Mist Swamps. If it exists, this city would predate all others that we know of, including Thera. As often happens when legends surface of fabled treasures hidden in lost cities, adventurers flock to the area hoping to find and claim for themselves the gold, silver, magical elements, and finely crafted weapons said to await discovery. Some expeditions to the Mist Swamps have returned; others have not. Those who have returned brought back nothing to prove that they had actually entered the swamps save strange and fearsome stories.

...You smell the Mist Swamps before you see them. Smell them and feel them, the heat soaking into your bones and making the very marrow feel heavy and wet. Ever smelted bad vegetables, cooked and eaten because you'd nothing more wholesome? That's what the swamps smell like. They say there's treasure buried deep in the muck, and I half-believed it till I smelled the place. I just wonder what that rotting-vegetable water does to gold or gems. If the treasures smell like that, let the swamps keep them.

We reached the edge of the swamps today and spent a bewitched hour watching the steam rise off the water. Through the mist, I could see dim, hulking shapes: trees, I think. I hope. Splashes and strange cries came

from all around, echoing so much that I couldn't tell how far away they were. The vines and hanging mosses that drape the gnarled trees seem to move as you watch them. Gave me the creeping terrors, they did. We set up camp on the other side of the trees, out of sight of the swamps. With night falling, none of us cares to camp too near the cursed place. Only the Passions know what might creep out of the bog, after all.

—From the journal of Negik
Silverhand, Swordmaster of Throal

Of the Poison Forest

The Poison Forest is a vast jungle that lies between the city of Jerris and the Wastes. Many Barsaivians believe that the mysterious black soot that blows from the Wastes across Barsaive's western edge adversely affects the bodies and minds of the citizens of Jerris. They also believe that the soot has created the bizarre condition of the Poison Forest.

At first glance, the jungle appears dead. Traveling through it is an unpleasant experience; only rotting trunks, withered vines, and dry, decayed leaves meet the eye. The black and gray of the scene is unrelieved by a single blade of grass or leaf shining with the green of life. The sky is clearly visible above, the bright blue of a clear day contrasting sharply with the stark, blackened branches. The lack of a jungle canopy is disconcerting. One expects to journey through murky green, but instead travels exposed to the sky and elements.

The silence of the jungle seems to beat on one's ears, for no truly living creature roams there. No birds flutter by; no predators roar out warnings to keep rivals away from their territory. Though the jungle is filled with vaguely familiar shapes, nothing



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bears any true resemblance to the living world outside the forest.

Yet the forest lives, in its own perverse fashion. The trees, vines, and leaves may seem dead, but they are not. The pools of dank, standing water smell fetid and incapable of sustaining life, yet they seem to sustain the forest in a perpetual state of decay. Though no birds sing, animals crawl over the ground and sluggishly climb the rotting trees.

The paradox is this: the forest is not dead, but dying. As far as anyone can tell, it will continue to die till the end of time. Each animal, each tree, each vine moves infinitesimally closer to death each day, but never truly dies. Because the trees never die, they do not fall and rot, making way for new life to take their place. For whatever reason, the Poison Forest cannot complete the natural cycle of death, decay, and rebirth.

...Today we finally reached the end of this accursed place, thanks the Passions. Now I truly know why it is called the Poison Forest, for even now its all-pervasive stench of a thousand dying animals clings to our clothing as if the forest itself held us in a death grip.

I cannot forget the sight of the unholy creatures that roam the forest's lifeless gray floor— half-dead beasts draped in decaying flesh, hideous abominations that should never see the light of day. On our second day wandering through the blackened trees we encountered one such beast, a massive tiger whose putrid flesh crawled with thousands of tiny white maggots.

I can scarcely wait to be shut of this place. For it is not life that animates the Poison Forest, but some blasphemous mockery of life that is not of this world.

—From the journal of Yllom of Oshane

This unnatural state holds the animals of the forest in its thrall as well. They wander the jungle, alive, but dying, their natural instincts to mate, hunt, and sleep ruined. They make little noise, but exist in a twilight between life and death, so confused that they no longer know how to live.

Though half-decayed and caught between living and dying, the animals apparently still possess the instinct to attack. Stories abound of those who somehow wander into the Poison Forest barely surviving savage attacks by rotting tigers or assaults by flocks of featherless, putrefying raptors. Some suggest

that the animals' hatred is all that remains alive or that perhaps something grants them the passion of jealousy, but no evidence can be found to support this conjecture.

These dangers are minor compared to the darker claims that the ever-dying jungle can exert its unnatural power over those who tarry within its miasma. A wanderer who stays too long in the forest may begin to decay, losing his or her sense of life, passion, and intelligence. Over time he, too, will enter the twilight between life and death, unable to fully live but also unable to die. As the victim's body and soul withers, he becomes a creature jealous of the living, striking out against those who enter the forest. Other stories tell of travelers who pass safely through the forest only to begin wasting away as they continue their travels.

Of course, we do not know enough to prove the stories' truth, but the only cure ever mentioned in legend for those afflicted is to perform a bold act inspired by each of the Passions.

Of the Servos Jungle

The Servos Jungle spreads its shade near the center of Barsaive, just south of the Throal Mountains. To walk from one side of the Servos to the other takes more than ten days. The jungle's apt Name comes from the human word meaning isolated, or separated from. Though the Servos exists within the borders of Barsaive, those who enter the jungle's boundaries leave Barsaive behind, in more than just name.

The jungle is dark and eerie, and many prefer to travel around rather than through it. Stories abound of the dangers in the Servos, and its fearsome reputation has spread across Barsaive. As with other jungles, untold creatures within it stalk unwary prey and the tribes of humans who apparently survived the Scourge under the Servos' canopy. Knowing what we do of the corrupted blood elves, most Barsaivians suspect that any group that lacked Theran protection against the Horrors must be Horror-touched.

The Serpent River is the largest of many rivers that crisscross the Servos Jungle. Even here, the rivers are home to many tribes of t'skrang and other Namegivers, though these tribes are more savage than those in Barsaive proper. Indeed, some are even cannibals. Lake Pyros and the stretch of the Serpent River that crosses the Servos Jungle are plagued by piracy, and

no heroes have yet dared to break the pirates' hold on the few villages in the jungle.

ON PLACES OF LEGEND AND PERIL

Scattered across Barsaive are many areas that attract adventurers from all across the province. These places, some of the most perilous and dangerous sites in all of Barsaive, have inspired legends in the past and will likely help create the legends of the future.

Of the Badlands

The Badlands are a large patch of blighted earth in south-central Barsaive. Before the Scourge, this ruined area boasted some of the richest farmlands in the province, as well as some of the finest and most prosperous towns. Indeed, the region's well-tended farms, rich forest, and abundant wildlife, led ancient accounts to describe the area as surpassingly beautiful. Apparently, the Horrors found such beauty a delicacy and cut a terrible swath through it.

In the present day, the Badlands can boast only rock-filled gullies cutting through barren hills. Building a road is not possible over such a rough landscape, and so each person who enters the Badlands strikes out on his own, with no knowledge as to how previous travelers made their ways safely through the area. No villages exist in the Badlands, and few Namegivers live in the area.

Travel through the Badlands is always painful. No shade exists, save in the occasional cave tucked into the hillsides, and the rocks covering the ground constantly slide underfoot, causing discomfort even through heavy boots. One cannot move carts through the Badlands, for the stones quickly splinter wooden wheels and dent metal-shod wheels. Riding a beast is almost as difficult. With the exception of the thick-skinned stajian used by nomadic ork tribes, few animals can bear the pain of rock-torn feet and cracked hooves.

Despite its forbidding aspect, life does exist in the Badlands. As one might expect, the deep, solitary gullies are home to monsters and Horrors. The few Namegivers who make homes in the blighted region include magicians seeking private places to study, and Questors of Jaspre determined to restore the land to its former splendor. Escaped slaves, often with their masters in swift pursuit, frequently enter the



Badlands in a desperate attempt to lose their pursuers, though few will ever emerge from the region alive. Weak from their time in captivity and usually unarmed, the escaped slaves are no match for the wildlife roaming these inhospitable lands. The Badlands may also hide one of the lairs of the dragon Mountainshadow. Though this story originated with King Varulus III, it has never been confirmed since its first mention 30 years ago.

The Badlands are pecked with dozens of kaers built into the hills, all of them showing signs of breaching by the Horrors during the Scourge. These destroyed refuges remain deathly still, some with their treasures still intact. Adventurers who enter the Badlands for the sole purpose of finding such kaers and collecting the valuables left lying with the corpses often find trouble waiting. Many of the kaers serve as homes for monsters and Horrors, and some of their magical and mechanical defenses are still in working order. The Horrors attacked the Badlands

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with such swiftness and brutality, and the area has remained so desolate, that in many cases it seems as if the monsters and Horrors simply replaced the inhabitants of the kaers.

...This night is too silent; I cannot sleep. I wish I had never come to the Badlands. I try to believe that Jaspree guides my steps to a safe haven here, but each day sorely tests my faith.

Jagged rocks lie loose on the ground, giving way at every step. This morning, a rockslide threw me down. Had I not caught a withered tree as I rolled past it, I would now lie dead at the bottom of a ravine. My boots are torn, and I cannot mend them. I passed a kaer a few hours' walkaway and thought to beg supplies from its folk, but could not make myself walk toward it. Its very stones seemed shrouded in darkness, and the wind blowing from its direction seemed to carry the stench of a charnel house. I am afraid; the roaring of wild beasts and the growing sense of evil paralyze me. The Passions save me, but I cannot go on. I cannot go back, either. There is no road, and I do not know the way.

Jaspree, Passion of growth and the land, if ever you have heeded your Questors, hear me now. Guard me from the evils that may befall me, and guide me out of this benighted land...

—From the journal of Tallis
Treyar, Questor of Jaspree

Questors of Jaspree state repeatedly that this land was corrupted by the Horrors, just as the creatures might corrupt a soul or mind. They believe that the land can be healed, but do not know how to accomplish this task. They are considering the question with some urgency, however, for it seems that the Badlands are growing. If it is possible to heal the Badlands, it will mean we can restore prosperity and health to all places in our province. If we cannot, the blight on those lands may yet destroy our world.

*When I was a boy, I successfully
expelled a Horror from my thoughts,
so I know such a thing is possible.*

—J'role the Honorable Thief

Of the Death's Sea

Forming the southern border of Barsaive, the Death's Sea is a vast body of molten rock resting in

a basin ringed by high hills of dry black stone. Contrary to popular belief, the Death's Sea is not a sea of fire. The surface of the sea is actually covered with loose, irregularly shaped fragments of stone called clenkas. In the cracks between the clenkas, bright red liquid stone glows. Occasionally a hot bubble bursts underneath the clenkas, spraying molten rock over the surface of the sea. The red glow of the sea is visible at night, even from miles away. Clouds floating over the sea shine with an eerie red glow; this same glow provides the spectacular twilights seen over the Twilight Peaks.

Clenkas are formed when the liquid stone touches the air and cools. Though the clenkas are solid, they retain the searing heat of the molten stone below and can burn with a touch. They are not sturdy; the slightest weight applied to clenkas may sink the stone and whatever is on it into the sea. The molten rock beneath the surface is hot enough to melt metal, and will kill any living being upon contact.

One can only travel across the surface of Death's Sea by airship. Unless an airship flies exceptionally low over the surface, it will not be affected. Ships that travel within 50 feet of the sea's surface, however, often find themselves unable to maintain a position of steadiness. The most likely explanation for this diminished performance is that the intensity of the elemental fire in the Death's Sea affects the elemental air in the ships.

...Sixth Day out of Iphan

The Death's Sea is happy today. Its bright red glow mocks us, mocks our unsuccessful attempts to find its elemental fire and mocks the five crewmen who died today.

Two new sailors were killed when four viraas attacked them. The presence of viraas told us we were near a huge pocket of elemental fire. Of course, the attack panicked the new recruits. They tangled the rescue ropes, and I had to risk the life of four others to rescue them. We nearly had them out, when one slipped from the grip of a rescuer and was instantly devoured. A fire wraith took the second in a blaze of flame that engulfed him instantly. We chose to leave that pocket of elemental fire, and instead check out a fool's island that had remained solid longer than most.

On the fool's island, we lost Nob, Skatz, and my good friend Llink. It is always a gamble to land men on a fool's island; I know it better than most, for I lost afoot

to one years ago. It seems that the Death's Sea knows when someone has trespassed on it. The fool's island stayed together nearly all day until Nob and Skatz landed on it, and only then did it begin to pull apart. Link died trying to save them; an explosion blasted up from the sea, charring all three instantly. I have never done anything so difficult as cutting the rope that held my companion of these last six years, then watching his body fall into that red death.

—From the log of Qui Kyak, captain
of the airship *Angry Troll*

A Description of Elemental Fire Mining

Despite the dangers of Death's Sea, hundreds of brave men and women venture out across its infernal surface each year to mine the elemental fire that animates its depths. The precious flame is used in the fire cannon of airships and riverboats, for casting magical spells, and in trade along the sea, bringing great wealth to the citadels of Byrdown, Mathok, and Iphan, which regularly send out mining expeditions. But the Death's Sea can also exact a terrible toll from those who would harvest her treasures.

Toward the end of the first week of my tour of southern Barsaive, I witnessed the intrepid miners at work. Our airship had just passed over the ancient kingdom of Landis and was drifting out over the great sea, when we spotted mining airships hovering a mere 50 feet above the sea's deadly surface. As we drew closer, we could see the tiny forms of miners lowering themselves from ropes attached to the ships, buffeted by the turbulent air as if they were moths fluttering around a candle flame. Clad only in loincloths, thick-soled boots, and thick gloves against the lethal heat, they carefully descended to a "fool's island"—a fragile, semi-solid mass of clenkas drifting along on top of the molten rock. They had barely just dropped their orichalcum-laced nets into the boiling sea when some of them began to shout frantically at the airship hovering above them. As the clenkas

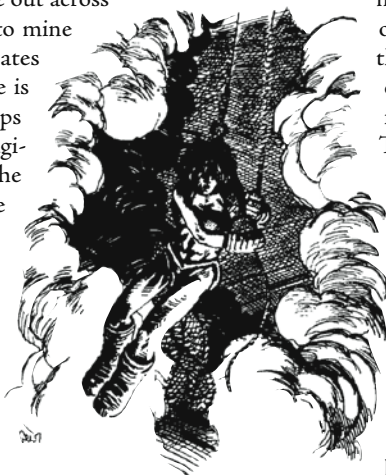
beneath their feet began to split apart, the miners scrambled up the ropes and the airship began to ascend.

Most of the crew had the luck to escape injury, but one lost her grip just as the clenka on which she stood tilted violently. With a muffled cry, she slipped into the flesh-searing, molten rock as the rest of the crew—some hanging no more than a dwarfs-length away—helplessly looked on.

Though the miner's death seemed a horrible tragedy at the time, it foreshadowed an even greater calamity that we witnessed later that same, ill-fated morning. We had come upon a larger expedition, this one using charges of elemental water to harvest the priceless fire. Working in pairs, the

mining ships first spread large, orichalcum-laced nets between them. Then the mining crews cast elemental water charges into the sea beneath the nets. The charges triggered violent explosions when they struck the molten rock, hurling shards of elemental fire and air hundreds of feet into the sky. As the sharp missiles reached the nets, the well-drilled crews quickly gathered in the huge seines between the ships, trapping the precious flame.

What happened next may have resulted from the work's heavy toll on the miners, or perhaps the Death's Sea herself was striking back at those who had plundered her depths. One of my companions later speculated that a careless crewman had likely packed too much elemental water into a charge, but everything happened so fast that no one can be certain what happened. All I remember is hearing an explosion—louder than the rest—and turning to see one of the hanging nets bulging upward. As the net rose, it pulled the two airships together. The hulls of the ill-fated ships splintered with a sickening crack, then both plunged toward the boiling stone below. The ships burst into flames and within seconds disappeared into the glowing cauldron of the Death's Sea, carrying more than 50 valiant miners to their deaths.



On the Strange Creatures that Inhabit the Death's Sea

The Death's Sea is home to many creatures, both monsters from our world and Horrors who remain on our plane for reasons we cannot guess. All these creatures appear immune from the horrible heat of the Death's Sea, thriving in the inimical environment. Though they feed mostly on each other, they eagerly attack any and all travelers across the sea.

Viraas and broccha both inhabit the fool's islands, lying just beneath the cool surface and rising up to strike anything that comes to rest on the clenkas. Large, winged fire eagles also fly in small flocks across the sea, searching for prey to bring back to their young waiting in molten nests. The legendary fire wraiths also wait patiently for any Namegiver with guilt in his heart to approach, that they may devour him whole.

On the Legend of the Death's Sea

Its intolerable heat and barrenness make the Death's Sea an inhospitable place not worth visiting. However, the lure of elemental fire continues to draw miners to the sea, as well as adventurers

to guard them. As friction between the different peoples and powers of Barsaive increases and open conflict with the Theran Empire looms closer, there is little doubt that the market for elemental fire will increase, with more and more expeditions launched over the terrible molten ocean.

The Death's Sea has existed for as long as we have kept records, and it has changed little over time. However, one interesting legend of its history found in the Great Library of Throal claims that the Death's Sea was once filled with water. It turned to molten stone in ages past when the Passions conspired to kill another of the universe's powerful entities—Death. They did this of their own accord, thinking to please the universe, which cherished life above all else. Combining their strength, they buried Death beneath the waters of the sea, then transformed the sea into molten stone to trap Death there. Death has been imprisoned for as long as the sea has burned, or so the story says.

Several questions spring immediately to mind. First, if Death was imprisoned, why do people still die? Was resurrection once not possible? The scholar Borsander of Throal suggests that this strange



thought might be true. Her research indicates that the potential for personal resurrection is comparatively new. Perhaps before Death was imprisoned, those who died were forever trapped in Death.

If the story is true, another question leaps forward with terrible urgency. According to the story, Death will be freed when enough blood soaks into the earth. We do not know how much blood is required, nor where the blood must fall. But our province lies next to Death's Sea, and a terrible, bloody war with Thera looms on the horizon. Could war with the Therans create enough blood to free Death? And when Death is freed, how will he greet the world? Will he set out claiming lives in a haphazard frenzy of revenge? Will pestilence, famine, and plague spread across the world as a result of Death's liberation?

Though these speculations may be no more than idle tales told generations ago around campfires, perhaps they provide a warning we would do well to heed. If through intrigue or careful tactics we can keep a bloody conflict with the Therans at bay, we might well protect not just ourselves, but countless others around the world.

Of the Forgotten City of Parlainth

Built with Theran labor and money long ago, the great city of Parlainth marks the far northeast corner of Barsaive. In the time before the Scourge, it served as the First Theran Empire's provincial capital and the home of the Overgovernor. In the days of its triumph, Parlainth had opulence and splendor unmatched even by present-day Travar.

What we know of Parlainth's past in our time comes mostly from exploration of its ruins, and from legends and stories that occasionally resurface in the remotest areas of Barsaive. We know that before the Scourge, the city was the Theran provincial capital of Barsaive. To protect their fair city from the Scourge, the Therans did not transform it into a citadel, as did many other cities, but chose

a different method of protection. They shifted the entire city into one of the netherworlds of astral space, wiping knowledge of its existence from every citizen's mind, believing that this was the only way to keep Parlainth safe from the Horrors. Despite this great feat of magic, the Horrors still managed somehow to detect and invade the city during the Scourge, destroying the legendary Parlainth just as they had destroyed so many other cities.

Through the efforts of J'role the Honorable Thief and the elementalist Releana, the Forgotten City of Parlainth was restored to earthly existence in Barsaive after the Scourge. It is true that its ruins harbor frightful creatures and Horrors, but they also contain countless treasures. The city

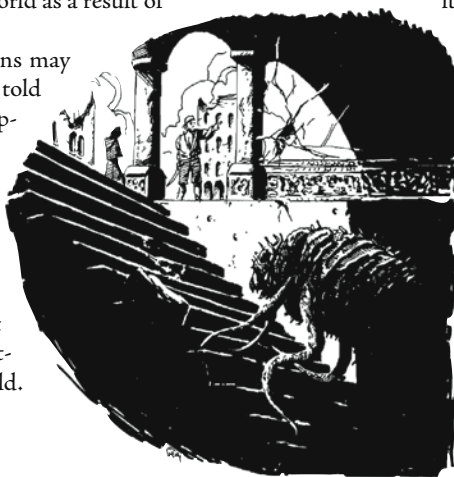
itself is a wilderness to be explored and tamed, for the tall spires and dozens of substructures deep underground hide myriad creatures and traps for the unwary.

A small town named Haven occupies the ruined city's southeast corner. The founders of the town cleared this small portion of Parlainth of both monsters and treasure, and Haven now serves as a trading post and way station for adventurers journeying deep

into the fabulous ruins in search of Parlainth's marvelous treasures.

...After about a day's ride northeast of the Cau-cavics, we reached Haven, where we purchased a moth-eaten adventuring log from a dwarf merchant. Using the directions supplied in its yellowing pages, we made our way to the outskirts of Parlainth, the fabled Forgotten City and the ancient Theran capital of Barsaive.

We saw the great citadel where mighty airships had once docked. Nearby, on a high hill overlooking the city, stood the monumental palace where the Overgovernor had once lived. Temples and great houses, market places and amphitheatres all





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spread out from the citadel. Deep green vines and mosses covered much of their fine, white stone walls, as if the jungle itself had conspired with Parlainth's original inhabitants to hide the great city. Though the wind and rain of many years had left the white stone pockmarked and pitted, close inspection revealed intricately carved designs and glyphs, a silent testament to the skill of Parlainth's artisans.

We carefully made our way toward the city center, on constant watch for the numerous Horrors still inhabiting the dead city. Suddenly, we froze in our tracks. Before us lay a rectangular courtyard the size of ten Theran kilas, a courtyard whose white stone walls still bore the brown stains of blood spilled long ago. We had found the ancient Theran slave market.

—From the journal of Sargon of Urupa

Haven may provide refuge against the dangers of Parlainth, but its inhabitants—adventurers, thieves, swindlers, mad wizards, and even Horrors disguised as any of the above—often prove as formidable a challenge as the traps and monsters of the Forgotten City.

It seems certain that the Therans have spies within Haven, keeping watch over Parlainth and any explorers who plunder its ruins. Speculations about their aims range from Theran plans to reclaim Parlainth and retrieve its treasures for their empire to tracking or even waylaying treasure seekers brave enough to explore its depths.

8—Kern Redhand, Historian of Throal

Of the Scarlet Sea

The Scarlet Sea, linked to the Death's Sea by the Pryon Strait, is the home of the Firespaw, a salvaged Theran vedette operated by a group of air sailors and merchants. The ship's crew, composed of humans, orks, and trolls, gather elemental air at their leisure, then travel down the Serpent River to sell their harvest to the t'skrang.

The Firespaw's crew claim the Scarlet Sea as their exclusive property, and so maintain the right to pirate anyone else attempting to mine the sea. In fact, they only attack ships that they believe they can easily defeat. Often, they extend their mining rights

into the Death's Sea as well, but only if they spot a ship they believe they can successfully overcome.

Of the Wastes

The Wastes form the western border of Barsaive. No Namegivers live in this area, now home only to creatures, Horrors, and stunted plants and animals. Before the Scourge, this rich and fertile area boasted more kaers and citadels than any other region of Barsaive. The end of the Scourge has brought no reports of survivors from this region, and few who have entered the Wastes to search for signs of life have ever returned. If Throalic records are accurate, Barsaive lost hundreds of shelters to the destruction of the Horrors in this area alone.

The Wastes feature a unique and puzzling phenomenon apparently created by the Scourge. Billowing clouds of ashlike smoke cover the entire region, the same ashy substance that floats through the Poison Forest and the city of Jerris. Though many believe this strange ash to be the cause of the Poison Forest's long dying and of the lassitude of the people of Jerris, studies of samples have yet to reveal any facts to support or disprove this belief. Another claim gaining popular support states that the ash is a Horror that controls the area and seeks to expand its influence.

...Today our galley passed over Jerris and then westward over the Wastes, a forsaken place that truly resembles the end of the world. Mercifully, a maelstrom of swirling, gray dust obscured the abominable land from the eyes of our crew; they surely would have mutinied had they seen the evil landscape below us. For the Wastes are still ruled by Horrors, those unholy entities from the Great Void of the netherworlds, terrible abominations that existed long before the Books of Harrow were even a dream in the tortured mind of the Martyr Scholar.

No creatures of the light would dare set foot in the Wastes. Its rancid air supports only the Horrors and their spawn: wormskulls, despairthoughts, bloatforms and jehuthras, swarms of krilworms, and other nameless creatures that feed on the souls of Namegivers.

—From the journal of Derleth, Nethermancer of Ar Kham



ON THE KINGDOM OF THROAL

You might imagine that the task of gathering information about the kingdom of Throal would prove an easy one. And in many ways, it was: I found numerous sources readily available, well-organized and complete historical records, and an orderly kingdom to survey. The challenge lay in choosing what to include, and what to leave for further works. As I may take up only a few pages of this work for my subject, I provide the most basic information and encourage interested readers to study further.

⑧—Inscribed by Jaron of Bethabel, Scholar of the Library of Throal

ON THE FIRST SIGHT OF THROAL

The entrance to the kingdom of Throal stands on the south face of the Throal Mountain range. To reach Throal, one must pass through Bartertown, a sprawling city of merchants and traders that has grown around the entrance to the kingdom ever since the time of the Scourge's end. My colleague Kern Redhand more fully describes Bartertown in the section titled "On Towns and Cities," so I shall leave the detail for readers of that chapter of this volume.

The wide, smooth Royal Road cuts through Bartertown, leading visitors straight to the gates of Throal. King Varulus III has ordered that this road be kept in continually pristine condition.

If only they could do the same with the rest of Bartertown.

⑧—Kern Redhand,
Historian of Throal

The journey through Bartertown permits one a fascinating glimpse of the countless Barsaivian cultures and races that come to trade with Throal. Merchants, beggars, and charlatans fill the streets, wares of every sort are displayed for trade, and criers call out for mercenaries to guard shipments across the province. Truly, Bartertown is an awesome, overwhelming sight; yet even its colorful chaos takes second place to the majestic Throal Mountains. One can

look up from any place in Bartertown and see the blue-misted mountains soaring high into the clouds, the peaks so enormous that they fill one's vision. The colossal mountains seem to lean down over Bartertown, giving one almost the sensation that the towering slopes might momentarily topple down upon the ramshackle city.

As one approaches the mountains, the gates of the kingdom of Throal are a welcome sight, perhaps because they relieve some of the breathtaking grandeur of the setting. These proofs of Namegiver habitation are reminders that the huge mountains can be tamed after all. The entrance to Throal lies through three massive arches carved into the mountains, their edges plated with gold. Because the mountains are so enormous, it is only from directly under the arches that one can truly appreciate the vastness of the gates. They tower overhead; people who look directly up at their golden curves often suffer

the momentary sensation of falling over backward. The three arches open into a chamber hundreds of feet high, which serves as the official entrance to the kingdom. Here is the place known as the Bazaar, where merchants who obtain licenses from the kingdom of Throal can set up their booths. Throalic guards patrol the Bazaar, watching for questionable business practices and keeping a sharp eye out for thieves.

From this great, vaulted chamber, nine huge hallways lead into the heart of the mountains. All along their





length, these hallways branch off into smaller corridors, leading into a maze that winds its way through the mountain range. The kingdom fills the Throal Mountains: long corridors and colossal stairways connect caverns massive enough to contain small cities.

A DISCOURSE ON RECENT HISTORY

No political institution in all of Barsaive can match the dwarf kingdom of Throal for size, power, and ambition. Though the dwarfs who founded it once served as administrators for the First Theran Empire, ever since the end of the Scourge they have sought power for themselves in order to promote dwarf ideals of equality and justice. They wish to bring their reforms to the rest of the province, but prefer to do so by persuasion rather than conquest. Their chief goal is to reform Barsaive's legal system, originally imposed by the benighted Therans and then handed down through the generations.

Like his father before him, King Varulus III has formulated unique and sometimes startling ideas on the nature of individual rights. These rights influence how criminals are judged in Throal, how society treats each individual, what each person owes to society, and what citizens may expect from their rulers as well as what rulers can expect from citizens. During the Scourge, King Varulus II and Varulus III created an extensive legal code. King Varulus II died before completing his work, but the present king believes that his father would have approved of his additions to Throalic law.

Some official grumble that King Varulus II would never have gone so far with certain reforms, but who can say if this is true?

♣—Jaron of Bethabel, Scholar of the Library of Throal

Shortly before the Scourge ended, King Varulus III presented his laws to the people. Though he knew they could not prevent him from implementing them, the idea of merely forcing his views on unwilling subjects was anathema to him. Therefore, the king took the time to explain his (and his father's) purpose in creating the new laws, as well as proclaiming his vision of the kingdom's future. The

people repaid him with steadfast loyalty; among the common folk, the king's reforms met with little resistance. Alas, this was not so among certain, powerful dwarf nobles.

King Varulus attempted his changes in a troubled time. No one could yet predict when the Scourge would end, and several Horrors had recently breached the kingdom's defenses. It seemed ill-considered to be planning the kingdom's place in the outside world when no one knew if the world outside still existed. But King Varulus, a visionary Questor of Upandal the Builder and perhaps a bit of a mystic, insisted that his people must plan for the future precisely because so many unknowns lay ahead. He declared that the dwarfs must have a firm idea of the kind of world they wanted to build when the Scourge ended and a plan to accomplish their goals.

Several conservative factions were deeply offended by what they viewed as Varulus III's rejection of tradition. Banding together, they attempted to kill Varulus and seize power. This conflict, which became known as the Death Rebellion, set families against one another, and might even have shredded the fabric of Throalic society had Varulus not immediately captured the initiative by arresting the rebellion's leaders and dispersing their followers. No such organized resistance has openly challenged his rule since.

Nearly one hundred years later, the Death Rebellion continues its work as a secret organization, attempting to discredit the king and secretly cooperating with Theran agents.

Their several attempts to kill the king, his wife Dollas, and his son Neden, have failed, but the Death Rebellion's power increases along with Theran influence in Barsaive.

♣—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

ON THE WORKINGS OF THROALIC LAW

The complete text of the king's laws requires several hundred pages; herein, I repeat only a few examples in order to illustrate the unique nature of these laws. Taken as a whole, the Throalic legal code is the most startling change to the practice of law the world has





EARTHDOWN GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

ever seen. The laws with the greatest importance to the greatest number of citizens are as follows:

All Namegivers are masters of their own souls, and none may be enslaved to the will of another. Though only a few Barsaivian cultures practice slavery, Throal is the first realm to openly declare slavery wrong, and to refuse to tolerate the despicable practice anywhere in any form. Though this law seems to imply that Throal must someday wage war on Thera to end the tyranny of slavery, King Varulus and those closest to him will say only that they hope their example will lead the Therans to abandon that barbarous institution.

Perhaps they will. But it seems unlikely.

⑧—Jaron of Bethabel, Scholar of the Library of Throal

A poor citizen who steals is judged less harshly than a rich citizen who steals. To the Throalic way of thinking, both a rich citizen and a poor citizen may know the law, but the rich man has no need to steal; a poor citizen, however, may be driven to do wrong by his desperate circumstances. By acknowledging this truth in law, Throal makes a deliberate effort to contradict the usual way of the world in which the law favors the rich. In many places, such as Thera, such bias is open, and those with greater wealth and power are less subject to the law; in other realms it occurs indirectly, where the wealthy influence the legal system with favors and money.

The kingdom of Throal takes responsibility for the property of its citizens. That is, if something is stolen from a citizen of Throal within the kingdom's boundaries, the kingdom must recover or replace it. Though this law unfortunately keeps a good deal of the kingdom's resources tied up in guards and patrols, most citizens appreciate the security the law provides.

The idea of property and its protection is crucial to the Throalic legal code. King Varulus III, seeing how the Therans built their empire upon the exchange of information and goods, plans to use the same methods to gain power for his kingdom.

WITHIN THE DWARF KINGDOM

Plunging far below the slopes of the Throal Mountains, the kingdom of Throal is a vast place. Its

myriad corridors and passageways extend a distance of many days' walk, branching off to other, seemingly endless corridors. Massive chambers and caverns filled with Throal's huge inner cities lie along these passages, as do all of the kingdom's important areas.

On the Halls of Throal

The winding halls of Throal and the living and working spaces which they connect represent unique dwarf construction styles. The countless wide tunnels reach some twelve feet high and wind through the mountains for a distance of many days' travel. These passages make up the old sections of the kingdom. Most citizens of Throal live here, preferring to dwell in the underground chambers where they feel most comfortable. Light quartz crystals line the walls of these corridors, illuminating their shadowy depths.

The old part of Throal, which served as the kingdom's kaer during the Scourge, is divided between residences and chambers used for trade, work, and research. Countless homes line the residential corridors, many-roomed dwellings that lie behind thick, wooden doors. In the trade and work spaces, the people of Throal conduct business, the making of goods, and scholarly research. These areas serve as workshops for craftspeople, provide meeting places for those who deal in importing and exporting goods, and contain the great Throalic libraries.

Long stairways carved from the mountain lead from certain tunnels, providing access between the different levels of Throal. The landings of some of the longer stairways feature small parks where people can rest, for the walk between levels can sometimes take an hour or more. In some of the parks are fountains of magical water specially enchanted to refresh those who partake of it. Unfortunately, the water loses its healing property when carried out of the city.

On the Great Library

Within the kingdom lies the Great Library of Throal, the most complete and inclusive library in the province. Its stone walls house the collective literary, artistic, and scholarly works of the people of Barsaive. Given the great numbers who dwell in Throal and the dwarf kingdom's extensive history, this priceless collection has grown over the centuries to a size almost beyond comprehension. In



CHAPTER 2: BARSATIVE

addition to gathering scholarly and literary works, the librarians are constantly adding to the record of Barsaive's history, from the province's beginnings to the present day.

Though the Scourge ended Thera's reign of Barsaive and therefore our land's status as a province, its citizens still refer to it as the province when not using its Name.

Ⓞ —Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

Among the many ways the librarians accomplish this goal is by hiring adventurers to seek the truth behind certain legends and rumors and to verify events reported from every region of Barsaive. Rather than relying on memory alone, the librarians require these adventurers to keep journals of their travels, recording each day the perils and wonders they have faced. In addition, the library purchases the journals of adventurers who have explored all areas of the province.

The library makes a formal acquisition of journals once a year, during the months of Sollus and Riag. Thousands of adventurers descend on Throal at this time, all hoping to sell their stories and become a part of Barsaive's history. Some adventurers earn enough from the library to continue their journey or to return home; however, no adventurer or group can expect to earn a fortune in this way.

I think we pay too much for these journals. We would better spend our coin on additional staff or enlarging the Library.

Ⓢ —Jaron of Bethabel, Scholar of the Library of Throal

The Master of the Hall of Records, currently my colleague Merrox, administers the library. At any time, roughly two dozen librarians and scholars assist the Master, each taking charge of a general area of study: topography, city lore, history (this subject requires five librarians), and so on. The library also catalogues maps of the entire province as well as of smaller regions within it.

All of the manuscripts and papers stored in the library are exhaustively indexed and coded so that visiting scholars and travelers can easily find what

they are looking for. Visitors may use the library for a fee of twenty silver pieces a day, which includes assistance from the librarians, scribes, and research scholars.

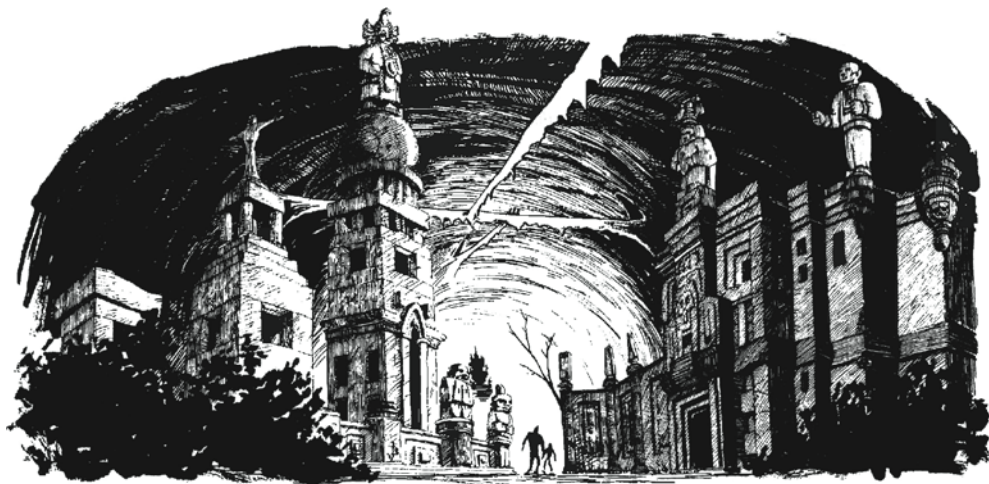
The Chambers of the Inner Kingdom

Certain tunnels lead to the chambers wherein the King and his court conduct the day-to-day business of Throal and Barsaive. These rooms include the king's audience chamber and banquet hall, where formal functions and ceremonies take place; the private chambers of the king, his family, and his court; and the Vaults of the Kingdom, which contain Throal's treasure and valuable, magical artifacts. Because it houses what we of Throal hold most dear, this Inner Kingdom remains under heavy guard at all times. Without exception, those venturing into this area without an authorized escort are detained.

I consider it my duty to illustrate the consequences of visiting the Inner Kingdom without the proper guard. It pains me to admit this, but I myself once entered the Inner Kingdom without first informing the authorities of my intent. I trespassed for a moment, no more; I meant only to look for Merrox, so that he might answer a vexing question regarding the cross-indexing of grain-trading records. I knew that he had gone to speak with the king. I suppose I should have waited, but the king frequently holds discourses on research and the law with Merrox for hours at a time. As one of the principal scholars of the Great Library, my research is particularly pressing, so I chose to risk entry rather than lose hours of my valuable time. I believed that my status might serve as a safe-conduct of sorts.

Much to my chagrin, I had taken scarcely twenty paces down the great hall leading to the king's private study when four guards in chain mail accosted me. Their leader, a black-bearded dwarf with a patch over one eye, gave me a grim look and questioned me coldly as to my business. All the while his fellows leaned ominously on their pole-arms, with their hands resting on the hilts of their dwarf swords. In vain did I explain who I was. They refused to let me pass. I bade them fetch Merrox, that he might vouch for me, but that suggestion only made them look on me with greater suspicion! At length I tired of the dispute and made as if to step past them, a deed which was my undoing. Four swords whipped out of their sheaths,





surrounding me in a ring of sharp, shining metal. As I stood motionless in shock, the chief guard sheathed his sword, gripped me by the arms from behind in a most unpleasant manner and marched me down the winding corridors to prison. I, Derrat of Wishon, chief scholar of the Great Library of Throal, actually went to prison! Merrox came several hours later and persuaded them to release me, but I shall never forget the indignity of the experience.

Ⓜ—Derrat, Wizard of the City of Yistaine

Most librarians believe that the king knows a number of secret passages that lead to various areas of the kingdom, allowing him to move through his domain without using the public corridors. Merrox refuses to confirm or deny these rumors, though I suspect he knows more than he is telling.

Ⓜ—Jaron of Bethabel, Scholar of the Library of Throal

The Mines

The endless tunnels of Throal also provide access to Throal's most important natural resources: the magical and mundane minerals drawn from the mining tunnels and shafts that wind through the deepest heart of the Throal Mountains. Though many of Throal's dwarfs immerse themselves in the theory and practice of governing a kingdom, the vast majority prefer to delve into the earth and uncover its treasures.

Such work carries risks; cave-ins may occur at any time, as may attack by creatures that roam the tunnels. Some of these are mundane animals that have crept into the tunnels from the surface of the Throal Mountains. Other, more dangerous creatures emerge from the elemental plane of earth and attack the miners to prevent them from gathering elemental earth.

Several different mining companies work within Throal, constantly searching for new, rich sources of raw material and more efficient means to mine it. The level of competition for the market and the companies' unsurpassed ability to work the mines effectively puts the prices of minerals and elemental earth in constant flux.

On the Caverns and Cities

More recent additions to Throal include the massive cities built in huge caverns throughout the Throal Mountains. City architecture differs considerably from the building style of the old kaer, reflecting the present-day variety among Throal's citizens. When King Varulus III invited people of all races from across Barsaive to take up residence in the kingdom of Throal, the officials in charge of housing the anticipated influx of people decided that the newcomers would adjust to their homes more quickly if their new residences resembled the homes they had left. Accordingly, Throalic engineers set about building roads, towers, and storied residences on the wide floors of five vast caverns.



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As was common in the kaers, these areas are illuminated by a magical, glowing moss that lines the roof of the caverns, supplemented by light-quartz crystals around the outer walls of each city.

The cities the dwarfs built inside the caverns, though generally smaller than cities in the rest of Barsaive, are no less splendid in design. Each houses approximately 25,000 people of many different races. Each city is ruled by a baron or baroness, also of a variety of races, who has sworn loyalty to King Varulus III. The city's noble families hold their titles for the life of the current baron or baroness. Upon the death of a city's ruler, the king may allow an heir to assume the place of his or her father or mother, or he may place a new ruler in charge of the city. In general, King Varulus considers the current ruling family's popularity among the citizens when making this decision. If the people find their current rulers satisfactory,

that family continues to rule. If the people feel otherwise, the king gives the stewardship of the city to a new noble family.

At this writing, the dwarfs have completed five subterranean cities: Bethabal, Wishon, Tirtarga, Oshane, and Yistane. These cities are filled with a mix of races who chose to become citizens of Throal. Bethabal is famed for the garden that seems to float near the roof of that city's giant cave, planted on an observation platform built during the city's construction. Six stone walkways now lead to the garden from various parts of the cavern, each affording a spectacular view of Bethabal.

Two more cities, Hustane and Valvria, are in the final stages of construction. No residents have yet settled there, and only a few dwarfs still work in the quiet cities. Walking through their streets is an eerie experience, almost like exploring an empty kaer or citadel.

ON BLOOD WOOD

If you have ever experienced mixed feelings, such as pain and pleasure, joy and sadness, or pride and shame, then you know what I felt at being given the task of compiling information about Blood Wood and the Elven Court. As a historian and scholar, I anticipated that my work might reveal the lesson taught us by the corruption of the elves of Blood Wood. But as an elf who remembers vividly the experience of living underground in hiding from the Horrors, I found it terrifying to face one of the most profound and disturbing outcomes of the Scourge. I believe that the fact of my racial origin and the knowledge that it was my kinsmen who willingly inflicted such agony on themselves were what made the study of this subject particularly painful for me.

Of course, many non-elves in Barsaive also feel as I do, and I know that my racial background should have no bearing on my work as a scholar, but I could not help but wonder what would have been my fate had I been born in Wyrms Wood instead of in a kaer. Might I have ended up as a blood elf? I cannot say, and do not wish to know.

—Set down on this the Third Day of Rua, 1505 TH, by Karon Foll, Scholar

ON THE TERRIBLE BEAUTY OF BLOOD WOOD

Blood Wood, a place both miraculous and unsettling, marks the northern boundary of Barsaive. Though life has returned to much of the world since the end of the Scourge, no place is so rich with life as the legendary Blood Wood. Revived and magically rejuvenated by the corrupted elves of the north, the forest has grown to enormous proportions and now stands as a testament to the beauty that elves, corrupted or not, can create.

...I remember my first sight of Blood Wood, decades ago. A shimmering island of green amid a barren, brown plain, its beauty both attracted and terrified me. Never in my life had I seen so many trees, which covered the land like a monstrous army of alien growing things. The sheer abundance of life all around me made my heart stop beating and tore the breath from my throat. As I approached it, knowing I must enter whether I would or not, the emerald beauty of the leaves became dark and menacing, and the thick maze of branches and trunks became a single, powerful creature that might easily



devour me. Until that day, I had seen only the stark, gray interior of my kaer and the mountainous brown horizon that surrounded my meager farming village. When I entered Blood Wood, I came upon a different land; even in my dreams I had never imagined such a place, and the difference of it paralyzed me with fear and longing.

—From the journal of J'role
the Honorable Thief

Blood Wood grows thick with green- and red-leaved undergrowth that brushes against a visitor's legs. Tall, thick-trunked birch trees overgrown with layers of furry moss lean down overhead, their leaves blocking most of the sun's light and turning the forest into an endless cavern of undergrowth. Thick vines hang in long loops from the canopy overhead down to the ground.

Animal life is equally abundant in the forest. Though a traveler sometimes crosses an eerily silent section of the woodland—more terrifying than any constant sound—the animals of the Blood Wood chatter and call and whistle. Many of the smaller animals prey on each other, posing no threat to travelers. Other animals are very dangerous; the small but deadly blood monkey, the fierce witherfang, the sly giant python, and others all wait to hunt down the careless traveler.

But these mundane plants and animals are not the greatest danger within Blood Wood, nor are they its most interesting inhabitants. This magnificent forest is home to the largest elven population in Barsaive, the corrupted elves who still worship the Elven Queen Alachia as their High Queen and the guardian of elven culture.

How BLOOD WOOD CAME TO BE

In the days before the Scourge, the Elven Queen ruled all the elves of Barsaive and other lands. All elves pledged their loyalty to her court, though many lived their entire lives without ever paying their respects to her in person. Over time, the Elven Queen lost the power to rule any but the elves. Her

kingdom, however, remained the most important and linked the realms of faerie with the mundane world. No matter where they lived, all elves owed and still owe their greatest loyalty to the Court of the Elven Queen, a tradition that continues undiminished to this day.

In return for their loyalty, the Elven Queen kept safe all elves in the world. With few exceptions, every Elven Queen has fulfilled this duty to her utmost. Keeping abreast of events in the world outside her northern forest kingdom by requiring reports on the outside world from all visitors to her kingdom, each Elven Queen learned where to focus her attention to guarantee the continued welfare of her subjects.

How the Schism Occurred

Even such ingrained traditions, however, could not withstand the challenge of the Horrors. Seven hundred years ago, as the world discovered the impending onslaught of the Horrors and the rulers of Thera created the Rites of Protection and Passage, Thera demanded that all citizens swear loyalty to its empire in exchange for protection from the Scourge. All elves knew that their first loyalty lay with the Elven Queen, and most expected Queen Alachia to agree to these terms. But the Queen rejected the Theran demands, and with them the Rites of Protection and Passage. Many of the elves in

Barsaive, fearing they could not survive the coming Scourge without the Theran Rites, forswore Queen Alachia and joined communities that had learned the Rites of Protection and Passage.

The elves called this time of turning away the Schism. Even as thousands of elves threw in their lot with Barsaive's other races and went into hiding in the kaers and citadels, the elven folk still loyal to the Elven Queen gathered around her in the giant Wyrn Wood for the hundred years preceding the Scourge. There a bitterness settled upon them, and their hearts became closed and dark.

They felt betrayed not only by their own kind, but by the world itself, which demanded that people make such unforgivable choices.





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The Corruption of the Elves

Unlike most communities, whose people built their kaers and citadels from the stone and earth they knew so well, the elves of Wyrms Wood drew on elemental magic to build shelters of trees and plants. The Elven Queen and her court sealed Wyrms Wood under a thick canopy of vines and leaves, placing magical wards within the trees of their forest just as other people placed wards on the stones of their kaers and citadels.

But their wards did not hold. Slowly, the Horrors ate away at the outer defenses of Wyrms Wood. Even as the beleaguered elves tried to shore up their magical defenses, the Horrors slipped in, possessing elves, attacking those who lived within the failed kaer, and arousing untold terror. In desperation, the elves began to dig deep tunnels to escape the Horrors, but the creatures had entrenched themselves in Wyrms Wood. Before long, the elves began to lose the battle in earnest.

In this darkest hour of elven history, the magicians of Wyrms Wood stumbled across a possible means of salvation. Rather than fighting the Horrors, they would simply make themselves unappealing to the creatures. Because the Horrors feed on the pain they inflict on their victims, the Court chose to drive them away by inflicting agony on themselves. By twisting elemental magic, they created the Ritual of the Thorns, which made sharp thorns grow out of their bodies and cut through their flesh. With their bodies and minds awash in constant, agonizing pain on which the Horrors could not feed, the elves forced the Horrors to leave the woodland alone.

Because the Horrors also consider despair, fear, and other anguish of the heart a delicacy, the elves of the Court disciplined themselves to feel little. They feel enough to still be considered Namegivers, but are capable of only so much emotion. The blood elves, as they came to be called, can feel love and concern for others, but only to a limited degree. Like the rest of us, they have hopes, dreams, and fears—but these, too, have limits.

The terrible plan worked; the hastily dug underground shelters combined with the self-inflicted mental and physical torture kept the elves from succumbing to the Horrors. For their survival, however, they paid a dreadful price. Some say that though the elves saved their own lives, what they did to

themselves rendered their lives as empty as if they had died. Even the elves themselves cannot deny that they twisted their nature into something horrible. Still breathtakingly beautiful in their own way, the blood elves of the Queen's Court also evoke overwhelming pain and sorrow.

To His Majesty King Varulus III of Throal,

Since my return from your kingdom, I have been disturbed by the outcome of our meeting. You and yours have grown to such distrust and animosity toward us, but for what reason? Surely what we have done to ourselves is no worse than the protective measures taken by other peoples of Barsvaive.

The tales of Blood Magic rituals in which communities sacrificed their own are known to us. You may feel that our solution is a barbaric one, but we never called for any type of sacrifice. And what of those whose shelters failed, and who were taken by the Horrors? This did not happen to we of the Elven Court, but again, you feel our solution intolerable.

We did what we had to do. We survived the Scourge, and in many ways, we survived more intact than others. The Ritual of Thorns has cleansed us as a people and helped us purge the seeds of corruption from ourselves. All those from outside Blood Wood know not the enlightenment that awaits anyone who chooses our way...

—From a letter from Queen Alachia to
King Varulus III of Throal, 1462 TH

Though they rarely speak of it, the members of the Elven Court feel torn by their current state. The elves who survived the Scourge take great pride in their victory over the Horrors. Some continue to celebrate the extreme choice they made, scoffing at those who are repelled by their cold and masochistic existence. However, each member of the Elven Court also recognizes that he or she has become alien to the rest of the world. Though their longing is unspoken, they remember with regret the days when they lived without the constant pain and stifled emotions they now suffer.

With time and help, the Court may discover a way to reverse the Ritual of the Thorns. Of course, they will never ask for such help. In a display of elven arrogance sadly common to my race, their perverse pride in their condition prevents them from acting to achieve the changes that some small remnant of



their hearts so desperately craves. They remain as they became during the Scourge; safe from the Horrors, but cut off from the world.

On the Transformation of Wyrn Wood

As the elves hid underground, their flesh torn by thorns and spilling blood into the thirsty ground as if in offering, the Horrors ravaged Wyrn Wood above. After the Scourge ended, the elves emerged to discover their beloved forest corrupted, forever altered by the Horrors. What had once been a verdant wood had become a desolate wasteland.

Unable to imagine life without their forest, the elves began to use the twisted magics they had developed during the Scourge to revive their home. Combining elemental magic with nethermancy, they created a hybrid magical process to help the forest re-grow. Blood from their own bodies fed the seeds they planted. Working without rest and giving ceaselessly of themselves, many elves died to renew the forest. The survivors carefully drained the corpses of blood and used it to speed the forest's growth, then planted the dead husks to feed the largest trees. Some say that the souls of these dead still live within the trees and can be called forth by offering blood to the forest.

During this time, the elves also created the first thorn men and other strange creatures. The nature of their magical arts remains a well-kept secret; other magic-users have yet to duplicate their perverse experiments.

On the Lure of Blood Wood

Why would anyone enter Blood Wood, filled as it is with dangerous monsters and equally dangerous elves? Many come because the woods are the richest source of elemental earth and elemental wood in all of Barsaive. Just as the Therans sail the skies with their mining ships in search of elemental air, or desperate and greedy miners work Death's Sea for elemental fire, so intrepid expeditions enter Blood

Wood in search of elemental earth and wood. The elves guard their woods jealously, however, dealing harshly with intruders. Mining expeditions work quickly and quietly, hoping to gather enough elemental riches to outweigh the risks.

Other people wander into the wood enticed by rumors of its beauty or the beauty of the elves. Inevitably captured and brought before the Elven Queen's Court, these hapless adventurers often find themselves drawn into taking a blood elf as a lover. Though such joining yields heretofore unknown, painful bliss, it lasts a very short time. Because the blood elves feel nothing as intensely as the other

Namegiver races, they tire quickly of non-elven companions and abandon them without a thought for other, newer amusements.

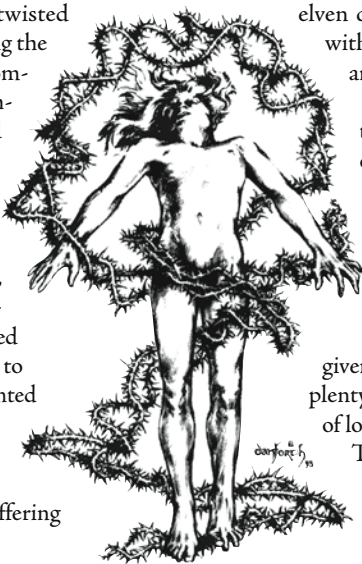
The abandoned adventurer continues to hope for the return of his or her elven lover, caring for nothing else, and eventually wastes away and dies. According to some tales, Blood Wood is littered with the bones of rejected lovers. Those who are discovered soon enough may recover, given time away from the wood and plenty of other company, but many die of longing despite all help from others.

The forest is also scattered about with lone Questors of Jaspree who have committed themselves to protecting Blood Wood despite the elves efforts to eject them.

Heedless of the threat of capture, the Questors work to keep others from entering the forest to mine for the precious elemental earth and wood. Though the elves disavow their efforts, such Questors often develop friendships with elementals from the earth and wood planes of astral space and so make formidable opponents.

Of the Elven Queen's Court

The life of the Court revolves around the Elven Queen's Palace, a tower of eight giant trees in a clearing in the heart of Blood Wood. The trees grow in a circle, their trunks as thick as taverns. The branches wind around each other, linking the trees in intricate



patterns, as if they had been grown to create this order, and through the order, to become beautiful.

...We stood before the palace of the Elven Queen.

Flowering vines grew between the trees, forming elaborate patterns. So thick did the vines grow that they created walls—walls covered with large green leaves and white and violet flowers at least two hand-widths across. The walls of vines had many openings, like windows, draped in intricate spider webs. Catching the sunlight, the webs turned it into a rainbow of colors.

White bones of many shapes and sizes fitted together to create a staircase that led to the palace doors. The doors were made of rose bushes grown so thick they blocked all light from passing through them.

—From the journal of T'rayn, Troubadour of Urupa

The palace stands eight floors high. The lower floor contains a ballroom and other public chambers. On the next two floors are quarters for the Elven Queen's guards and personal advisors. Above that is a floor devoted to the Court's bizarre magicians and the laboratories. The fifth and sixth floors contain guest chambers, though they most often stand empty. The top two floors belong to the Elven Queen: the uppermost floor contains a hall filled with gifts brought to Queen Alachia by visitors to Blood Wood, as well as her private chamber. An open wall of the bed chamber looks out over Blood Wood. From this vantage point, the forest spreads out like the still surface of a bright green lake.

On the Hierarchy of the Court

At the head of the Court is the Elven Queen. She holds ultimate power within the Court, and exerts considerable influence over elven folk outside Blood Wood who still owe her loyalty. The Elven Queen's first duty is to protect the Court, Blood Wood, and other forests across the world. Because its power

and influence have eroded over the past several hundred years, the Court now finds it impossible to maintain its distance from the complicated politics of the world. If they are to survive, they must gain power by playing the same political games as every other realm.

The current Elven Queen, Alachia, has involved the Court in intrigues throughout Barsaive. Thus farther attempts are marred by the Court's lack of experience in the affairs of other races. In centuries past, the Elven Queen and the elves of Blood Wood

could command instant respect and awe; but few in Barsaive feel the same reverence since the elves carried out their self-inflicted corruption. King Varulus III of Throal has made his antipathy toward the corrupted Court of Blood Wood quite apparent. Those who know anything about Blood Wood and its inhabitants speculate that many years will pass before the Queen successfully replaces her imperious directness with the silent, unseen maneuvering necessary in our time.



According to reports from those who have penetrated Blood Wood for any reason, Alachia has decreed that the Elven Court should have limited dealings with the outside world.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

On the Position of Consortis

Queen Alachia appoints eight advisors and courtiers, called consortis, one for each of the massive trees that supports the palace. The Elven Queen often dismisses a consortis and then appoints a new one with little warning or apparent logic. Her whims have prompted her to dismiss and reappoint some members of the court several times. As might be expected from this description, the consortis wield little actual power, but on occasion may influence the Elven Queen. Though she usually surrounds herself only with those who support her own plans and ideas, and will dismiss a consortis for daring to speak his mind, her advisors

have occasionally led her in unexpected directions. In addition to advising (and supporting) the Elven Queen, consortis often have their own concerns that may not be in accord with the greater concerns of the Court.

On the Position of Blood Warders

In the hierarchy of the Elven Court, the Court magicians are next in power to the Elven Queen and the consortis. Known as Blood Warders, the Court magicians continue to practice the twisted magics created during the Scourge. They create the thorn men, fire hounds, and other strange creatures that patrol Blood Wood. They advise the Elven Queen on various matters, and she listens carefully to their counsel.

Though the Blood Warders often act independently of the Elven Queen's knowledge in the political sphere, the rest of the Court rarely protests their actions. The elves seem to have given the Blood Warders sole responsibility for keeping their perverse traditions alive, without practicing the traditions themselves. The Blood Warders accept this responsibility, knowing that it brings them considerable freedom to act.

For example, the Blood Warders recently procured the bones of dozens of skeletons from a graveyard outside an inhabited citadel in order to perform a certain experiment. Without asking the Queen's permission, the Blood Warders secured funds from the Queen's treasury and hired a band of adventurers to remove the bones from under the watchful eye of the graveyard's guards. Even for members of the Elven Court, grave-robbing is considered reprehensible, but no one reprimanded the Blood Warders for their dreadful deed. Despite Queen Alachia's apparent willingness to grant the Warders a certain freedom, many observers believe that she is beginning to feel uneasy at her magicians' growing power. Few know precisely what the Warders have been up to and no one except Alachia would dare to ask.

On the Position of Exolashers

The exolashers are the Elven Queen's personal guard, Adepts in martial magics. Fiercely loyal to the Queen, they will gladly die for her upon her command.

On Relations with Other Elves and Races

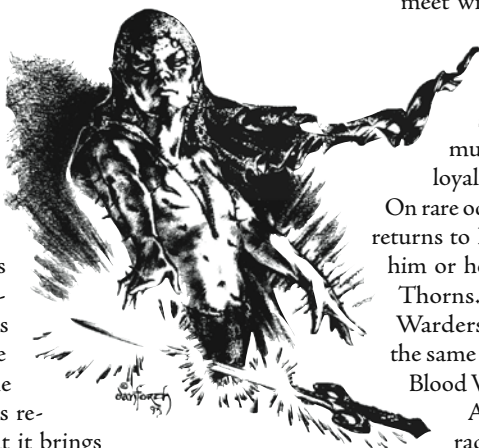
At this writing, the Elven Court's relations with elves outside Blood Wood remain strained. The blood elves' self-inflicted corruption gives other elves pause, and the Court's strange pride in its tainted condition only increases the suspicion felt by elves not of Blood Wood. The Court frequently

sends emissaries from Blood Wood to meet with other elves, whom the Elven Queen considers "lost" members of her Court, in hopes of persuading these elven communities to renew their old loyalty to the Elven Queen.

On rare occasions an elf from outside returns to Blood Wood and submits him or herself to the Ritual of the Thorns. The magic of the Blood Warders corrupts these elves in the same way that all inhabitants of Blood Wood have been corrupted.

As for relations with other races and powers, the Queen has publicly decreed that the

Court will undertake dealings with non-elves only when absolutely necessary. Of course, in a place such as the Elven Court, full of elves who breathe intrigue as other races breathe air, the word "necessary" has many definitions. According to one particularly interesting report, certain factions among the Blood Warders seek alliance with other realms, but must work covertly for fear of the Queen's wrath. She has, on occasion, been known to slay those who dare oppose her too openly. One rumor speaks of a nameless Blood Warder who even engaged in secret correspondence with the Theran Empire.





OF THE THERAN EMPIRE

Because the enmity between the kingdom of Throal and the Theran Empire is so much a part of the history of our land, I decided that the same librarian should compile both sections. Therefore, I have set down all that we know of the Theran Empire. I have never visited Thera, though I have heard of its wonders from Therans who have been here to Barsaive and from the records kept safely in Throal and other kaers during the Scourge.

—Written on the Eighth Day of Gahmil, 1505 TH,
by Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

The Long Night has ended. The Theran Empire has survived. Her people and subject lands are united once again. As of this day, Theran rule and guidance is restored to her province of Barsaive. Governors and administrators will arrive within the week to re-establish Theran laws and customs throughout the province of Barsaive.

The passing of the Scourge has strained the glorious empire to its breaking point. It is therefore declared that all villages, towns, and cities within Barsaive prepare to make all their public and private records available to the representatives of the empire within a fortnight. After reviewing these records, the representatives will cipher the tithe of services, chattel, and people that each community owes to Thera for the period starting from the sealing of Thera to the present day.

The Long Night is past. The sun that is Thera has risen.

—From the second Theran Proclamation

OF PRIDEFUL THERA AND BARSAIVE

The heart of the Theran Empire is the city of Thera, which sits on an island in the center of the Selestrean Sea to the south and west of Barsaive. Before the Scourge, Thera was the capital of a great empire that ruled all the known world. The First Theran Empire was a place of magic, power, and knowledge beyond that of other realms; it was also a place of arrogance and evil. Since the end of the Scourge, Thera has served as the capital of a second empire with all the same traits as the first.

According to our records, a group of magicians founded Thera centuries ago, when they foresaw the coming of the Horrors and wished to discover a way to stop them. When they realized it would be impossible to forestall the Scourge, they sought a way to protect the world from the Horrors. Their

magical studies produced the Rites of Protection and Passage, the means to build shelters against the Horrors. Knowing the value of this information, the arrogant Therans demanded favorable trade agreements, oaths of allegiance, and sometimes slaves in exchange.

At one time, Theran influence extended across Barsaive and beyond. Indeed, many records indicate that the empire once covered a vast area radiating out from the island of Thera, uniting many lands through magical studies and trade. Despite their abominable practice of slavery, I would not be a responsible scholar if I did not grant that the Therans contributed some good to the world by creating a sense of world community. That little good, however, cannot outweigh the great evils they have wrought in our land.

During the Scourge, Barsaive was completely cut off from Thera. For the first thirty years after the end of the Scourge, the dwarfs of Throal took advantage of the Therans' unexpected absence and worked to re-unite Barsaive under the freedom and justice of Throalic law. Throal outlawed slavery, and greatly reformed the legal system to offer justice to all throughout the province.

Almost fifty years ago the Therans returned to Barsaive, intending to become our overlords once more and demanding that we hand our lands and lives over to them. They had changed little, and none for the better. If anything, the time spent behind the magically protected walls of Thera seems to have made them even more vile and arrogant. As with the elves of Blood Wood, something seems to have twisted their souls during the Scourge.

As every Barsaivian knows, the prideful Therans did not get the cringing allegiance they expected from Barsaive. Our time in the kaers had affected us as well; no longer were we willing to bow to the



Therans like slaves before a stern master. Led by Throal, Barsaive rejected Thera's demands, and this conflict of wills brought on the Theran War.

I discuss the war in more detail in the section of this work titled How Barsaive Came to Be.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

OF THE THERAN PEOPLE

Though our records clearly indicate that adepts and magicians of many races founded the city of Thera, most Therans of our day are of human or elven stock with strangely similar features. Though this might not seem unusual in a small kaer populated by a single race, one would expect the population of a city made up of students from across the Theran Empire to show greater diversity. How any population's features could take on such consistency remains a mystery, despite Throalic scholars' best efforts to explain it. Therans taken prisoner over the years refuse to speak of it. Neither do magical probings elicit anything more than a deep sense of guilt and shame.

Features common to many Therans include tall, thin bodies, high foreheads, and prominent cheekbones. Their bodies have a lean elegance, especially in the fingers and limbs. Skin color ranges from bronze to dark brown, a result of the southern sun. Oddly enough, many Therans appear physically weak, perhaps because their home city is so rich in magic that they need do little with their own muscle and bone. One exception to this phenomenon of course, is the Theran soldier. These individuals have the strength of any human or elf of Barsaive, and fight fiercely in battle. The Theran study of magic does not lack for either combat spells or adepts who can use magic to make up for any physical deficiencies while also wielding a sword.

Social rank holds great importance for Therans, who mark their status with their clothing. Everyday garb consists of a tunic, a sort of loose outer garment. The cut of the garment, the material from which it is made, and its color all reveal the wearer's

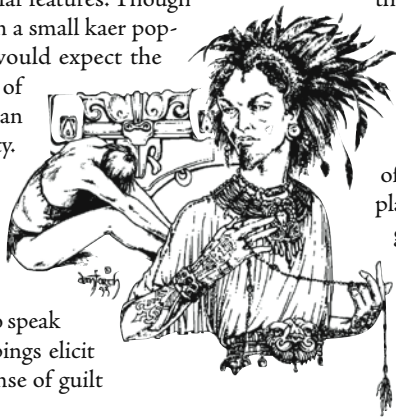
relative status in Theran society. The most prominent members of their culture wear white. Those next highest in social rank wear tunics of metallic colors such as gold and silver, sometimes with real gold and silver woven into the fabric. Ordinary citizens wear colored tunics, most often blues, greens and reds. Slaves wear black tunics, the opposite of the exalted white.

A DISCOURSE ON THERAN GOVERNANCE

The Empire of Thera traces its history back to the founding of the city of Nehr'sham, the "center of the mind." The history of the city remains rooted in the history of the School of Shadows, founded to study magic and interpret the *Books of Harrow* that prophesied the coming of the Horrors. The empire displays its roots in the form of its government and social ranks, but it has grown larger and more powerful than its founders ever imagined. The city of Thera, and indeed the entire Theran Empire, has become a sprawling bureaucracy almost beyond its rulers' control.

Officials within the Theran military and government may sponsor new recruits to the Theran civil service to fill vacant positions. This sponsorship system discourages officials from practicing ill-considered favoritism in office; the sponsoring official must answer for the conduct of his or her appointees throughout that appointee's career. When an incompetent member of the bureaucracy falls from grace, he is likely to take his sponsor with him, no matter how long or illustrious the sponsor's service.

All appointees must undergo well-regulated examinations. The exams test the subject's knowledge of magical theory, specific magical skills (for magicians or adepts, respectively), political theory, practical applications of government policies, history of the Empire, and knowledge of Theran arts and literary classics. These examinations continue throughout the bureaucrat's career, determining





how swiftly he advances and for how long he retains each position.

According to Theran records, the system works well, generally ensuring deserved promotions and carefully chosen appointments. The system does, nevertheless, occasionally force unlucky officials to take desperate measures in last-ditch attempts to save face. For example, the late Theran Overgovernor Povelis committed his forces to a suicidal and wasteful siege of the kingdom of Throal in an attempt to bolster his flagging prestige during the Theran War. His assistant Tularch, who briefly succeeded Povelis as Overgovernor after that worthy's suicide, was demoted to provincial admiral. Only Tularch's close friendship with the new Overgovernor, Kypros, saved her from utter disgrace, and every action she takes is directed toward redeeming her standing within Theran society.

Those administrators and officials of the empire who successfully achieve high status through the examination system tend toward insufferable arrogance. Because they have passed the most stringent tests their society can devise, and because they believe their society superior to all others, they naturally believe that they are better than anyone else they might meet. Even when captured by enemies, they speak and act with a self-confidence more befitting a master of slaves than a prisoner. In fact, this arrogance has led them to enslave other races. Certainly, their prosperity depends on slave labor, but they also sincerely believe that other societies produce nothing better than slave stock fit to be driven to death so that Therans might live well.

The Therans do not support slavery simply because they are "evil" or have nothing better to do. The practice comes from their long-held beliefs in their own superiority.

—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

OF THE THERAN PRESENCE IN BARSAlVE

Theran forces in Barsaive are controlled by Overgovernor Kypros. Kypros holds court from his personal kila, the Ascendancy, which is usually docked at Sky Point or the city of Vivane. Kypros regularly flies over the southwest section of the province to

keep his Barsaivian allies in line and strike fear into the hearts of those who dare resist him.

From observation and the reports of escaped slaves, we know a little about the Ascendancy. The vessel is shaped like a square, two hundred feet to a side. At each corner stands a circular, fifty-foot-tall tower. The towers widen at the base, and this splayed plinth makes battering down the walls a difficult task. The ship carries 170 sailors and 300 Theran soldiers. One out of every ten soldiers is an adept in a Discipline of martial combat. The Ascendancy carries approximately 200 close combat warriors and 100 archers and crossbowmen.

The walls of the kila enclose the Ascendancy's Great Tower, which stands almost 70 feet tall and nearly 50 feet across. The walls are eight feet thick, and support a spiral staircase built into the side facing the kila's courtyard. The first floor of the Great Tower is the great hall, which contains a cooking hearth and serves as Kypros' council chamber and feast hall. Kypros' quarters—a hall furnished with tables and chairs, a master bedroom, and a library—occupy the second floor. The stairway continues to a third floor, and from there to the roof. We do not yet know what the third floor contains, though rumors claim it is an elaborate shrine to the Mad Passion Dis. Slaves taken to the third floor never return, leading us to suspect that the Therans practice live sacrifice even though the Passions forbade such barbaric offerings generations ago.

The Theran Airship Fleet

Two additional kilas patrol within the borders of Barsaive, the *Prestige* and the *Regal*, both commanded by Provincial Admiral Tularch, the former Overgovernor of Barsaive. the *Prestige* is a circular kila, 120 feet across with five towers built into the ship's wall. One of the towers serves as the great hall and Tularch's personal chambers. The *Regal* is a triangular kila, smaller than the *Prestige*, with a tower at each corner.

Tularch also commands a dozen vedettes outfitted for combat and another dozen outfitted for mining. The admiral enjoys complete freedom to use the fleet as she wishes, but must report all maneuvers to Kypros. The Overgovernor has yet to reject any of Tularch's plans, but escaped slaves have reported that Kypros is simply waiting for Tularch to make



some dreadful blunder. When she does, Kypros will send Tularch back to Thera and establish his favorite political apprentice, Hychraius, as the new provincial admiral. If the reports are true, it would seem that the friendship between Tularch and Kypros has not worn well.

Of Theran Military Forces

The Theran Empire maintains a substantial military presence in Barsaive, though one insufficient to launch an effective strike against Throal. Theran soldiers in Barsaive consist of the Eighth Theran Legion, under the command of General Crotias. A veteran of several campaigns in the south of the Theran Empire, Crotias arrived in Barsaive recently, in the year 1504 TH. As of this writing, the general is still reorganizing the legion and installing her trusted officers in key positions. We cannot know for certain how her presence will affect matters in Barsaive once she is prepared to give it her full attention, but she is rumored to be both ruthless and clever. The Eighth Legion consists of 4,200 soldiers and 700 cavalry. The foot soldiers are a mix of heavy infantry for close combat and light infantry armed with projectile weapons. The heavy infantry outnumber the light infantry three to one, and one out of every ten soldiers is an adept in martial combat.

Within the legion are units called divisions, each made up of 120 troops in twelve files and ten ranks. A single division usually handles garrison duties and patrols the area around Sky Point.

The legion is also divided into larger units called cohorts. Four divisions form a cohort, numbering 480 soldiers. When a great battle is planned, all the divisions combine into cohorts, and the cohorts combine into a legion of 4,200 troops. Outside of such large-scale battles, cohorts often receive orders to engage in smaller skirmishes on their own. The commander of a division is called a strategos, the commander of a cohort a pole march, and the commander of the legion is General Crotias.

When combined into its full force, the Eighth Legion is arranged as follows:

Twenty divisions draw up into two lines of ten divisions each, composed of heavy infantry. A space of 60 feet, equal to each division's width, separates the units. The units of the second line fall in behind the spaces of the first line, allowing the second line to easily advance to the first or the first to fall back to the second. This arrangement gives the troops extra mobility when marching in two lines and solidarity when they combine to fight. The combined 20 divisions have a depth of ten ranks and a front line of 1,200 feet. Certainly a formidable foe to meet on the battlefield!

Completing the Legion is a third line of ten units of light foot soldiers, alternated with ten units of reserve troops. Each light foot unit numbers 120, and each reserve unit numbers sixty.

On paper, General Crotias also commands the soldiers posted to Admiral Tularch's ships in addition to the soldiers of the legion. However, an unspoken rule gives ship's officers the power of

command in combat, meaning that the Admiral commands her own soldiers in practice. So far the general seems content to let this interpretation stand.

Of Barsaivian Lands Under Theran Control

Though the Theran Empire once ruled all of Barsaive, in our time Thera controls little Barsaivian land. The region currently under the control of Thera lies in the southwest of Barsaive, extending north to the Delaris Mountains, east to Death's Sea, and touches the edge of the Twilight Peaks.

Every town and city in this area of Barsaive has Theran representatives and administrators living within its boundaries. These official representatives of the Theran Empire often receive a small contingent of soldiers to be stationed in the town, usually numbering from five to fifty troops.





CHAPTER 2: BARSATIVE

The largest city in the Theran-controlled area of Barsaive is Vivane, which lies completely under the empire's thumb. Though this city has a Barsaivian native loyal to Thera as its nominal leader, it is commonly understood that this Barsaivian magistrate is nothing more than a puppet controlled by Overgovernor Kypros. Clearly visible from the military base at Sky Point, Vivane is the Theran playground, and many Therans regard it as their new provincial capital. For more information concerning Vivane, see the section of this book titled **On Towns and Cities** (p.77).

You ask me what it is to live under Theran rule? By your words it sounds as if you expect me to horrify you with tales of terrible perversions, of public slaughter, of arrogance, treachery and oppression. It is not so.

Yes, the Therans can be harsh masters. As I write this to you, I sit in the shadow of the Overgovernor's airship Ascendancy, which is once again docked at the Basalt Spire. It is here as a warning that the riots in the Broken Quarter must stop. Tonight, Theran guardsmen will bring that warning down into the streets, dealing with lawbreakers most harshly. But if a man breaks the law, should he not be punished?

Vivane is quiet, my friend. More quiet now than before the Therans returned. Yes, days and nights of fire and blood nearly consumed the city before the people recognized the truth before them. But I, for one, am pleased they are here. I feel safe. For as long as they remain, no Horror would dare come here, nor would any ork scorcher or raider. I feel safe, too, from the thieves that once peered in my windows at night, lusting after my wares and my children. The Therans have made Vivane safe for myself and my daughters. What more can I ask?

—From a letter by Adrak Erraom, Liquid Jewel Merchant of Vivane, TE 1008

Sky Point

Sky Point, the Theran military stronghold within Barsaive's borders, is a huge platform elevated hundreds of feet above the ground by thick stone pillars; it serves as the base for the Theran airship fleet as well as the home of the Eighth Theran

Legion. Overgovernor Kypros rules Sky Point through a group of Theran functionaries who see to the efficient running of the base.

One can only reach the platform by airship or through spells or magical items designed to levitate people or objects through the air. No stairs or other mechanical means provide access to Sky Point, which makes the platform safe from most attackers. Each of the pillars is 300 feet thick and built to sustain a great deal of damage without breaking.

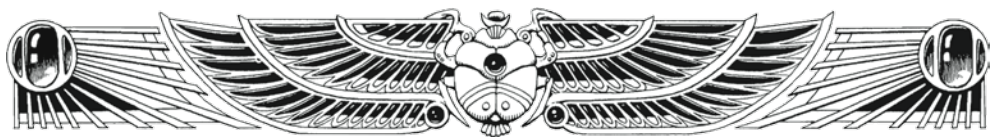
At all hours of the day and night Theran mining ships, crewed by slaves, float off the platform to search for elemental air. The Therans use bursts of elemental fire to breach the barriers between planes and reveal pockets of the precious material. These mining bursts can sometimes be seen as far north as Throal, and serve as a constant reminder of the Theran presence. The mining ships are a common target for the crystal raiders, and the Therans exert serious efforts to keeping their mining operations safe from raiders and saboteurs.

Under the shadow of the Sky Point platform lies Vrontok, a settlement comprised mostly of humans who have thrown in their lot with the Therans. These unscrupulous people range all over Barsaive, capturing other sentient beings to sell to the Therans as slaves in exchange for Theran protection and certain magical items.

The settlement numbers some 20,000 inhabitants. Its dwellings huddle around two of the platform's pillars; many of them are built against the pillars themselves, rising on top of each other like moss climbing up a tree. Of course, these dwellings do not reach high enough to allow access to the platform.

Sky Point and Vrontok are surrounded by a series of trenches and pickets to foil attack from the ground. Several drawbridges allow access to the land beneath the platform, each heavily guarded. Units of the Eighth Theran Legion live in camps beneath the platform, where the troops conduct maneuvers designed to repulse any invasion by land.





CHAPTER 3: GAME MASTERING

Reality is what you make it. Literally.

—Ivinus of the Night Sages, Master Magician and Wizard of the Primus Order

All that is required to run a good EARTHDOWN campaign is inspiration. Of course, having excellent players helps. To that end, keeping your players motivated and engaged is a required strategy for a fun and memorable session. This chapter offers tips,

suggestions, and advice for helping Game Masters to bring their skills and imagination to life in the world of EARTHDOWN.

The rest is up to you.

ADVENTURES AND CAMPAIGNS

Many Game Masters will play EARTHDOWN by running the adventures RedBrick publishes as written. Other Game Masters will “tweak” those adventures to suit their group or style of play. Still others will ignore the published adventures completely and create their own. This section provides information that Game Masters can use for their adventures. Game Masters may use themes, subplots, storytelling, roleplaying, and other techniques to create, change, or enhance adventures and campaigns. The techniques defined below provide examples of their use. This section offers suggestions for creating and maintaining an ongoing EARTHDOWN campaign and guidelines for making your EARTHDOWN game unique.

CREATING ADVENTURES

The three main elements of an adventure include objectives, motivations, and opposition. Though these represent the most important elements of a good story, a good adventure also includes other elements such as atmosphere, mood, conflicts and challenges, themes, subplots, and storytelling.

Atmosphere and Mood

The atmosphere of an adventure goes beyond its physical setting to include such elements as the attitudes of unfamiliar Game Master Characters, their actions, and the impression, or “feeling” the

characters receive from their environment. The atmosphere of an adventure taking place during the day in a big city should be very different than the atmosphere of an adventure set at night near the Blood Wood or in the Badlands. In a big city during the day, the characters may feel relatively safe from surprise attack by anyone (or anything). Characters in the Blood Wood or the Badlands, on the other hand, can never be too careful.

The way in which the Game Master describes the setting of an adventure helps establish the atmosphere by giving the characters a specific, powerful impression of their surroundings. A description of the Blood Wood as “a big forest that is almost always dark and gloomy,” does not create the same type of atmosphere as, “the dark woods stretch for miles in all directions. Twisted trees and plants create the unsettling illusion that the entire forest is writhing. The corruption that pervades this place goes beyond the mere visual to permeate your every sense.” The first description helps create the setting of the adventure, but, unlike the second description, fails to evoke much imagination or feeling. The second description not only provides visual information, but gives the player an idea of how his character feels.

Use descriptions that relate to more than one or two of the characters’ senses when describing encounters. Describing the odor of a particular place or the texture of the ground can help convey



CHAPTER 3: GAME MASTERING

atmosphere to your players. The skill of imaginatively describing the atmosphere of your adventures is well worth developing. It will enhance the quality of your game and your players will thank you for your time and effort.

In addition to the atmosphere evoked by a particular setting, an adventure should also have an overall “feel,” or mood. Is the adventure a lighthearted journey to a big city or a dark, serious tale of evil and corruption? By defining the mood of an adventure, you sum up the overall emotional impression it should leave on the characters. You can establish the mood of an adventure quite easily by creating an atmosphere that conveys the feeling you want. For example, if the adventure is the tale of a village’s corruption into sacrificing its own to a Horror, the overall atmosphere should be dark and gloomy with a touch of despair (the mood). Mood also relates closely to an adventure’s theme (see below).

Conflicts and Challenges

Good adventures present the characters with conflicts other than combat against opposition. Conflicts can be emotional, intellectual, or moral or ethical. For example, an adventure may revolve around the inevitable conflict of heroes manipulated by a servitor of a Horror. The heroes start out believing that their noble goal is to destroy the evil Questor of Vestrial, but when they finally encounter the Questor, they discover that, in reality, he has been fighting to prevent a Horror from devastating a nearby town. By the time the characters realize they’ve been duped by their employer, they must choose between two evils. Using non-combat conflict in your adventures forces your players to think carefully about their characters’ actions.

Most conflicts can be resolved. In the above example, the characters can resolve the conflict in at least two ways. If they let the Questor live, they allow him to continue his activities in the name of the Mad Passion Vestrial. If they kill the Questor, they must deal with the Horror threatening the small town. Conflict resolution represents the wider consequences of an adventure.

Each adventure may offer several conflicts and resolutions. If an adventure takes several game sessions to complete, each session should have a goal, which may be the resolution to one or more

conflicts. A conflict need not always have a resolution, though the players and characters may find too many loose ends frustrating. Strike a balance between conflicts that can be resolved, continuing plotlines, and situations that simply offer no satisfactory conclusion.

Good adventures challenge the characters in different ways. Some challenges take the form of an opposing Game Master Character or creature, but some are less direct. Sometimes the greatest challenge in an adventure is the journey across an unexplored area of Barsaive. Successfully completing the adventure may require the characters to solve a puzzle of some sort, presenting an intellectual challenge rather than a physical one. Sometimes, the atmosphere itself can be the adventure’s challenge. By virtue of its location, characters will find an adventure set in the Blood Wood more challenging than one set in a mundane forest. After all, most forests do not have patrols of thorn men and blood elves looking for trespassers.

Theme

A theme allows you to focus the details of an adventure around one central idea or concept that describes what the adventure is about. For example, if an adventure centers on the activities of a ring of Theran spies working in the city of Travar, the theme might be intrigue. If the characters become involved in one trollmoot’s revenge against a rival moot, the adventure’s theme might be vengeance. Of course, not all adventures need themes. The purpose of an adventure may be simply to get the characters from one place to another in an interesting way. For example, the courier job the characters are hired for may actually be a straightforward pickup and delivery, with no betrayal or double-cross awaiting the characters at the end.

Game Masters can use mood, atmosphere, and conflicts to support the adventure’s theme by creating specific elements or events that emphasize in different ways the main thrust of the characters’ involvement.

Betrayal, vengeance, intrigue, and heroism all make suitable themes for adventures in *EARTHDAWN*; every Game Master is sure to discover many others. As an illustration of one use of a theme, consider the commonly used theme of conflict with the Horrors.

Horror Theme

The word Horror as used here does not refer to the horror genre. It refers to the creatures from astral space that ravaged the world of EARTHDOWN during the Scourge. The Horror theme is RedBrick's way of describing one of the overriding reasons heroes adventure in EARTHDOWN. These themes are usually complex enough to weave the plot of an adventure or tie together a series of adventures.

In one way, an adventure with a Horror theme may be the best way to initiate the players into the world of EARTHDOWN. Historically, the Horrors affected most of Barsaive in the same way; they ravaged the land and people, forcing all sentient beings to find a way to protect themselves. Even the magics provided by the Therans proved ineffective against some Horrors, and the communities that hid themselves in kaers and citadels found themselves forced to create new forms of protection, either to save themselves or to protect the rest of the world from the threat they faced. These new protections sometimes took forms that required the people to perform actions as bad as or worse than those the Horrors themselves perpetrated; when those communities realized the truth of what they had done, they sought to leave those events in the past or to somehow redeem their actions.

The Game Master may decide to provide a common history for the Player Characters by placing them all in the same kaer or citadel, then creating for them or allowing the players to invent the history and events of that hiding place. The adventure would begin as the characters re-emerge into the world, and the theme might revolve around their efforts to cleanse themselves of the actions they took against the Horrors while in the kaer, or, if nothing untoward happened during their time of hiding, to help free other Barsaivians from the influence of the Horrors.

The Horror theme as described above consists of four basic elements.

1. Characters somehow isolate themselves in an effort to protect themselves from the Horrors. This isolation is not always physical. For example, the Ritual of the Thorns used by the elves of Blood Wood to fend off the Horrors is simply another form of isolation. In fact, most uses of Blood Magic



in the days before the Scourge represented similar attempts at isolation.

2. The characters emerge from their self-imposed isolation when certain signs indicate that the Horrors are gone or less powerful than before. In most cases, this meant simply emerging from kaers and citadels. But the isolation sometimes affected a community as deeply as the Horrors themselves, and the physical emergence became only a first step to truly rejoining the world.

3. The characters realize that the isolation they believed would protect them has, in fact, corrupted their community on a deep level. At this point a character may realize that the means did not justify the ends.

4. The characters begin their efforts to recover what they once were, to redeem their actions, to grow beyond the damage done. Success in these efforts may take unexpected forms; redemption may involve more than performing ever-greater heroics.

Adventuring the Horror Theme

Rather than starting the characters at the beginning of the story—inside the kaer or citadel—the Game Master may decide to begin the adventure when the characters emerge from the kaer, when they recognize the consequences of what they have done, or as they begin their quest for redemption. Rather than creating an elaborate history at this point, the Game Master may simply give the characters a mission or other compelling reason to leave the kaer, then reveal the story behind their flight bit by bit as the adventure unfolds or allow the players to make up their characters' history. Again, if the group of characters goes through all four stages of the Horror theme, the Game Master may set up their isolation as another type of protection from a Horror (or other danger) rather than the more common retreat to a kaer or citadel. The characters would still move through the same four stages, isolation, emergence, realization, and redemption; the focus would simply be slightly different.

The Horror Theme can also be used as the overall theme of a campaign, with different adventures dealing with each of the four stages. The Horror theme may also tie together a campaign through a series of subplots woven in and through the main stories and adventures.

Subplots

Subplots create a second, less important story that serves as a counterpoint or provides subtle emphasis to the main story of the adventure. Subplots can provide comic relief or serve as a device to accomplish something in the main story of the adventure. For example, a subplot could center on a young child who follows a group of heroes around the city during an adventure and always manages to be in the way at inopportune times. The child may have nothing to do with the story at all and may be just a harmless annoyance. Or he may turn out to be the son of the very nethermancer the characters are trying to find.

Subplots can also help establish mood and atmosphere, or emphasize the theme of an adventure. For example, if the adventure's theme is vengeance, then a subplot about a Game Master Character from a past adventure seeking revenge against one of the players' characters would serve to support the overall theme.

Storytelling

Roleplaying games are a form of storytelling, the difference between a printed story and a roleplaying adventure being that in roleplaying, the whole group of players tells the story, not just the author.

For example, an author writing a story creates all the characters, the setting of the story, and the plot. He also writes all the characters' dialogue himself. The author knows the way the story will end, and the consequences of the story's final events. This style of story telling could be called "independent storytelling."

Storytelling in a roleplaying adventure is very different. No one person creates every element of the story; instead, the players create the central characters of the story, the Game Master decides on the setting, creates the plot, and creates the secondary characters. Both the Game Master and the players act out the character dialogue. This type of storytelling could be called "interactive storytelling." That is, the story unfolds through interaction between the players and the Game Master.

This is not to say that no one controls the story. The Game Master must take charge, controlling the pacing of the story and determining who the players' characters meet. In order to do this successfully, the Game Master must learn the finer points of storytelling, including creating a good plot, interesting Game Master Characters, and so on. A good adventure provides objectives, motivation, and opposition. A good Game Master also fleshes out his adventures by adding color (using theme, mood, and other elements mentioned above) and secrecy to the story. The Game Master can synthesize the story elements suggested in this section into storytelling by using roleplaying, pacing, and drama.

Roleplaying

The Game Master should try to roleplay each Game Master Character as fully as a player would roleplay his or her character. This can mean keeping track of a lot of characters, but the effort is worthwhile. Work up to fully realizing all your Game Master Characters by rounding out just the key characters in the story; for example, the village leader who asks the heroes to protect his village from the Horror that threatens it, or the Theran slaver who captures the characters and plans to sell them as



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slaves in Sky Point. As soon as you feel comfortable roleplaying the major Game Master Characters, gradually expand your repertoire until you can roleplay all the Game Master Characters as individuals. Because you will almost certainly create too many characters to remember, keep notes about the Game Master Characters that will appear in the adventure. Usually a few lines on each, a description of their prominent personality traits or what they know about the adventure, is enough to jog your memory.

The Game Master should also create well-rounded recurring Game Master Characters—those characters who appear more than once during a campaign. Recurring characters most often represent friendly or neutral characters like merchants or teachers, though enemies or villains may also make repeat appearances.

Pacing

If you have ever read a story that seemed to drag on with no clear end in sight, or one filled with non-stop action that barely gave you time to catch a breath, you have seen examples of various styles of pacing. You can use any of these styles or many others to pace your stories; the difficult part is judging the best pacing for each adventure and your group.

One way to pace your adventures is to follow your players' lead. In other words, match the pace of the story to the players' mood. Are they bored, or do they need a break in the action? For example, if the group is preparing to make a cross-Barsaive trek and you allow them to spend the first three hours of the game session buying supplies, the players may get restless waiting for something to happen. This is when you should pick up the pace. Invent a minor incident to distract the characters and serve as a transition to their next action. For example, a fight between two farmers would draw the characters out of the various shops they were visiting and into the street. The Game Master could take that opportunity to announce that all purchases have been made and ask what the characters intend to do next. At the other end of the scale, if your adventure feels like one big fight after another, the players may need a break in the action to let their characters heal some damage or plan their next action.

The pacing of an adventure can also be used to emphasize some of the other elements discussed

above. For example, an adventure with a creepy, dark atmosphere works well if run at a slow, steady pace. An adventure whose theme is action or heroism works best when run at a quick and lively pace.

Drama

Drama can be a very effective tool to bring your players into the world of EARTHDAWN. The stories told in roleplaying games tend to be dramatic. Usually somewhat short on humor (though not always), these tales tell of heroes and danger, the very stuff of drama (or even melodrama). Don't be afraid to describe scenes to your players dramatically, or to dramatize when roleplaying your Game Master Characters. When a character you control offers his help to someone in need, don't just say, "I'll help." Instead, have the character declaim, "Fear not, for I shall aid you in this time of need." It may sound corny, but dramatic roleplaying gives your characters personality, cut a word please.

Remember that as a Game Master, one of your most important responsibilities is to entertain your players. After all, the first ground rule of roleplaying is Have Fun. One way of accomplishing this is through drama. If all your characters sound the same, then the players will begin to think they are the same.

Storytelling Techniques

The main techniques we recommend for storytelling in EARTHDAWN are dreams, foreshadowing, and the tale. Most authors use these techniques to accomplish certain things when telling stories and, while common, they are difficult to use effectively, especially the first time. For example, if you try to foreshadow events in your adventure and discover that you've been too subtle or given the story away, don't think that you've failed and refuse to try again. Try to figure out what didn't work and learn from that mistake. You'll be better prepared to try using that technique again in the future.

Dreams: The Game Master can use dreams to give a character (and player) a hint about something that might occur during the coming adventure. Dreams are a classic storytelling technique, often used in television shows and movies. Dreams can be used as a form of foreshadowing (see below), or to give the characters insight into a current or upcoming situation. Dreams let the player (and character) know

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that an event or situation is important. Exactly how you use the dream to present information is another matter. The dream's message may be obvious, such as an accurate enactment of an upcoming event in the adventure. A dream may send a more subtle message, providing obscure clues that hint vaguely at the true situation through a metaphor or by wrapping symbolism around an event in a character's life.

Foreshadowing: In foreshadowing, an event early in the story hints at a similar, more important event later on. For example, the heroes may enter a town at the beginning of an adventure and see a child who has trapped and is torturing a small animal. The child isn't particularly cruel, he just doesn't know any better. It may even occur to the characters that perhaps the child is imitating something he's seen or heard about, or is subconsciously acting out something his conscious mind has suppressed. That event can foreshadow the heart of the adventure, when the heroes discover that a Theran slaver recently raided the town and made off with a few of the townsfolk. When the heroes track down the Theran and break into his stronghold or ship, they find that he is torturing his captives for information about a nearby town. The encounter with the small child foreshadows the heroes discovering the slaver torturing his captives.

The Tale: The world of *EARTHDAWN* is rich in oral tradition. Many stories and legends were passed down through the generations when Barsaive hid within the kaers and citadels to escape the Scourge. A Game Master Character sharing a tale or story with the Player Characters is an effective way to involve the characters in the adventure and provide the background for the story at the same time. The tale could be the legend of a long-lost magical treasure, the story of a town ravaged by a Horror that has yet

to be defeated, or any number of other stories. The Tale is a convenient way to tailor an adventure to your group's interests and the Player Characters' lives.

The players and their characters can also use the Tale. The world's strong oral tradition of tales and legends should encourage adventurers to share the stories of their adventures with the people they meet throughout Barsaive. Characters may tell their stories to prove their credentials, as payment for lodging, food, or other supplies or favors, or simply to entertain the locals. And of course, the more people who know of them, the higher their legend grows.

Players may prefer to simply say "We tell our story while we're in town" or something to that effect. The players may also be willing to actually tell the story out loud with the drama appropriate to a heroic saga. As the Game Master you know what happened in the last (and previous) adventures, but you may never have heard the players' version of events. If they will tell you (the Game Master Characters) the story as they remember it, you learn about events from their perspective and their view of the adventure's outcome (or the version they choose to tell strangers). This can be important if you want to build future adventures on the events of a past adventure. When the Player Characters tell their Tale, you learn what the characters know (or remember) and can base your adventure on that information. What the Player Characters know may not represent the whole truth, of course.

In addition to using a Game Master Character's Tale to draw the Player Characters into the adventure, you can base adventures on the Player Characters' own Tale. For example, suppose you create an adventure in which the characters discover a smuggling ring in the city of Jerris. The smuggling ring is actually run by one of the city's rulers, but the players never discover that fact. They think they've found the ringleaders and smashed the smuggling operation, but the true powers behind the ring remain free to begin again. Later, you decide to create an adventure linked in some way to the smuggling adventure. The background for this adventure should not reveal the name of that city leader in connection with the ring; the characters didn't know about his involvement before and so should not learn about it now. If the goal of this new adventure is to uncover the city leader's complicity in the smuggling ring,



the Player Characters must discover it through the usual channels.

If the Game Master keeps careful records of everything that happens during an adventure, he will probably know what information the characters have and what they don't. But by hearing the players tell the Tale of the adventure, you'll find out how they remember the adventure, and that's what's important. This knowledge allows you to build on their perception of the world, which in turn helps you maintain the illusion that the world is real.

CREATING CAMPAIGNS

Game Masters may want to send their group of Player Characters through a campaign, a series of linked adventures featuring the same Player Characters, and usually the same players and Game Master. Campaigns offer several gaming advantages, and we designed the world of EARTHDOWN to be played in this fashion. A campaign featuring the same characters allows the players and Game Master to watch the characters grow more capable and powerful, becoming the heroes of legend by recognizing and achieving goals. While many situations in EARTHDOWN work well as individual adventures, many of the underlying political and magical themes in EARTHDOWN lend themselves to use as the backdrop for a longer series of stories. One familiar and pervasive example is the Theran Empire's continuing efforts to regain political control of Barsaive. A story this complex may stretch over many adventures, perhaps spanning years of the characters' lives. One adventure is simply not enough to explore the Theran storyline.

By definition, a campaign may be nothing more than a series of unrelated adventures connected by the fact that the same characters appear in all of them. However, you may find that it's more fun to plot storylines that require several adventures to resolve. For example, suppose you design an adventure in which the characters must seek out and kill a very powerful Horror, a task that can only be accomplished using a special magical weapon. Rather than creating an adventure in which the heroes simply find the weapon and attack the Horror, you can create a campaign made up of several steps, each of which is a separate adventure. For example, the characters learn that the Great Dragon Icingwing has the magical weapon they need to kill the Horror.



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The characters travel to Icewing's lair to ask for the weapon. The dragon agrees, but asks in return that they retrieve a certain magical treasure for him, said to lie in the Badlands. Before the characters can go to the Badlands, they will need a map of the area. Maps of the Badlands are very hard to find—in fact, they can only be obtained from the Library in the kingdom of Throal. One adventure expanded into a series of adventures with little difficulty.

Campaign Elements

AN EARTHDAWN campaign can be a simple matter of running a series of adventures one after another, all featuring the same Player Characters. However, recurring player or Game Master Characters may not be enough to make an interesting connection between the stories in each adventure. Subplots, motivation, objectives, and opposition all serve as excellent techniques for creating an interesting, engaging campaign.

Subplots

The Game Master can use subplots to create continuity through several adventures to make a campaign. Secondary to the main story of the adventure, subplots relate the adventures to one another through a minor storyline, character, or series of events. Subplots can hint at upcoming adventures or refer to past events.

For example, you might set the stage for an upcoming adventure by incorporating two or three scenes into the present adventure that relate to future events. When you run the new adventure, the characters (and players) will already have some information about or be familiar with the present situation. In the previous example, instead of simply setting the characters down in the village where the Horror lived, the Game Master may have begun the campaign by enlisting the characters' help to rid a village of a Horror.

In the first adventure of the campaign, the characters travel to that village, staying at more than one inn on the way. At each resting place they hear a tale or a snippet of information about Icewing the dragon. In a later adventure, when they discover that they must deal with Icewing to reach their goal, they realize that they already have some helpful information about this formidable adversary. Icewing has become

a subplot of the campaign. Continuity through subplot helps maintain the illusion that the world of the game is a living place that changes over time.

Subplots may also occur in a more haphazard fashion, though this use of the technique requires more complex planning. The Game Master creates several apparently unrelated and unimportant events that the players and characters either witness or take part in during one or more adventures in a campaign. The end of the adventures fails to reveal whether or not these events held any importance; the players and characters may forget they even happened. In fact, these apparently unrelated and unimportant events form the basis of an adventure you plan to run in the near future, probably as part of the campaign. When you get ready to run the adventure based on the subplot, review your notes on the events you used to hint at the new adventure and be sure to refer to those events during the adventure. The characters and players will have an Aha! reaction as everything suddenly makes sense, and once again you convince your players that your game world is a real place where people and situations change and grow.

Objectives

Most campaigns benefit from a planned objective. This is certainly true of campaigns built by expanding on one storyline, as in the example above. However, the campaign objective may be more abstract than simply achieving a single goal. For example, a legitimate but more long-term campaign objective may be to explore Barsaive and free it from the remaining Horrors.

As long as each adventure in a campaign has a clear objective, you need not create a campaign objective. But building an objective into your campaign will help focus the campaign and help you create a basis on which to build adventures.

Motivation

Campaigns also benefit from an overriding motivation. The campaign motivation may be the same as the motivation for an individual adventure, but is usually the overall reason that the characters continue their adventures. They may want to free the world from the Horrors, or spread the legends of the heroes of the world, or build their own legends.

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The motivation for a campaign may also be more practical. The characters may want to track down and rescue a person captured by the Theran slavers or a Horror, seek knowledge of a specific race or place, or be determined to solve the puzzle of a family heirloom. It is important to tie your adventures to the Player Characters' campaign motivation because it allows the characters to feel as if they are acting on personal motivation.

Opposition

An ongoing campaign also benefits from large-scale or very powerful opposition, usually characterized by an enemy or foe too large to handle in one or two adventures. This opposition may continue to combat the characters over a long period of time; a villain (see **Chapter 4: GM Characters**, p. 164), a powerful Horror that consistently evades destruction, or agents of the Theran Empire.

A long-term campaign centered on a specific opponent also gives the characters an opportunity to find one or more of that opponent's Pattern Items and so become more likely to defeat him (or it).

Continuity and Change

Campaigns should be dynamic; that is, they should change over time. Some changes in a campaign are the direct result of the characters' actions; a Game Master must be prepared to incorporate these changes into the planned storyline, and must also alter his story to fit the new circumstances. For example, if an important Game Master Character dies unexpectedly in one adventure, he should not show up in a subsequent adventure in the campaign no matter how vital he is to the Game Master's plan, unless the Game Master manipulated events so that the characters did not find a body. Dead characters suddenly coming back to life is an extreme example of a lack of continuity, but a common failing. With everything that can occur during a campaign, it is easy to lose track of minor details.

The Game Master needs to demonstrate to the players and characters that the world of EARTHDAWN continues to change. This can be accomplished many ways. A friendly Game Master Character may grow older, become sick, or gradually experience a change of heart about one or more of the Player Characters. The Game Master can also show changes

in the game world by allowing Game Master Characters to share stories of the world from places the characters have never been. You could pass on rumors during the adventure, then update them for the characters from time to time. If you offer the characters an adventure that they leave for another set of heroes to complete, reveal the result of their inaction later on. Game Masters should feel free to invent other ways of demonstrating change in the characters' world.

Because the characters in your campaign will change over time, continually growing in power and gaining different and better abilities, your campaign must change to accommodate this growth. As the characters grow in power and experience, you and the players will become more familiar with the rules of the game, which in turn may impact on how well both the player and Game Master Characters perform in the game. As the Game Master and players become more familiar with how the rules work, they will make better-informed choices and eventually maximize their characters' potential. Game Masters will learn how to create campaigns suitable for more advanced characters with time and experience, but in early campaigns may have to adjust the planned events and opponents more drastically to account for changes in the characters.

Another important way in which your game may change over time will be a result of the characters (and players) learning more about the world of EARTHDAWN and how that world works. As you create adventures that deal with the various elements of the game, the players and their characters will learn and remember more about the world, and that knowledge will show in the way they play the game. This particular change is a natural one, and should be welcome; part of the excitement of all roleplaying games, and EARTHDAWN in particular, is discovering a new world. Greater familiarity with the rules of the game and the game world allows both players and Game Master to use those rules and that knowledge more creatively and with greater complexity.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The world of EARTHDAWN abounds with adventuring opportunities. Given the size of Barsaive and the conflicts that exist between its citizens, the

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possibilities for stories appear practically limitless. To keep you from being overwhelmed by the possibilities, we present some of the major elements of EARTHDAWN below and suggest a few adventure ideas for each.

Horrors

The Horrors represent perhaps the most obvious source of adventures in EARTHDAWN. The characters may battle the Horrors that remain since the Scourge, or fight to right the damage left by the Scourge. Many Horrors still dominate towns and villages, feeding off their captives' fears and other strong emotions. Adventures and campaigns centered on the Horror theme usually fall into this category.

Therans

Though they no longer wield the powerful presence they once showed in Barsaive, the Theran Empire remains a very real threat. The Therans still control the southeastern corner of Barsaive and support a network of spies scattered throughout the larger province that works to subvert local governments. In this way the Therans hope to pave the way for eventual re-domination. The Therans show particular interest in Parlainth, once the provincial capital of Barsaive. Known Theran spies work in Haven, in the outlying areas of Parlainth, but their identities and agenda remain unknown.

Passions/Questors

The people of Barsaive turn to their Passions, the embodiment of the emotions and feelings of the people, for spiritual support. Because of their central role in peoples' lives, the Passions can serve as inspiration for many adventures. In particular, an examination of how the Questors of the Passions interact with the people of Barsaive makes for good stories. Because most Questors believe that serving their patron Passion is the only important goal in life, and many would fight to the death to do so, simply imagine the potential clash between Questors of the same Passion pursuing similar goals but with different methods of achieving those goals.

The Mad Passions and their Questors present the most adventure possibilities. The Mad Passions work individually (so far) to destroy the other Passions, giving no thought to the consequences. The result

of a battle between the Questors of a Mad Passion and the Questors of any other Passion could be devastating.

Exploring Legends

Another key element of EARTHDAWN is the legends of that world and time. As the characters adventure across Barsaive, they will learn many legends of heroes, treasure, Horrors, and other monsters. These make ideal sources of adventures for your game. Share legends with the characters that will intrigue them and pique their curiosity, then use these legends to spark new adventures. For example, unfold to the characters the legend of the Crystal Spear, rumored to still lie within a kaer in the Badlands. The legend could serve as the focus of an adventure in which the heroes explore the Badlands and discover what lies within its borders.

Exploring Kaers/Citadels

Kaers and citadels dot the landscape of Barsaive. Most have been abandoned, though some remain inhabited by people still unwilling to believe that the Scourge has ended. Kaers and citadels generally make good adventuring sites, usually to find and use what was left behind. Kaers and citadels also make a good setting for an adventure or campaign with a Horror theme.

Mapping Barsaive

Barsaive changed significantly during the years of the Scourge. Many towns, villages, and cities were completely destroyed and others relocated to escape the Horrors. Most of the natural terrain remains as it was, but even some geographic formations have been transformed. As a result, few accurate maps of Barsaive exist. As a change of pace from battle, some person or organization may hire the characters to map an area of Barsaive. This task could lead the characters to uncover a city long-forgotten from before the Scourge, or simply afford them the satisfaction of a job well done.

Treasures

In the same way that adventures that focus on legends are important to the people of Barsaive, adventures based on magical treasure benefit the denizens of EARTHDAWN. The histories of magical

items contain the history of the people of Barsaive. Because these items can reveal to characters so much information about the history of Barsaive, they make a practical foundation for adventures and campaigns. In order for the characters to learn an item's past, they must inevitably travel from one end of Barsaive to the other; these travels can lead to any number of adventures.

Because the rules for using magical treasure require that characters seek out an item's Key Knowledges, Game Masters can easily use the task of discovering all the Key Knowledges of an item as the objective or motivation for several adventures or a campaign.

Communities

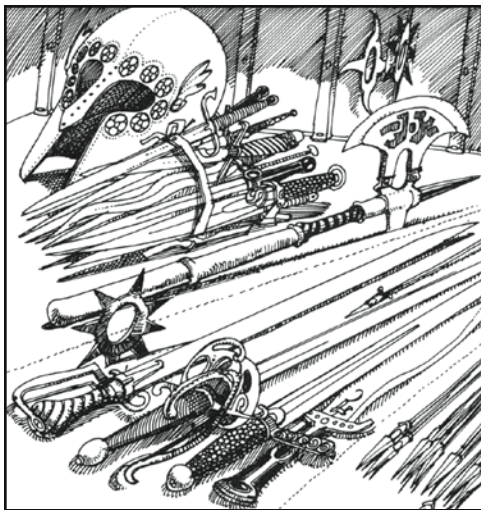
In addition to kaers and citadels, countless cities, towns, and villages also dot the landscape of Barsaive and provide almost endless possibilities for adventures. Adventures set in or near communities can involve thievery, political intrigue, the Horror theme, and so on. Several of the major cities of Barsaive were briefly described in the EARTHDAWN rulebook, but these only represent those known to the kingdom of Throal. Many communities of various sizes wait to be rediscovered.

CUSTOMIZING EARTHDAWN

Every EARTHDAWN game should be unique. The rules and information about the world that we publish should serve as a starting point: from there, it's up to you to present the world to your players in an interesting and appropriate way. The way the world of EARTHDAWN comes to life for you and your players is up to you.

Take what we've written and change it to make it the game you want to play. We don't intend for you to completely rewrite the rules (unless you REALLY want to), but feel free to tweak them here and there so that the game plays the way you like.

Before we begin, we offer a word of warning. Red-Brick has a firm idea of how the world of EARTHDAWN will take shape, and will continue to publish EARTHDAWN material according to that vision. Eventually, we will contradict something you've changed or a decision you made. You must decide how to resolve such contradictions, but we consider our version of the universe the correct one for purposes of continuity and other issues.



Creatures and Horrors

If you don't like the creature or Horror descriptions we provide, feel free to change them and their game statistics. The least risky thing to change about creatures and Horrors is their activity cycle and habitats. If it suits your adventure for a worm-skull to be found in a wet, marshy swamp, then that's where it should be. We don't mind. Once again, what we publish should serve as the starting point, the base from which the rest of the game grows. It's up to you to aid that growth.

Treasure

EARTHDAWN encourages its Game Masters to customize magical treasures. Even the treasures provided in the EARTHDAWN rulebook and in this book present only about half the information you need to use them in your adventure or campaign—you must supply the remainder of the information. This includes the specifics of Key Knowledges known as Research Knowledge. The open-ended system we created for magical treasure allows you to take what we provide and fill in the details in the way best suited to your group and adventure. In this area more than others, EARTHDAWN becomes your game.

Therans

In our version of EARTHDAWN, the Theran Empire plays an important role in the setting of the game. They present a constant threat looming just

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to the southwest, constantly plotting and working for the time when they can reclaim their land. They have a network of spies in place across Barsaive to implement their plans and work toward their ends.

If you don't like the idea of the Therans, and political intrigue and scheming is not the type of game you like to run, pretend the Therans don't exist. Ignore them. Remember, it's your game. On the other hand, you may want more information about the Therans NOW, because you want them to play a central role in your very first campaign. In that case, play up their role in Barsaive. We probably won't be addressing the Therans for some time because we have a lot of other ground to cover first, so make up your own version for now.

Tone and Mood

As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, there are many ways to create the right mood for your EARTHDawn adventures. But the game itself may be played using one of several different moods. EARTHDawn can be a game of heroic fantasy, where the characters strive to reclaim the world from the evils of the Horrors and the Therans that threaten it. EARTHDawn can also be a world of discovery and wonder, where the characters are constantly surprised and amazed by each new discovery. This EARTHDawn is full of unexplored lands and hidden secrets—some of which offer knowledge, others which offer danger. EARTHDawn may also be a dark, injured world where the characters continually discover the scars the Horrors left on the world through their own efforts and through those corrupted by the Scourge. This dark mood of corruption can be easily related to the Horror theme (see above), where people use whatever means necessary to protect themselves from the Horrors without regard for the consequences.

Choosing a specific mood and tone for your game is another way to make your EARTHDawn unique.

Blood Magic

Blood Magic is one of the most disturbing elements of the world of EARTHDawn. How you decide to use it in your campaign is important. Blood Magic is very powerful; the blood charms in the EARTHDawn rulebook and the blood oaths in this book represent powerful forces in the game. The Game

Master should also recognize that Blood Magic is one of the aftereffects of the Scourge, and as such is inherently dangerous.

People turned to Blood Magic in an attempt to protect themselves from the Horrors before the Scourge. Though people have used it less in the years since the Scourge ended, Blood Magic still has a strong presence in Barsaive. Many people consider Blood Magic a constant reminder of the days of the Scourge, a time that most people would like to forget, and so the majority of the population shuns these magics. See the Blood Magic section of this book for more information.

Goods and Services

Chapter 8: Gear in the *Player's Guide* offered some guidelines for assigning availability to equipment and services in Barsaive. Availability provides another area in which you can customize your game. By making different goods and services more or less easy to obtain, you are altering the world to match your vision. You may decide that blood charms are available, but only on the black market at outrageous prices. Perhaps you think that magical healing aids should be readily available nearly everywhere in Barsaive. Certain weapons and armor may only be available in certain marketplaces, or be sold only by traveling peddlers. These and other choices further define your game and make it different from others.

Player Ideas

Your best source of ideas for customizing your EARTHDawn game could be your players. We're confident that they will be able to tell you exactly what they want and don't want in their game, down to specific items, rules, abilities, and spells. Asking for this input may result in more information than you actually wanted or needed, but will serve two purposes. It lets you know how they would like to see the game tailored, and lets you know what type of game they want to play. If you create a campaign with a dark, gritty mood, but they tell you they want heroic fantasy, you may want to re-evaluate your approach.

If you give the players what they want, they're likely to stay with your game longer, and everyone will have a better time playing. However, you are the Game Master, and, ultimately, you decide how

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your game will be played. We don't suggest that you alienate your players by insisting that everything be done your way, but they should also be willing to compromise and try something different. After all, that's why you picked up a new game in the first place—because it offered something different. But remember, having fun is the reason you chose to play EARTHDAWN in the first place.

Keep Notes

The last piece of advice we have to offer is to make notes about the events of your campaign. By tracking important events, you can make both campaigns and adventures increasingly deep and complex. Because the events of your adventures can and will alter the

game world, the more adventures your characters take part in, the more a part of the world they become. The world will be dynamic because of the characters in your group, not simply because RedBrick publishes a certain sourcebook or adventure.

Another use for campaign notes is to compare what you develop and what RedBrick publishes. You may develop an area of the world, only to find a sourcebook at your hobby shop the very next week that explores that exact area of Barsaive. By using your notes to review what you created, you can decide which ideas you like from your version and the published information and integrate both worlds into your next unique adventure or campaign. EARTHDAWN will become your own world.

ADVENTURING GROUPS

Welcome to our tavern, my friends. Come, share the tales of your adventures with us, for we are ever eager to hear more of the heroes of our days...

—Finthal Doran, Innkeeper of the Silver Slipper in Jerris

The world of EARTHDAWN encourages groups of Player Characters to work together to solve problems. The Player Characters in your gaming group may come together through an outside force at first, formed into a group and forced to work together for a specific purpose. Once that purpose is accomplished, they may decide to continue to travel together for other reasons. At this point, the characters have become an adventuring group.

Traveling with an adventuring group offers many advantages over solo exploring. The most obvious is survival. By working together, the characters will have a better chance of living longer, healthier lives. Forming adventuring groups also gives the characters access to a powerful and unique magic; by forming and Naming an adventuring group, the characters in the group can use thread magic to improve their abilities, become more powerful, and take on more dangerous challenges. This advantage will be discussed in a future EARTHDAWN product.

As adventuring groups travel the land, tales of their exploits precede and follow them, told both by the members of the group and by those who see and hear of the group's deeds. As the characters seek out new adventures, stories of the group spread throughout the land, and given time, the members

of the group will take their place among the legends of EARTHDAWN. But the legends of adventuring groups do not simply filter into the Barsaivian collective unconscious. The characters in the group must build their legend by seeking adventure and keeping a record of their travels, battles, victories, defeats, discoveries, and so on.

The people of Barsaive look to heroes for inspiration, protection, and, most importantly, for the hope that their world shall endure. Fortunately for those characters who seek to become heroes of the people, EARTHDAWN offers adventure opportunities galore. From battling the remaining Horrors left on this world, to fighting against the Theran Empire, to re-exploring the land; countless adventures await those courageous enough to face danger in search of glory.

Characters can add to the legends created by their adventures by keeping a journal of their group's exploits. This journal is called a Group Adventuring Log.

ADVENTURING LOG

Group adventuring logs serve several purposes. A journal provides a record of the history of the group, both personnel and events. It also records any discoveries made by the group, and as such can

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serve as a source of stories and legends. An adventure log might provide a rudimentary sketch of an unmapped region, confirm or disprove popularly held beliefs about a people or place, or record the fate of a missing person.

While this type of information may be invaluable to interested parties, adventuring logs serve an even more important function for the ordinary citizen. The stories in an adventuring group's journal are tales of heroism and tragedy, the types of stories the people of Barsaive need to hear. By sharing their adventures with the people of Barsaive, an adventuring group brings hope to a re-emerging world and so are hailed as heroes.

Aside from these loftier reasons to record their tales of heroism, an adventuring log can also make the characters money.

Library of Throal

The great Library of Throal is tasked with recording the history of Barsaive, including the tales of its heroes. One of the most efficient ways it does this is by collecting the stories of adventuring groups. Once a year, the kingdom of Throal invites all adventuring groups to bring their journals to the Library and share their stories with Throalic historians. The kingdom of Throal pays well for these stories, because adventurers' tales contain the history and describe the present of Barsaive. How much a group receives for the stories in their log depends on the legendary status of the group. Fledgling adventurers earn a modest sum, while great heroes of legend can earn a king's ransom.

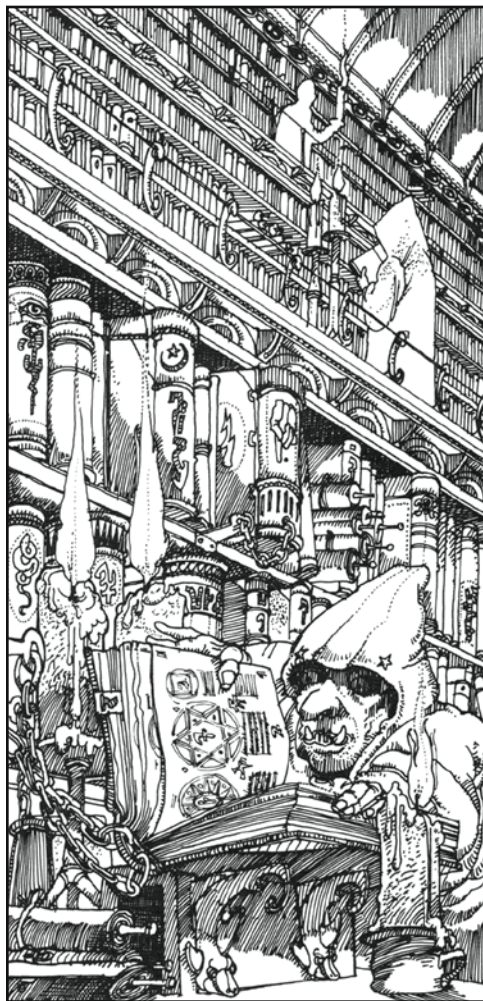
Players' Role

Though the adventuring log is something the characters create, the players must actually write it. Two considerations should encourage players to physically record their adventures. First, if the players don't keep a written journal of their groups' adventures, their characters cannot earn any money from the Library of Throal. Even if the characters state at the end of every session, "We're keeping a journal," if the players themselves don't write it out, it doesn't count. If you want to make the big bucks, you've got to earn it.

The second consideration helps both the players and the Game Master. Because the adventuring log

provides a record of all the group's adventures, the players will not have to ask the Game Master to repeat the events of a specific encounter, adventure, or campaign. The journal also gives the Game Master a quick reference guide to events in the game, and what information the characters would or would not possess. Finally, the adventure log makes it easier for players to roleplay their characters more consistently and generally makes the game run more smoothly.

The players can record their adventures any way they choose. This journal can take any form. The players may decide to purchase a blank or lined journal, use a three-ring binder and notepaper,





or even create a computer database. Every player should take a turn recording the group's adventures so that no one gets the job every session. The type of information that should be included in the journal includes: the Names of the members of the group, the Name of the group, a sketch of the group's symbol, and an outline of the events of an adventure. The players can decide how much detail to include in their account.

Log Payment

Determine your group experience point total by adding together the characters' experience point totals and dividing the result by the number of characters in the group. Each time your adventuring group shares its journal with the Library of Throal, it earns 100 times its group experience point total in silver pieces. For example, a group with an experience point total of 10 would earn 1,000 silver pieces.

GAME MASTER NOTES

*All of life is but a game, and we are merely players. Of course,
some of us never quite get the rules straight.*

—Trebor of Asaf

This section provides game information for various topics discussed in **Chapter 2: Barsaive** (p.8), including directions for using Shantaya's sextant, population figures, a price guide for Barsaive's several standards of living, and specifics on t'skrang trade goods. Each topic refers to the section in **Chapter 2: Barsaive** which the general information on that subject appears.

POPULATION

This section provides estimates for both the general and area-specific racial composition of Barsaive. These numbers do not describe the total population, which remains uncounted since the Scourge.

This section shows Barsaive's total population distribution, the distribution of each racial population in the province's three major geographic areas, and the breakdown of population in each geographic area. For a general description of Barsaive's population, see **Chapter 2: Barsaive** (p.8).

Estimated Racial Composition Table

Race	Percent of Total Population
Dwarf	32
Ork	19
Human	16
Troll	13
Elf	10
T'skrang	8
Obsidiman	1
Windling	1

Racial Distribution Table

Percent of Total Population (by Region)

Race	Throal	Lowlands	Highlands
Dwarf	50	35	15
Ork	40	55	5
Human	20	65	15
Troll	10	40	50
Elf	22	75	<1
T'skrang	20	80	<1
Obsidiman	<1	50	50
Windling	25	60	15

Racial Composition Table

Percent of Regional Population

Race	Throal	Lowlands	Highlands
Dwarf	43	20	26
Ork	22	22	8
Human	10	18	10
Troll	11	9	36
Elf	8	16	5
T'skrang	5	11	5
Obsidiman	<1	2	5
Windling	1	2	5

The previous tables show racial distribution across Barsaive by geographic region, as well as the racial breakdown of the population in each area. For example, the Racial Distribution Table shows that 50 percent of all dwarfs in Barsaive live in Throal; the Racial Composition Table shows that dwarfs make up only 43 percent of Throal's total population.



CHAPTER 3: GAME MASTERING

SHANTAYA'S SEXTANT

Mapmakers in Barsaive use a tried and true method to create and give directions to various places and points of interest in the province. This method is based on a device known as Shantaya's sextant, a two-part mechanical apparatus to be used with appropriately marked maps, both invented by an adventurer named Shantaya Nightstar. The sextant consists of the astrolobe (direction finder) and the rod (distance finder).

Eight directions are marked at irregular intervals around the perimeter of the astrolobe. Each interval between the directions is larger than the previous one. The user centers the astrolobe on his location, then aligns one or more of the eight directions with landmarks to determine the direction of travel to his intended destination.

The rod is a long, rectangular piece of thin metal marked along both edges. These marks indicate, according to the scale of Shantaya's maps, the distance to various destinations in days walking and riding. The center of the rectangle is cut out to serve as a frame for the destination.

Shantaya's maps are drawn to a specific scale, then refined by the addition of a series of concentric circles, centered on the kingdom of Throal, that represents distances from Throal in increments of 10-11 days' walking. These circles help travelers judge distances with a quick glance at the map. The second set of marks that distinguishes Shantaya's maps from others is twelve straight lines originating at Throal that divide the map into twelve wedges. A representation of one of the Passions and a star group associated with that Passion appears in each wedge and serves as a navigation point for travelers who know their directions but do not have a map. Travelers can judge their course more precisely by journeying toward a Passion star-group at one of three phases of the day; sundown, midnight, and sunrise.

Adventurers who possess maps do not need the sextant to travel between known places. The sextant is really designed to find places that do not appear on maps and to help Throalic archivists and mapmakers to reconstruct a group's journey and pinpoint their discoveries.

When used by adventurers in Barsaive, Shantaya's sextant takes on magical qualities that allow travelers

to find their way through the province with the help of the Passions and, if one is available, a map.

STANDARDS OF LIVING

Barsaivian standards of living fall into four distinct categories: squalid, poor, comfortable, and wealthy.

Those who live in **squalid** conditions make their homes in barns, stables, or mud huts erected outside the walls of towns. Desperate, fearful, and angry at the shocking deprivation of their lives, they often resort to acts of violence simply to survive. People living in squalor lack the means to protect themselves, have no standing in law, and are considered outside the bounds of society. Slavers target these people more often than any other group. Though a few people live in conditions of squalor near villages and towns, most of these poorest of the poor live outside large cities where community ties are weaker and no one knows or cares for their fate.

A **poor** standard of living raises people above squalor, if only a little. Though the poor live hand-to-mouth, most can scrape together enough coin to rent living space in a sturdier, wooden hut or a room in a run-down boarding house. Surrounded by the violence of those less fortunate even than themselves, poor thieves often rob other people in a desperate attempt to better their condition. In general, law enforcement and lack of opportunity keep the poor downtrodden and constantly afraid of slipping into squalor.

For the most part, the law protects those who enjoy a **comfortable** standard of living. Though their possessions and money may make them targets of thieves, they have legal recourse to recover their property or receive compensation, and they rarely trouble themselves about the source of their next meal or where they will lay their heads. For these people, life moves along without incident unless adventure finds them.

Wealthy people live well, residing in large and splendid houses, wearing costly garments, and wielding considerable power and influence in their communities. Because they have the most to lose, the wealthy run all governments, from the village elders to the city councils. Though some genuinely care for the welfare of all, most spend their time protecting their power and wealth from other wealthy citizens who desire more riches and influence.

EARTHDOWN GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

The general per-month expenditures of each standard of living are given in the Cost of Living Table. Note that Adepts who reach comfortable or wealthy standards of living tend to spend more money as they increase in status level. As Adepts become more powerful, they generally accumulate more wealth and spend more money to maintain the lifestyle to which they become accustomed.

The currency listed in the table represents the approximate value of whatever a person at each standard of living spends, trades, or barter. For example, a poor farmer may never actually use coins in his daily life, but may trade 20 silver pieces worth of grain each month.

Cost of Living Table

Standard of Living	Expenditures per Month
Squalid	5 sp
Poor	25 sp
Comfortable	150 sp/status level
Wealthy	350 sp/status level

T'SKRANG TRADE GOODS

Though many races offer unique goods for trade, the t'skrang trade several items that remain in constant high demand: fish, certain spices, and novelties.

Fish

The t'skrang preserve and sell three grades of fish. The special ingredients and secret magical method they use to prepare this delicacy gives the fish a unique, delicious taste that only they can produce, thus creating a constant demand for their product.

The tastiest, most expensive, and longest-lasting fish, Grade A, takes two months to prepare. Also high quality but slightly less hardy, Grade B takes one month to prepare. Grade C fish spoils quickest and takes two weeks to prepare. The t'skrang also sell fresh fish to inhabitants along the Serpent River for one-half the Grade C price. Each grade of fish remains edible for as long as it took to prepare; for example, Grade A fish lasts two months before it spoils. Fresh fish must be eaten almost immediately.

The longer it takes for a t'skrang village to prepare each grade of fish, the higher the chance becomes

that the process will fail. If the magic fails to take hold as they preserve the fish, the decay of the preceding weeks immediately sets in and the food becomes inedible. Because it takes the longest to prepare, Grade A fish has the highest rate of failure. Grade B is slightly easier to produce; Grade C is commonly available.

The t'skrang normally sell their fish for the prices per barrel listed below.

T'skrang Fish Table

Grade of Fish	Price per Barrel
A	500 sp
B	200 sp
C	100 sp

Spices

The t'skrang gather many unusual spices from locations passed down from generation to generation, processing their secret caches using secret methods. Three exotic spices, trikella, ustandar, and pestain, are in particular demand throughout Barsaive. The price per ounce listed below reflects the value of the spice.

T'skrang Spices Table

Spice	Price per Ounce
Trikella (light green powder, often with silver sparkles)	20 sp
Ustandar (red and coarse, like sand)	10 sp
Pestain (small green leaves, finely chopped)	5 sp

Novelties

T'skrang novelties come in many shapes and sizes, all skillfully and lovingly created by craftsmen who combine elemental water and earth with mundane wood, stone, and metals with delightful results. The well-known t'skrang affinity for pranks and theatrics puts their novelties in great demand, which they satisfy by producing a variety of goods too numerous to list. A fairly representative example includes small spheres made of water that swirl with different colors when shaken, small figurines that cry when held gently in the hand of a child, and stone rings that change color during the course of the day. The novelties range greatly in quality and price, usually running anywhere from 1 to 1,000 silver pieces each.

LEGENDS

There is truth in the adage that all legend springs from fact. And finding the truth behind the legend is the true juice of life.

—Monus Byre, Leader of the Seekers of the Heart

Legends unite the people of Barsaive with their past and point the way toward their future. Inspired by legends, the heroes of Barsaive fight to reclaim their world from the devastation of the Scourge and to free it from the remaining Horrors. These heroes, in turn, spawn the legends that will inspire Barsaive's future generations.

As the people of Barsaive strive to rebuild their lives outside the kaers, the lessons of the past teach the people of the present how to guard against and even overcome the hardships and dangers of their task. Many Barsaivian legends speak of dangers that still threaten the living; by uncovering the facts behind those legends, adventurers can learn not only what happened as the Horrors grew to engulf the world, but also how to root out these abominations and rid Barsaive of their dreadful legacy.

USING LEGENDS

The following text presents just a few of Barsaive's many legends, which the Game Master may incorporate in adventures and campaigns. Each legend entry includes a section titled **Adventure Ideas**, which suggests specific ways the Game Master may use the legend or elements of it. The Game Master can present the legend to the players characters in various ways. For example, they may hear the legend from a troubadour during a stay in a small town or find it in the journal of another adventuring group as they investigate an abandoned kaer or citadel. Use whatever means fits your style of play. Some of the legends work better as background than as a central element in a campaign and are so noted.

The Game Master decides the "truth" of each legend. Though the adventure ideas provided in the following pages assume that the legends are literally true, the Game Master may decide otherwise. But even if he determines that some are complete fabrications or contain certain elements that are false, he can still use these legends to lead characters toward other adventures.

THE EARTHDAWN

In the first days after the end of the dark times known as the Scourge, King Varulus of Throal decreed that the bravest and boldest among his people should go forth and explore the land of Barsaive. After centuries of living in underground kaers and sealed citadels, the people hungered for the sight of the sun and the scent of the wind and many answered his call. Of the hundreds who ventured out into the Horror-ravaged countryside, however, not a single soul returned, until the day the troll sky raider Vaare Longfang came back to tell His Majesty that the Horrors were retreating to the hellish place that had spawned them. Longfang's courage and strength so impressed Varulus that he immediately ordered an airship made ready for her and commanded the raider to explore the length and breadth of Barsaive, documenting the world the Horrors had left and spreading the joyful news of the Scourge's passing to those still in hiding. Throal's finest mages gave the ship strong magic for defense against the Horrors that remained, and Varulus provided a crew of heroes fit for a grand adventure. To represent his hopes for the expedition, the king christened the ship the *Earthdawn*.

For a year and a day the *Earthdawn* sailed across Barsaive's skies, surveying the ravaged land and battling many perils. Though some Horrors lingered in places still thick with magic, Longfang and her crew found most of Barsaive free of the abominations. But these glad tidings fell on deaf ears, for though the *Earthdawn* landed at every kaer and citadel it encountered, all but two rejected their words. Fearful and unbelieving, the people refused to come out of their shelters.

When Longfang returned to Throal and told Varulus of the people's fears, he commanded her to set off once more, this time for the larger kingdoms of Barsaive. Varulus hoped that if Longfang could persuade the great kingdoms to open their doors, the example of the mighty would banish fear among all of Barsaive's people. And so the *Earthdawn* set sail

once more, this time toward the human kingdom of Landis. The airship was never seen again. Though many believe Longfang and her valiant crew fell prey to the Horrors, the true fate of the *Earthdown* remains a mystery to this day.

Occasionally, travelers in remote areas report seeing the airship slowly sailing through the Barsaivian sky. According to another tale, the “ghost ship” still carries invaluable maps of Barsaive drawn by Longfang’s own hand.

Adventure Ideas

The abandoned *Earthdown* may indeed still drift through the skies of Barsaive, appearing every so often near the Throal Mountains or the area once known as the kingdom of Landis. Her original crew, however, is likely long dead or perhaps trapped in another plane of existence. Some unknown force—Horrors, Questors of a Mad Passion, or even Thera spies may be guiding the *Earthdown* now. And if

Longfang’s maps truly exist, such artifacts would be invaluable. Of course, any attempt to recover such artifacts would undoubtedly attract the attentions of any number of Game Master Characters—Therans, Horrors, elves, and the like.

THE ENDLESS STAIRWAY

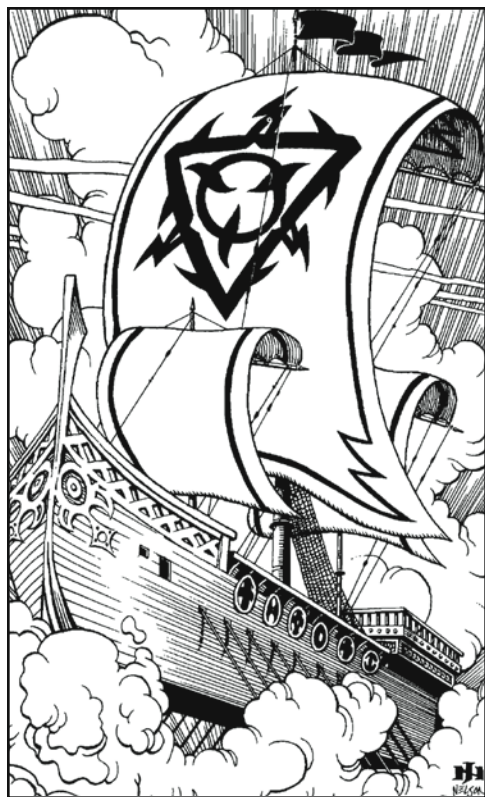
During the time just before the Scourge, when Horrors walked the land but were not yet its masters, a great evil came to pass in the lands between the Serpent River and the kingdom of Throal.

The dwarf Weaponsmith Ginn Darrow, who lived in a small mountain village, fell under the power of a nameless Horror and went mad. In the grip of his madness he worshipped the abomination and built a temple to it as though it were a Passion. He preached that salvation from the approaching Scourge would only come to those who sacrificed their lives to the Horror by dying a bloody death or dedicating themselves forever to its dreadful service.

Those who believed Darrow’s mad words traveled to the blasphemous temple in the Throal Mountains, then spread out to ravage nearby towns and villages. Those who did not flee were killed outright or brought back to be sacrificed on the Horror’s unholy altar. In this way, Darrow and his followers helped speed the coming of the Horrors to Barsaive, confident their dread masters would spare their lives in gratitude.

The armies of Throal and Thera struck at these evildoers scant years before the Scourge began, killing many and driving the rest ever deeper into the Throal Mountains. Angered by their defeat and thirsting for revenge, the Horror-worshippers began to build the Endless Stairway, a set of steps to link the accursed temple in the mountain peaks to another hidden deep underground. From these two temples they intended to wreak vengeance on the Throalic and Thera armies by summoning the physical form of their patron Horror and so speeding the arrival of the Scourge.

Darrow and his disciples vanished during the Scourge. Some say the Horror took them into itself, while others claim the creature simply destroyed them. Still others say the account is no more than a tall story, but even today travelers who pass through the Throal Mountains tell tales of tribes who roam its isolated valleys, tribes that still worship the





abomination and practice the forbidden rites. Some visitors even claim to have seen the Endless Stairway, ascending into the dark mists that surround the mountain peaks and winding its way deep into the black bowels of the earth. So far, no one has dared climb the length of the stairway, and the temples to the unknown Horror remain a mystery.

Adventure Ideas

The so-called Endless Stairway extends roughly ten miles from top to bottom, with countless blind twists and turns that make it extremely hazardous to traverse. To reach the stairway, characters first must scale some of the most forbidding peaks in all of Barsaive. Much of the stairway itself lies in dark mountain passes infested with griffins, espagra, jehuthras, and other foul creatures spawned by the unholy unions of Horrors and the local fauna. Characters who survive these dangers and reach the end of the stairway may find a temple built on a large plateau just below the highest peaks of the Throal Mountains. Populate the temple with any foul folk

you wish—descendants of the original cultists, a tribe of savage trolls, a sect devoted to one of the mad Passions. Any of these would be plausible.

The lower reaches of the staircase may contain even greater hazards. Extending far underground, the stairway leads through numerous subterranean dens occupied by various nasty creatures. Some tales even claim a dragon's lair lies beneath the Throal Mountains. The Game Master may choose to have the stairs lead into this lair, or to someplace worse. According to legend, the bottom end of the stairway leads to the temple of the patron Horror. Though the abomination has no Name in any of the tales, scholars have linked it to an ancient cult known as Those of the Great Hunter. That cult's adherents served the Horror called Verjigorm, the Hunter of Great Dragons. And if Darrow's disciples had any connection to the worshippers of Verjigorm, only the mightiest heroes should consider a trip down the Endless Stairway.

THE EVERLIVING FLOWER

Hundreds of years before the Scourge, the finest artisans of the elven kingdom of Shosara crafted a beautiful treasure for Queen Failla of Wyrn Wood. From the rose gardens that once blossomed near the Queen's Palace in the wondrous Elven Court, the Shosaran elves took a single, perfect rose and enchanted it so that it would live forever. To protect it from all harm, they crafted a crystal box, weaving spells around it into a tapestry of magic that no one could break. They placed the beautiful rose inside the crystal box, sealed it shut and sent it to Wyrn Wood as a token of their undying love and loyalty to the Queen of all the world's elves.

Alas, the beautiful Everliving Flower never reached the Queen, mysteriously disappearing somewhere between Shosara and Wyrn Wood. For many years, those who knew of the wonderful treasure believed that the Therans had stolen it and enshrined it in their stronghold city of Parlainth. When the proud Theran capital of Barsaive vanished during the Scourge, many believed the wondrous, Everliving Flower lost along with the Forgotten City's other treasures.

Accounts of the Flower's rediscovery surface periodically. According to one such story, a band of adventurers found the Everliving Flower in the ruins of



Parlainth not long ago and delivered it to the Elven Court. It is said by the Seekers of the Heart—elves who believe they can purify the corrupted Elven Court at Blood Wood—that the discovery of the sacred Flower heralds a momentous change for elvenkind. Other tales contend that a wound from the thorns of the rose brings everlasting life.

Adventure Ideas

Recently retrieved from the ruins of Parlainth by hirelings of a Wizard Adept named Hiermon, the Everliving Flower currently rests inside Queen Alachia's palace in Blood Wood. Some of these events are fully described in an upcoming *Adventure Compendium*.

If the Game Master wishes to re-create the discovery of the Everliving Flower in detail, he may design an adventure in which the Wizard Hiermon hires powerful and experienced characters to retrieve the artifact from Parlainth. Make the search as difficult a task as the Player Characters can cope with; the Therans who once possessed it considered the

Flower one of Parlainth's most valuable treasures and protected it well enough so that it survived the Horrors' sacking of the Forgotten City. And any protection that can stand up to a Horror onslaught should pose quite a challenge for even the most talented and experienced adventurers.

The Game Master might also design an adventure in which Monus Byre, leader of the Seekers of the Heart (see **Chapter 4: GM Characters**, p. 164), hires the adventurers to verify the existence of the Everliving Flower. Such an adventure might take the characters to Haven in search of Hiermon the Wizard, to Parlainth, or even to Blood Wood to view the Flower firsthand.

THE INVAE BURNINGS

Chorrolis is the Passion of wealth and trade, much venerated along the great trading routes and wealthy cities of the ancient kingdoms of Landis and Cara Fahd. Long ago, when the Scourge was but a dark rumor, one cult of his followers worshipped Chorrolis with greater fervor than any other in those lands. As they grew in number, their rivals in trade began to disappear. The dead bodies of some were found, others never appeared again. When the leaders of Landis and Cara Fahd at last began searching for the killers, they discovered the cult of Chorrolis had come under the sway of an evil, loathsome insect race called the Invae.

The Invae knew no mercy toward the people of Barsaive; they took captives and used them in bizarre, arcane rituals that transformed their captives into insects or summoned more of their cursed race from the black depths of astral space. No one knew how long the Invae had worked their evil will in Barsaive, nor how far their presence had spread.

Panic swept through Landis at the news of the Invae and soon spilled over to other kingdoms. Soldiers and terrified citizens swept through the temples of Chorrolis, slaying all within and burning the buildings. Unable to tell friend from foe in their frenzy, the people also razed temples of Astendar and Floranus and killed many of their innocent worshippers. These first attacks killed hundreds of Invae. The rest fought fiercely to protect their brood, and the streets ran red with blood. The terrible battles of sword and magic destroyed the once-proud city

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of Emmerlich and left the very earth on which it stood lifeless.

The burning of the Invae continued across Barsaive long after the creatures had died or gone into hiding, and thousands of innocents lost their lives. In memory of their dead, followers of Chhorolis hold a bitter feast once a year. As for the Invae—some believe the loathsome creatures survived the burnings and the Scourge and even now work their evil among the races of Barsaive through corrupted followers of Chhorolis.

Adventure Ideas

Though few in number, the Invae still exist. Most live in hivelike societies located near Barsaive's large population centers, including the cities of Travar, Urupa, and possibly even the kingdom of Throal. Though many regard them as another form of Horror, the Invae act quite differently. Rather than feeding off the pain of their victims, the Invae subject their victims to loathsome rituals that induce

metamorphosis, transforming the victim into a Namegiver/Invae hybrid. These creatures, in turn, breed new Invae to increase the size and power of the hive. Once the hive reaches a certain strength, it then may summon an Invae queen from astral space.

Game statistics for the Invae appear below. Though a myriad of Invae varieties exist, these statistics apply to all types.

Invae

The Invae are human-sized creatures that most often resemble wasps or ants, though they have also been known to appear in termite or mantis forms. Hybrid forms combining these insect features and characteristics of the Namegiver races are also fairly common. Most people believe that other forms of Invae exist, as yet unseen in Barsaive.

INVAE

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d8, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 5; Parry: 6; Toughness: 8 (2)

Special Abilities

• **Armor +2:** Chitinous armor.

• **Claws:** Str+d6.

• **Poison:** Any creature damaged by an invae's claws suffers from paralysis poison.

• **Possess:** Invae can subject helpless creatures to a horrific ritual that transforms them into invae. This ritual takes 3d6 rounds. Once complete, the creature is permanently turned into an invae.



THE MAD PRINCE

In the year 955 by the reckoning of Throal, a new prince ascended the throne in Madaalen, near the ancient kingdoms of Landis and Ustrect. During the first five years of his reign, Prince Willem simply warmed the throne, using his power only to amuse himself. Though he did no harm, he also did no good. His advisors despaired of their lackluster prince and implored the Passions to shake him from his lazy ways.

In the sixth year of his reign, Willem began to take notice of the affairs of his realm, and his advisors believed their prayers had been answered. At the turning of the year, he decreed the royal castle should have new towers; his advisors hoped that a period of good governance for Madaalen would

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follow the building of the new turrets. Willem soon proved them terribly wrong. From his gilded throne, he proclaimed new laws that demanded horrific punishments for minor crimes. He declared war on nearby villages and towns, claiming they harbored “ancient and implacable enemies.” Not even the fierce resistance of the trolls of neighboring Ustrect could end the prince’s madness, for a Horror had possessed him. The abomination gave Willem the power to bend the minds of those around him. His wife, his advisors, his army commanders, bodyguards, and Madaalen’s leading citizens all succumbed.

Through the grace of the Passions that love the Namegiver races, Willem’s eldest daughter, Eleni, escaped the Horror’s wiles. On a moonless night, Eleni escaped from the castle and traveled in secret across Madaalen, trying to rally the villagers and nobles to her cause. She told tales of grotesque festivals held within the castle walls and of the terrible fate that mad Prince Willem had in store for Madaalen. Though her pleas brought sympathy from those who heard them, fear stayed their hands, and none dared oppose Willem.

Just as Eleni had begun to despair, her father issued another proclamation, demanding the villages of Madaalen include with their taxes a special bloodwine, mingling the blood of chosen, fellow villagers with the fruit of the vine. The people of Madaalen refused to obey such an evil command; outrage and anger swept away fear, and hundreds of thousands joined Eleni to fight against the Horror-crazed tyrant. Under Eleni’s command, an army of men and women from Madaalen, Landis, and Ustrect marched toward the castle and won two great victories against Willem’s forces. Officers in the rebel army saw that the prince’s officers screamed at each other and at their men, raising no weapon until the rebels attacked. Though each of Willem’s soldiers fought like a maddened thing, they could not fight side by side, and so the rebel army cut them to tatters like cheap troll cloth.

At last Eleni’s armies reached the castle and laid siege to the place. War engines hurled enchanted missiles at the walls, as magicians probed for weaknesses in the castle’s defenses. For four months the siege dragged on, until one morning soldiers digging a tunnel saw that the castle’s main gate stood

open. Suspecting a trap, Eleni and her commanders waited several days then sent patrols inside. Some vanished; those that returned told Eleni that the castle was a bewildering maze. They had found a few servants alive and scores of defenders dead, their throats slit and organs missing. Among the dead lay Eleni’s brothers and sister; Willem and his wife had disappeared. A long search turned up nothing, and Eleni ordered the castle entrances mortared shut. Refusing to set foot in what had once been her home, Princess Eleni ruled Madaalen from the village of Cirol. Bad crops and worse luck continued to plague Madaalen, however. Peasants deserted their farms, and merchants took their business elsewhere. As her realm descended into poverty and despair, a saddened and bitter Eleni left Madaalen to spend her final days living off the bounty of the Merchant’s Council of Throal.

Willem’s final fate remains a mystery, but in villages near the place once called Madaalen, the people tell tales of sudden madness overtaking gentle folk



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and causing them to commit atrocities unheard of since the reign of the Mad Prince.

Adventure Ideas

The sealed castle of the Mad Prince still stands. The people living near it know nothing of what remains inside. It stands deserted and isolated, and neither plants nor animals live within miles of it.

This legend presents several possibilities for adventures. Willem and his wife may still be alive; the Horror that granted Willem his power may have given them unnatural life, condemning them to observe the atrocities it forced them to commit against their citizens and family and to witness first-hand the devastation of the Scourge. They may still inhabit

the castle, hoping that someone can free them from centuries of torture.

Or the Horror may have driven Willem and his wife truly mad, and they committed the horrible acts of the legend of their own volition. These acts of violence may have caused the castle and its surrounding area to become Tainted or Corrupt (see **Chapter 6: Magic** the *Player's Guide*). This area might also be the home of a Horror, either the Horror that drove Willem to madness or another Horror drawn by the residue of bloodshed and anguish.

The Horror may also have killed Willem and his wife; they are buried beneath the basement of the castle. The Game Master might lead the characters to uncover the secret of the legend of Willem.

SECRET SOCIETIES

All right boy, I'll tell you what you want to know, but remember this. Knowledge is power, and power corrupts.

—The last words heard by an over-curious Troubadour Adept in the city of Kratas

The population of Barsaive hides a number of organizations operating to achieve their own ends and whose goals sometimes do not promote the betterment of life in the province. These groups operate province-wide by placing their agents in the governments of many cities, even within the kingdom of Throal. Some of these groups work for evil purposes; some simply prefer to operate on their own terms, giving allegiance to no government, loyal only to their stated goals and purposes.

This section gives the Game Master information about the general nature of Barsaive's secret societies, as well as specific information about a few of the most powerful groups.

THE NEED FOR SECRECY

The many different secret societies in Barsaive have different practices, goals, and means to those goals. Despite their differences, they all share one similarity: they accomplish their aims because they are anonymous and their leaders untouchable by outside influences.

Members of these groups are usually willing to do anything to maintain the secrecy and stability of the group, including killing anyone who threatens that secrecy. Two factors bolster their fanaticism. In a

society as paranoid of corruption as Barsaive's, those with the strength to join such a secret organization will be fiercely loyal to it. Because of the Horrors, most people avoid engaging in activities that could be interpreted as corrupt or tainted. Those willing to do so are convinced that the results of such an action justifies the action. Further, the stability of the group often depends on its members maintaining its secrets. For example, if the leader of the Hand of Corruption became known as the head of that group, public and official outcry would surely lead to his (or her) death, which might cause the entire group to dissolve.

Except for those cults dedicated to serving one or more Horrors, secret societies strive to dissociate themselves from the Horrors. Horror cults thrive on the fear they instill in people by allowing their purposes to be known and on the pain they inflict upon their victims. Other secret societies recognize the risk of becoming the target of heroes determined to end their influence, and so try to keep a very low profile.

Adventure Ideas

Characters should know little to nothing about the activities and plans of secret societies. They may



hear an unfamiliar name in the course of obtaining information about a current investigation in various cities in Barsaive, or they may come across a reference to one of these mysterious organizations in the library at Throal (in fact, several such groups are discussed briefly in **Chapter 2: Barsaive**, p. 8), but the Game Master should only reveal these hints at a moment that is appropriate or timely. Providing clues to the existence of these groups gives the characters another piece of the puzzle of their world. As heroes, discovery is an important part of the characters' lives, as is uncovering groups that may pose a significant threat to Barsaive and the world.

The players characters cannot begin the game as members of any secret society, which lie beyond the experience of any beginning character. This circumstance allows the Game Master to add an element of mystery to any adventure he creates simply by using these secret groups as a minor incident or part of a subplot.

Secret societies have a lot of adventure or subplot potential and can be incorporated into campaigns fairly easily and with great success. The difficulty lies in introducing the characters to the appropriate secret society subtly but effectively.

The simplest way for the Game Master to expose the characters to a secret society is to bring the characters into contact with some consequence of the society's activities. For example, the characters might find the remains of a victim of the Hand of Corruption whose limbs and blood are arranged in some intricate pattern. Their attempts to find out more about this apparently ritualistic slaying could bring them information about these specialized assassins.

The characters may discover the society in the course of an adventure. One of the characters' contacts might turn out to be a member of the Lightbearers or may witness a Lightbearer using his special powers against an agent of the Horrors.

As a way to distance themselves from a particular operation, a secret society might hire the characters to perform an errand or undertake a more serious task. Though they obviously wouldn't reveal their true identity and purpose, the characters might pick up enough rumors to realize that something more is going on. A secret society might also make an attempt on one of the characters' lives. The character

may not even recognize the reason for the attack until he remembers witnessing the exchange of goods in a dark alley in Kratas, or overhearing a somehow shady business deal.

The Game Master can also use this technique to tie together subplots of past adventures. For example, suppose that by Game Master design or random chance the characters have witnessed a series of unexplained, apparently unconnected killings. If the killings were the work of the Hand of Corruption, the characters may learn about the Hand's activities by becoming their newest target. Similarities between the deaths the characters have seen and the attempts on their lives force them to look at circumstances in a new way. All those "unexplained" killings suddenly begin to fit together in a frightening pattern, and now the characters are not only aware of the Hand's activities but have also become involved.

Try to avoid constantly pitting the secret society in direct confrontation with the players characters. By their nature, secret societies should only help propel an adventure. Do not use them to arbitrarily kill off a character who has overheard too much. Sometimes it may seem that killing a character is the only way to motivate the players, but such drastic action should remain a last resort. More appropriately, the characters may notice a secret society's existence as a result of the group's failed attempt to perform a mission or even to kill one of the Player Characters.

AVAILABLE INFORMATION

Certain information is known about the more significant secret societies operating in Barsaive. In the following descriptions, most of the information has been left vague and open-ended enough to allow each Game Master to use these societies in the manner best suited to his or her group.

CULTS

A wide variety of cults, groups devoted to a particular person, creature, or ideal, operate in Barsaive. Cultists are characterized by their extreme devotion to their patron, including complete willingness to give their own lives for the cause.

The most common cults in Barsaive center on one or more of the Horrors. These cults worship their patron Horror as devoutly as most Barsaivians worship the Passions. They often erect statues to the



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Horror and perform rituals to sate the Horror's desires or hunger. Many such cults exist for the purpose of summoning a particular Horror into the physical world from its native plane by completing complicated rituals and casting very powerful spells. One such cult, Those of the Great Hunter, serve the Horror Verjigorm, the Named Hunter of Great Dragons. No reliable evidence exists to confirm whether the Horror operates in the physical world at this time or if its cult works to summon it.

Much to the surprise of the cultists, the Horror they choose to serve often wishes nothing at all to do with them. These cultists often end up as food for their patron, learning too late the lesson to only serve those who call.

Another type of cult pervading Barsaive are those devoted to the Mad Passions. Cults have sprung up to serve Dis, Raggok, and Vestrial, though the many different cults devoted to each of the Mad Passions refuse to have anything to do with one another. These cults regard even others devoted to their patron as violators of their faith, and so their enemies. Because the various cults to the Mad Passions fight with each other, none have joined ranks to force the ideals of their patron Passion upon the people of Barsaive. The cult known as the Hand of Corruption is sometimes considered nothing more than a cult of Raggok, but this group and their goals reach far beyond the ideals of even a Mad Passion.

HAND OF CORRUPTION

If there exists in the land of Barsaive a group more loathsome than the Therans, it must be the Hand of Corruption. Despite the name of the group, its members are not corrupted by Horrors, nor do they have any relations with Horrors. The Hand of Corruption see themselves as the proper response to a corrupted world. Their view is that the world is now tainted beyond redemption, and the fact that

anyone remains alive on it is an unfortunate fluke. They consider it their job to cleanse the world of all Namegiver races, for once the world is free of their influence, purity will be restored, and the world will be clean again.

Members of the Hand of Corruption fall into three distinct groups. The first are the Nihilists, the philosophical branch of the organization. The second, and arguably most powerful, are the Brokers, who plot and carry out covert operations to destabilize governments and communities throughout Barsaive. The last are the Assassins, who carry out the plans of the Brokers and slay innocents as offerings to the Mad Passion Raggok. Members of all three

groups contain Questors of Raggok, but that is not a requirement to be a member of the Hand of Corruption. Because the philosophy of the organization completely contradicts the accepted order of the universe, none but the Mad Passions will accept a Questor who is a member of the Hand of Corruption. The Mad Passions encourage the work of the Hand of Corruption.

The Nihilists argue that the Scourge made the world a corrupt place that must be destroyed, or at the very least purged of the Namegivers. They reason that it is the

existence of the Namegivers that drew the Horrors to Earth in the first place. The Nihilists wear black robes and usually live apart from the rest of society, either in isolation or in small farming settlements. They support themselves through farming and also receive some funds and supplies through the Brokers. The least active group in the Hand of Corruption, the Nihilists often seem innocuous because they mainly talk about their beliefs, rarely acting on them. This they leave to the Brokers and Assassins.

The Brokers, following the lead of the Nihilists, reject the idea that the world is now in balance, the effects of the Scourge balanced by heroes performing daring tasks. They believe all attempts to rebuild





the world since the end of the Scourge serve only to feed worse evils yet to come. They want all efforts to rebuild the world to fail. From Thera to Throal to the smallest village of farmers, the Brokers work in subtle ways to destroy every effort toward community and safety. The Brokers have only limited resources and a small membership, however. Rather than attacking villages with swords and spears, they poison the water. Rather than ambush dwarf caravans directly, they encourage hungry villagers to ambush the wealthy merchants. Another typical strategy is their frequent attempts to pit different power factions against one another. Their work often strengthens the hand of Theran Overgovernor Kyprios, whose goal of re-conquering Barsaive requires that he divide the province before he can take it, but the Brokers deny that this outcome of their efforts is intentional.

Brokers do not distinguish themselves by their dress, for they must penetrate all levels of society, living as farmers, merchants, miners, sailors, and so on. They use a complicated series of hand signals to identify each other and speak in code. Their role in the Hand of Corruption is so secret that whole villages, towns, and even cities are rumored to be populated entirely by Brokers.

The Assassins commit direct, overt acts of death and destruction. Where the Brokers are subtle and neat, the handiwork of the Assassins is often bloody and terrible. Victims are often found carefully dissected, limbs and blood arranged in patterns that no one but the agents of the Hand of Corruption fully understand. Ahehm of the Blood Wood speculated that the rituals and patterns will eventually bring into existence a new Passion, a Passion of retribution. His research was progressing well until he was killed—in ritual fashion by the Assassins—and his notes destroyed. The fact that Assassins could enter the Elven Queen's palace, kill a Blood Warder, and then escape again, without anyone realizing the murder had taken place until hours after Ahehm's death is either a testament to the skill of the Assassins, or a hint that their influence extends even into the Elven Court.

The Assassins wear black robes with black hoods and a veil that covers their mouth and nose. They work alone or in units of three, depending on the assignment. An Assassin always receives his orders

from intermediaries, never directly, which often leads to miscommunication. Individual Assassins feel no compunction over these mistakes, for they are content to kill any number of people in service to the cause. The organization draws talent from diverse sources, and many of its members are magicians and adepts of various Disciplines.

Leaders and adventurers who make a name for themselves anywhere in Barsaive by helping to rebuild society will likely find themselves targeted by the Hand.

KEYS OF DEATH

The Keys of Death is a far-flung cult of assassins, whose every member fancies him or herself a Questor of Death. They believe this despite the fact that Death is not a Passion like the twelve Passions the Universe created to inspire Namegivers and that there are no records of Death ever having Questors. If people point out that the Keys of Death do not seem to receive mystical benefits for following Death's ideals, they simply recite the legend that Death is imprisoned under Death's Sea and claim it is that which prevents Death from granting them power. Though they believe themselves Questors, they must depend on the powers of adept magic to carry out their missions, most often twisting the abilities of the thief and warrior to murder.

The legend of Death says that several Passions imprisoned him under Death's Sea, and though people and creatures still die, Death's influence is now limited. Because Death does not roam free, people can be resurrected, and those who should die sometimes escape death through improbable means. The aspect of the legend on which the Keys of Death focuses says that when enough blood has soaked into the soil of Barsaive, Death will be freed and wreak terrible vengeance.

The Keys of Death assassins intend to curry favor with Death by sowing Barsaive's soil with enough blood to help free Death. They also hope that they will be spared his revenge. To this end, they hire themselves out to anyone willing to pay their price. The cost of an assassination varies greatly, depending on the importance of the victim and the difficulty of the assassination. Sometimes the assassins do not charge for their services—it is their desire, after all, to spill as much blood as possible.



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There is no hierarchy in the Keys of Death. People become members through contact with other assassins, and members rarely meet. Members of the Keys of Death always maintain another livelihood, usually one that allows them to constantly relocate without attracting suspicion.

Every assassin owns black robes known as death robes, which they wear only during assassinations and murders. Because Keys of Death assassins are essentially self-motivated and might never have seen another assassin in his death robes, each robe is unique in style and decoration. All death robes are marked with indecipherable symbols that only the assassin himself can explain, usually in the context of how Death is connected to his life.

Theories abound that Horrors have corrupted the minds of the Keys of Death assassins, driving them insane. Most people accept this idea because it allows them to view these assassins as an aberration and not a norm for Namegivers.

LIVING LEGEND CULTS

The world is a better place than it was one hundred years ago—the Horrors are fewer in number, the jungles of the world are full and lush, and Throal is making progress in uniting the people of Barsaive. Yet remnants of the blight that took hold of the world years ago remain, and these remnants make people despair. In an attempt to rise above the despair, people create their own means of keeping hope alive. The living legend cults fall into this category.

Living legend cults consist of groups of people who believe that the answers to the world's problems lie in the past. These answers may sometimes take the form of ancient magical artifacts, lost tomes filled with invaluable wisdom, and even long-dead heroes. The cultists extensively research the objects or persons of their veneration, and then try to bring the object or person from the past to the present. Some cultists wish merely to preach an ancient philosophy, other groups seek out ancient corpses and attempt to raise them from the dead.

The various living legend cults have nothing but the essence of their beliefs in common. In fact, most resent being grouped together under one name. Most groups consider the work of other groups thoroughly absurd and have no respect for any quest but their own.

The efforts of the cultists keep them busy throughout Barsaive, searching out ancient ruins, exploring lost cities, and browsing through crumbling texts. The cults formed around legends powerful enough and widespread enough to be worth remembering for hundreds of years, but vague enough to allow the cultists to interpret them to their own ends. A thread of truth runs through all their beliefs, though most cultists only believe in the legend they research.

Many of these cultists are decent people, doing what they believe is right and trying to help the world, yet willing to allow others their own efforts toward the same goal. Others believe that non-cultists are trying to stop them from saving the world, and so use bloody methods to advance their cause. In some cases, their paranoia is well-founded.

For example, the Hand of Corruption devotes considerable effort policing the living legend cults, fearing that one day they will actually pull some valuable artifact up out of a ruin. They send spies into the cults, trying to gather enough information to reach the next clue about ancient power before the cultists. The Hand of Corruption usually destroys the ancient items or uses them to their own ends, if possible.

The most prominent living legend cults are described below.

Cult of Naaman Y'ross

Naaman Y'ross was a hero who fought the Horrors in the years before the Scourge, before the



inhabitants of Barsaive sought shelter in the kaers and citadels. Many believed that it was possible for him to lead a massive army against the Horrors and prevent the Scourge from taking place at all. Obviously, he failed, but because the legends of his death contradict each other—one says a Horror killed him during a three-day battle, another says one of his followers was possessed by a Horror and turned on Y'ross. There are even those who suggest he never died and has somehow remained alive for the past five hundred years.

The members of this cult fall into three distinct camps: those who think Y'ross is still alive, but has forgotten his identity and his true destiny; those who think he died, but could be raised from the dead; and those who think that it is possible to find the hero's spirit and invest it in another body. The cultists engage in endless debates, drawing upon obscure legends and tales to support their separate theories. They also devote a great deal of time to researching the legend of Naaman Y'ross, occasionally discovering an interesting and useful fact. For example, several of the cultists have proved beyond doubt that Y'ross was an elf, making it entirely possible that he still lives.

Several of the Y'ross cult groups claim to have found the hero's tomb. They dug up the bones that they believed belonged to Y'ross, then went off on long quests to raise the man from the dead. Some actually succeeded, and though the resurrected man has been grateful in every case, none has been Y'ross.

Wielders of Purifier

Legend says that when the Horrors first began to appear in Barsaive, King Varulus I, by then old and dying, commissioned the forging of a magical sword to defeat the creatures. He gathered together master Weaponsmiths from among his own people, the elven court, the troll-moots, and other groups: the sword they fashioned was Named Purifier.

It is said that the balance of the blade shifts to accommodate the wielder, so that a troll might use it as easily as a windling. It is also said that Purifier burned with red fire when used against a Horror. Other legends say the blade could kill a Horror with one blow. Still other tales relate that the mere presence of the blade near someone corrupted by

a Horror was enough to cure the person and cast out the Horror.

Nearly every hero of the age before the Scourge is reported to have used the blade, and so no one knows what became of it or if it ever really existed. Some tales tell that a Horror named Bryxax stole the sword and carried it back to the plane of the Horrors. Other tales relate that Vrastr, a glorious warrior, lost the blade over Death's Sea when she was killed by Horrors while riding her flying steed. It is also rumored that a powerful wizard hid the sword by casting a powerful spell on the blade to make it look old and rusted, dulling its edge beyond use. If the blade can be found and the spell removed, Purifier will once again be able to smite Horrors.

Seekers of the Heart

Another living legend cult active in Barsaive seeks to transform the Blood Wood into the fair home that once held the Elven Court. Known as Seekers of the Heart, these people claim to possess ancient prophecies that foretold the corruption of the elven court and the creation of the Blood Wood. According to the cultists, the secret texts also contain mystical revelations describing the means to redeem the elves from their self-inflicted corruption.

Members of Seekers of the Heart are mainly uncorrupted elves, though they draw their members from many races. Seekers of the Heart is one of the few living legend cults with a powerful hierarchy, established to ensure the organization's secrecy. The Seekers claim that the ancient texts they possess could also bring about the ruin of the Elven Court and the spread of the corruption of the Blood Wood across the world. Whether or not this is true, the potential for power or destruction will lure many to seek the ancient texts for themselves.

An estimated two to three hundred Seekers of the Heart live in Barsaive. Most are nominal members who listen for rumors, collect funds for the organization, and perform similar small tasks. No member of this group ever discusses the cult's purposes or shares gathered knowledge, a principle that makes them unpopular among other scholars. Only a small percentage count themselves among the cult's scholars and adventurers. Those who belong to this elite group wear robes and armor of white and gold and



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spend their lives questing for obscure texts and artifacts, some apparently useless. Those outside the cult speculate that the questing is a facade to hide their real purpose from the world.

Seekers of the Heart have no official relations with the Elven Court. Rumor says that Queen Alachia's Blood Warders kill known and suspected members on sight. However, some members of the corrupted court have made contact with the cult to encourage or perhaps warn them.

The one well-known quest undertaken by the Seekers of the Heart is their attempt to make contact with the ancient elven nation of Shosara, declared separated from the Elven Court by Queen Failla. The Seekers believe that if they are to truly save the Elven Court and return it to its former splendor, the elves of Shosara must be accepted back into the Court. This quest seems impossible, because the Shosarans have had no contact with any part of Barsaive since before the Scourge.

A recent rumor and legend has piqued the curiosity of the leaders of the Seekers of the Heart. Certain adventurers report that an ancient elven artifact known as the Everliving Flower has been recovered from the ruins of Parlainth, where it lay since the beginning of the Scourge. Legend says the artifact was a gift from Shosara to Queen Alachia when she became the head of the Elven Court at Wyrn Wood. The treasure was lost in transit, somehow ending up in Theran hands. Ever since the report that this artifact had been found, Seekers of the Heart have been working to verify the truth of the story. To the Seekers, the re-appearance of an artifact of such importance to the pre-Scourge elven kingdom symbolizes that change is coming within the community of elves, and they intend that change to be the one they seek.

LIGHTBEARERS

Though most of the heroes of Barsaive fight against the Horrors that still infest the world, one special group aims at nothing less than freeing this world of the Horrors now and forever. This group is known as the Lightbearers.

Origins of the Lightbearers

The Lightbearers first came into being nearly 300 years before the Scourge. According to legend, a

dwarf merchant named Nicolez Trund first originated the idea for the group. Though a native of Throal, Trund traveled in his work to the farthest reaches of Throal's trading empire, thus observing the first unmistakable signs that the Horrors were coming. Though the Kingdom of Thoral enjoyed extensive magical protection, Trund could barely imagine what less-protected parts of the world would experience during the Scourge.

Trund knew that nothing could stop the Scourge, but he still felt the need for an organization to fight against the Horrors. Trund and his allies wanted to build an institution that would survive for centuries, not just the lifetimes of its founders. They wanted to give humanity a weapon against this Scourge and any Scourges of future millennia.

Trund and his group studied the stories of the Horrors so that they might better know their enemy. In doing so, they learned of the darkness that lies at the heart of the Scourge. Seeing the dark time approaching, Trund wanted a name that would represent the work of struggle against this darkness. The name he chose was Lightbearer.

Lightbearers would be heroes and adventurers. Heroes might only be chosen to become Lightbearers when they had proven their prowess and resilience. Lightbearers would be trained to recognize the taint of Horrors and would have the opportunity to gain abilities to combat the Horrors and their kind. They would be tasked with learning all they could about the Horrors, in the process recording tales and sparking legends themselves. The Lightbearers would help the world reclaim itself from the Scourge, leaving a legacy that would help the Earth thousands of years into the future, the next time the Horrors returned.





Lightbearer Organization

Not much is known about the Lightbearers' organization. They have no formal charter or official headquarters. Their leaders, numbering from six to perhaps a dozen, are called the Swords of Light. The Swords of Light meet in Throal three times a year. The times and locations of these meetings are closely guarded secrets. The Swords of Light set priorities that guide the activities of the Lightbearers until the next meeting. The eldest of the Swords of Light is an obsidian warrior named Isam Derr. As eldest, Isam leads most meetings of the Swords of Light, though in truth his authority is no greater than that of any of the other Swords of Light.

A member of the Swords of Light may call an emergency meeting at any time. Such calls are normally made in response to evidence of Horror activity that demands an immediate response greater than local resources allow.

The Swords of Light also decide what information is magically preserved in preparation for the next Scourge. These decisions are crucial because creating magic to last thousands of years is a task as difficult as it is expensive.

The Lightbearers maintain a loose network that balances a degree of secrecy with the need to communicate. Trund believed that the Horrors and those they corrupt would go to any lengths to destroy the Lightbearers or any other group actively opposing them. He said, "Our enemy cannot kill what it cannot find." Politics also make secrecy desirable, as the goals of the Lightbearers sometimes conflict with those of local rulers. Lightbearers often find and sometimes enrage forces that tribal chieftains and fearful kings would rather pretend do not exist.

All Lightbearers are asked to choose a name by which other Lightbearers will know them. The Lightbearer uses this name in all contacts with other

Lightbearers, including face-to-face conversations. This name is but a label to allow for clandestine communication and does not represent the Lightbearer's True Pattern. Though group members sometimes use conventional means of communication, most Lightbearers use magical means to communicate with one another. They most often conduct face-to-face meetings behind the facade of shimmers, masks of light that Lightbearers use to protect their identities.

The Great Pattern

The Lightbearers draw their power from a magical source known as the Great Pattern. Little is known about the Great Pattern, except what has been written by the historians of the Lightbearers, and it remains a topic of much debate among scholars and even among Lightbearers all across Barsaive. Most believe the Great Pattern refers to the True Pattern of the Earth. Those who support this theory believe that because the Lightbearers strive to reclaim the Earth from the Scourge, the Earth itself grants them their power via its True Pattern.

Others believe the Great Pattern is actually a combination of the True Patterns of all the Passions. Though this theory contradicts most accepted knowledge of magical theory, the ways of the universe remain mysterious enough to allow for any possibility. Still others believe the Great Pattern does not exist at all and that the Lightbearers derive their strength from those they claim to oppose. Though many dispute this theory, some scholars insist the Lightbearers are actually servants of the Horrors and that their entire organization is an elaborate deception.

Whatever the truth, the Lightbearers are a powerful organization, capable of performing significant feats toward their goals.

BLOOD MAGIC

Many say that slavery is the worst thing the Therans brought to Barsaive. I for one, disagree. The worst they have done still remains among us. It is the use of our own blood in our magic...

—Vercian, Throalic Wizard Adept, Author of *Thoughts Concordia*

As introduced in the *Player's Guide*, one of the three forms of magic used in the world of EARTHDAWN is Blood Magic, along with Spell and Thread Magic.

Blood Magic is powerful, but that power demands a price. In order to use Blood Magic, a magician must sacrifice some of his own blood. Though usually



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only a drop or two, the fact remains that the magician is using his own blood to power his magic—in essence, drawing on his own life energy.

Because Blood Magic offers a vivid reminder of the torments people inflicted on themselves in the days before and during the Scourge, those who continue to use it are often viewed with suspicion by the ordinary citizen. The majority of Barsaivians are working to put the devastation of the Horrors behind them or out of their minds completely, and choose to ignore everything that Blood Magic represents, even its potential for helping those still battling the remnants of the Horrors. Those who are willing to accept the necessary means to achieve the greater good of destroying the Horrors now choose to refer to the practices of Blood Magic as “Life Magic,” hoping by stressing the positive aspect of this magic to cultivate tolerance among the mainstream for those who use this magic.

HISTORY

The following is excerpted from Thoughts Concordia by Vercian, 1460 TH.

Blood Magic is now, and, regrettably, will forever be a part of our world. People learned of the power that living energy gives to magic in our world and embraced that power. It aided our recovery from life within the kaers and helped us successfully battle the Theran Empire. But at what cost?

In order that we and our descendants may learn from our mistakes, what follows is a brief history of the development and uses of Blood Magic in the province of Barsaive. May future generations understand its lesson.

Blood Magic originated in the magical laboratories and experiment chambers of those men and women who would one day found the Theran Empire.

When the population of Nehr'esham (the “center of the mind,” which would become the Eternal Library at Thera) threatened to grow beyond their control, its leaders chose to impose rites of initiation upon those who wished to join the Great Project. One of these rites evolved as a blood oath sworn between the initiate and the leaders of Nehr'esham. With this oath, initiates dedicated their lives to the Great Project and to the completion of the Eternal Library.

The oath made with blood quickly became a tradition among the scholars at Nehr'esham, and they

soon began to use it to swear oaths for other purposes as well. Former enemies used blood oaths to swear everlasting peace, and marriages were often sealed with blood oaths. But as happens in our world of magical thought, as we do, so do we create. The magical energies of the world began to pattern themselves after the practices of the people and eventually imbued blood oaths with magic power. Where once one who violated a blood oath was only shunned by those around him, now the magic inherent in the blood oath physically marked the violator. Runic scars would appear on the oath-breaker's body where the blood for the oath was drawn. These scars resisted all healing, including magical healing.

Dissemination

The leaders of Nehr'esham sent adventurers out into the world to collect works for the Eternal Library, and those adventurers spread the ideas and practices of blood oaths as they traveled. Adventurers for the Library used blood oaths to seal trade agreements, pledges of loyalty and friendship, and for other important events and promises. The use of Blood Magic spread throughout the known world, and as the frequency of its use increased, so did the strength of its bond to the magic of the world. And as happens in the cycle of our world, as the bond between magic and the use of Blood Magic increased, so too did the use of Blood Magic increase.

Research

Other uses of Blood Magic evolved from this prosaic beginning. Wizards and Nethermancers witnessed the power of Blood Magic and sought to better understand it. They reasoned that if Blood Magic could so powerfully seal oaths and promises, then it might have other magical uses. They began to experiment with incorporating the use of blood sacrifice into powering magical items. They met with limited success using Blood Magic to power existing items, but did discover methods of creating magical items powered solely by Blood Magic. This research resulted in what are now known as blood charms: magical charms that offer their user very powerful benefits when imbued with Blood Magic.

During the years when research was producing blood charms, adventurers also found (some say formed) another type of Blood Magic. Heroes found



that sacrificing their own blood allowed them to improve their abilities beyond physical and mental limits. Magicians used Blood Magic to increase the duration of spells, while other Disciplines used it to enhance the effects of their magical talents. In a familiar cycle, the widespread use of Blood Magic strengthened its power and caused it to manifest in still other forms. Unfortunately, this increased access to Blood Magic came at a time when the people of Barsaive were becoming desperate, aware that the Scourge would soon overtake them.

Protection

Before the Therans refined the *Rites of Protection and Passage* and offered them to the people of Barsaive during the days of the Orichalcum Wars, people sought to create individual methods of protection against the coming Scourge. Many of those people experimented with Blood Magic, the results of which often proved as horrible as or worse than the effects of the Scourge itself. These experiments continued even as people shut themselves into the kaers and citadels. Having heard of and seen the Horrors' terrible power, Barsaivians feared that even the Theran methods of protection would fail and so embraced Blood Magic rituals to provide additional safeguards. The proven powers of Blood Magic led people to believe that if used properly, Blood Magic would protect them even from those Horrors strong enough to break through the Theran defenses.

The most horrifying legends describe communities sacrificing peoples' lives to power their Blood Magic rituals, thereby hoping to protect their descendants against the centuries-long Scourge. Some communities even used lotteries to select the victims of the Blood Magic. These victims were forced to accept their fate or be banished to the outside.

These were extreme examples. Most Barsaivians refused to embrace the power of Blood Magic so profoundly. A majority continued to use the power of Blood Magic only as it was taught through the centuries: to swear oaths and promises, and occasionally to create blood charms and provide magical enhancement.

The end of the Scourge and the opening of the kaers and citadels marked a decline in the use of Blood Magic in Barsaive. Though this decline may

be a result of many things, I believe that the prime motivation is the effects of Blood Magic on the elves of the Elven Court at Wyrn Wood. Too proud to accept the Theran protection against the Horrors, the elves turned to Blood Magic when their own methods of magical protection failed. The most extreme form of Blood Magic lives on in the elves of what is now called Blood Wood. The world has seen the effects of Blood Magic used in desperation, and they recoil in fear and disgust from those who accepted these methods.

The history of Blood Magic should serve as a lesson for all who contemplate its use. The power of Blood Magic is to be feared, not embraced.

IN REFERENCE TO BLOOD MAGIC

Update to the Thoughts Concordia by Anselm of Throal, 1505 TH.

The use of Blood Magic has splintered into two distinct practices since Vercian wrote the above text. Most adepts and magicians practice a type of Blood Magic whose power comes from small personal sacrifices of one's own life energy. This type of Blood Magic has come to be known as Life Magic. Though all uses of Blood Magic permanently mark the user in ways both physical and mental, this first use of Blood Magic can be considered relatively safe.

The term Blood Magic now refers almost exclusively to magic that draws its power not from self-sacrifice of personal life energy, but from the sacrifice of unwilling victims. Only the Therans are said to practice this type of Blood Magic, but only rumors say so, not facts. Other tales suggest that the Therans' ages-long dominance over magic comes from practicing sacrificial Blood Magic. Even rumor does not suggest that this type of Blood Magic has been used in Barsaive since the Time of Hiding.

The original writings of Vercian sparked an ongoing debate among magical scholars about the uses of Blood Magic. One faction believes that in its original form, as used for oaths, charms, and so on, Blood Magic poses no hazard to its users. They propose that Blood Magic is simply an extension of our basic understanding of magic, and that its use is no more dangerous to Adepts than the use of patterns and threads.

Others claim that Blood Magic in any form is surely a result of corruption by the Horrors. They insist





that Blood Magic originated with the Horrors and that using it only draws one closer to the Horrors.

The scholarly world does not fall strictly into these two camps. Those learned men and women who spent the early years of their lives traveling for the Library and seeking lost knowledge during their adventures have seen Blood Magic used for both good and evil. Though they have seen Blood Wood, the ever-present example of Blood Magic gone horribly wrong, many have also benefited from what is now called Life Magic and suffered no ill effects. These men and women share Vercian's hope that the knowledge of past abuses of Blood Magic will serve as a lesson to those who choose to use Blood Magic in this age. All agree that Blood Magic offers great power, and with that power comes equal responsibility.

USING BLOOD MAGIC

As the Game Master, you determine what part Blood Magic will play in your EARTHDawn game. Will it be a positive source of magic, or will it be used only by evil beings and people? Will blood oaths be a way of life, or cause for shunning? Are blood charms available in most cities and towns in Barsaive, or are they only available on the black market? Perhaps your campaign will not include Blood Magic at all. Perhaps in your world of EARTHDawn, all uses of Blood Magic were forbidden at the end of the Scourge. If this is the game you choose to play, simply ignore all references to Blood Magic in the EARTHDawn

rules. Your decision about the role of Blood Magic will affect the way you run your campaign.

The material RedBrick publishes for EARTHDawn will view Blood Magic much as Anselm describes it in the *Update to Thoughts Concordia*. That is, Blood Magic exists in both forms: positive Blood Magic, the only type of Blood Magic Player Characters can use, which is also known as Life Magic; and evil Blood Magic, practiced by those corrupted by the Horrors and other evil Game Master Characters. We chose this view because we believe this dichotomy will inspire interesting characters and stories. But again, you must decide how you will run your EARTHDawn game. Please note that as stated above, Player Characters may only practice Life Magic. RedBrick products will only provide rules for using this positive type of Blood Magic. At the Game Master's discretion, evil and misguided Game Master Characters may practice evil Blood Magic to achieve their ends, but RedBrick will not publish rules for doing so.

We offer the following considerations to help you decide the role of Blood Magic in your game.

1. Blood Magic is a powerful force and can serve as an important element in the mood or atmosphere of an adventure. At the same time, positive Blood Magic can allow Player Characters to become very powerful.

2. If you use Blood Magic in your campaign, ask the players to keep track of any specific effects in the appropriate space on the character sheet. This

will help keep track of specific penalties for using Blood Magic.

3. If you decide to use Blood Magic in your game, make it one of the more disturbing elements of EARTHDAWN. Blood Magic should serve as a reminder of the atrocities the people of Barsaive inflicted on themselves in an attempt to protect themselves from the Scourge. Blood Magic is one of the scars the Scourge left on this world, one created not by the Horrors, but by man.

When the Player Characters use Blood Magic, they should feel uneasy about doing so. Even their choice to use Life Magic and what that choice requires them to do to themselves should disturb the Player Characters. Though the world of EARTHDAWN is trying to recover from a great physical disaster, its people are also trying to redeem themselves for the actions they took to fend off the Scourge and the Horrors. Even in pursuit of this noble goal, the ends may not justify the means, and the Player Characters should recognize that possibility.

BLOOD OATHS

Blood Magic has three main functions in EARTHDAWN: to magically enhance abilities, power blood charms, and seal blood oaths. The *Player's Guide* provides information and rules for the first two uses of Blood Magic. This section explores the three types of **blood oaths**: blood peace, blood promise, and blood sworn.

Blood Magic oaths represent one of the most significant uses of Blood Magic in EARTHDAWN, allowing characters to use Blood Magic as a form of social magic. In a Blood Magic oath, Blood Magic seals an oath made between two characters. Your character may swear a Blood Magic oath with any NPC who agrees. While most Blood Magic oaths are sworn between player and Game Master Characters, two Player Characters can swear a Blood Magic oath with the Game Master's permission.

Blood oaths can only be sworn between two characters at a time. If two characters wish to swear a blood oath with three dwarfs, for example, each character would have to complete the oath three times, once with each dwarf.

Blood oaths must be sworn voluntarily. However, a character who swears a blood oath while under the influence of magical charms or spells is considered

to have done so voluntarily. Folklore also tells tales of heroes who swore blood oaths while blind drunk and then regretted the promises they made.

The intent of a blood oath is to pledge an even exchange of abilities, deeds, promises, and so on. Though legends speak of unscrupulous bargainers who somehow deceived others into advantageous blood oaths, these deceivers fared badly as a result. Blood Magic always punishes the unjust user.

As do most other uses of Blood Magic, blood oaths last for a year and a day. When that time expires, a blood oath can be renewed for another year and a day.

Blood Wounds

All uses of Blood Magic cause permanent damage, though a character may heal that damage after a year and a day. A character who swears a blood oath takes a penalty to Vigor rolls, but he may also suffer more serious consequences if he knowingly or unknowingly breaks his oath. A character who breaks a blood oath takes a wound that can only be healed using a healing potion.

Unlike their effect on non-magical wounds, a healing potion does not automatically heal blood wounds. The character must drink the potion, then the player makes a Vigor roll with a -8 penalty. If the roll is successful, the wound heals, leaving a runic scar. If the roll is unsuccessful, the wound remains.

A character can only heal a wound caused by violating a blood oath after all other wounds (for example, those inflicted in combat) have been healed. A healing potion only heals one wound.

Legends say that Questors can heal wounds caused by violating blood oaths, but no recent evidence can substantiate these legends.

Blood Peace

A **blood peace** oath seals a truce between two characters. Any two living characters of Name-giving races may swear a blood peace oath.

To swear blood peace, the characters each draw blood from their own dominant weapon arm (t'skrang draw blood from their tails). This causes a permanent -1 penalty to all Vigor rolls. This penalty cannot be removed as long the blood peace remains in effect, and becomes permanent if a character violates a blood peace oath.

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Each character then presses his weapon into the other character's blood. As the blood dries on the weapon, the characters swear the oath. The oath varies across Barsaive and among races, but all include the same elements as the following example.

"As the sun shines upon the earth, so shall light illuminate my deeds. All people shall see that I mean no harm to [other character's name]. I shall take no action to bring harm to him or those of his blood, or by inaction allow harm to befall [other character's name] or those of his blood.

"As the moon shines upon the earth, so shall light illuminate my intent. All people shall see that I honor my promise."

By swearing a blood peace oath, two characters promise that they will never harm one another or allow harm to come to the other through inaction. This promise is binding; a character who swears a blood peace oath with another can never intentionally harm or allow the other character to suffer harm if he can prevent it. A character who knowingly or unknowingly violates a blood peace oath releases the other from the vow.

A character who violates a blood peace manifests a magical wound in the place from which he drew blood for the oath. This wound lasts for a year and a day from the time it is received. If a character violates a blood peace during the first week of the oath, the wound lasts a year and a day from that time. If the characters break the oath on the final day of the blood peace, the wound lasts another year and a day. A wound created by violating a blood peace does not heal naturally during this time.

A character may attempt to heal the wound using a healing potion (see **Blood Wounds**, p. 160). If the result is successful, the wound heals, but leaves a runic scar. Such scars permanently mark the character as a blood peace betrayer, though characters may hide them with costumes, make-up, or illusions.

If both characters keep their vow for a year and a day, the place on their body from which they drew blood becomes the color of gold, silver, rubies, or emeralds. When the duration of the oath expires, the penalty taken by swearing the blood peace can be healed as for normal damage.

Your character may swear a blood peace oath with as many characters as you wish, limited only by the number of points of permanent penalties your character must take for each oath.

Blood Promise

Characters who swear a **blood promise** pledge to perform certain deeds. Any two living characters of the Name-giving races whose attitudes are Uncooperative or better toward each other may swear a blood promise. Blood promises must be made only by those vowing to perform dangerous or heroic deeds. Two characters could not, for example, make a blood promise for one to cook and the other to clean the dishes.

To swear a blood promise, the characters first cut in their foreheads and their chests over their hearts, drawing blood. Each character takes a permanent –1 penalty to Vigor rolls by drawing blood for the oath. This penalty cannot be removed for a year and a day after the blood promise is made or until both parties fulfill their promises. The penalty becomes permanent for characters who do not fulfill their sworn promise.

Each character then wipes the blood from his forehead with his left hand and the blood from his chest with his right hand. The characters face each other and press their hands together, making sure the blood mixes. As the blood dries on their hands, the characters state their names and recite their promises to each other. Both promises should be stated in as similar terms as possible and should describe the pledged deed precisely. The oath must also state how long the character has to perform the deed, which can be any length of time up to a year and a day. During the oath, each character must describe an ability or skill he will use while accomplishing the deed, and both characters must agree to meet after fulfilling their promises, within a year and a day after they make the blood promise.

Delthrien the Archer finds himself negotiating with Filtch, a Thief of poor reputation. Delthrien needs Winter Fury, a magical arrow hidden somewhere in the caverns of the dragon Icewing. Filtch needs bits of three magical plants for an unsavory reason of his own—Olis Eye, Moonreed, and Floating

Palm, all rumored to grow in the Mist Swamps. Filtch knows the secrets of Icewing's caverns, but he refuses to sell his knowledge or lead a team. He also does not want to go mucking about in a marsh, so Filtch and Delthrien strike a deal. They agree to swear a blood promise and make the following oaths:

"I, Delthrien, elven Archer, promise to travel to the Mist Swamps. There I shall obtain leaves from three magical plants: Olis Eye, Moonreed, and Floating Palm. I shall be diligent in my efforts in the swamps. I shall slay the dangerous beasts that dwell there with my True Shot. I shall not tarry nor accept any other deed until I have secured the leaves. I shall find these before the start of winter season. I shall then return to this tavern and deliver the leaves to Filtch the Thief. With Filtch I mix my blood in promise."

"I, Filtch, windling Thief, promise to travel to the caverns of the dragon Icewing. I shall use my Silent Walk to tread through his caverns more softly than snow falling on a quiet night, and there I shall obtain the arrow Winter Fury. I shall be diligent in my efforts. I shall not tarry or accept any other deed until I have secured Winter Fury. I shall find the arrow before the start of winter season. I shall then return to this tavern and deliver Winter Fury to Delthrien the Archer. With Delthrien I mix my blood in promise."

Blood Magic increases the roll associated with the deed named in the blood promise by +4. In the example above, Delthrien would add +4 to his attack roll while using the True Shot Edge, while Filtch would add +4 to his Stealth roll while his using Silent Walk Edge. The bonus lasts until the promise is broken or for a year and a day. The character applies this increase whenever he uses the associated skill or ability for the duration of the oath, whether the character uses it to fulfill the promise or for some other purpose. The characters must fulfill the promise within the agreed time or the oath is violated.

A character who violates a blood promise oath manifests a magical wound on the forehead. These wounds last for a year and a day from the time the blood promise is broken, and will not heal naturally during this time.

A character may attempt to heal the wound using a healing potion for each wound (see **Blood Wounds**,

p. 160). If the result is successful, the wound heals, but leaves a runic scar. These scars permanently mark the character as a blood promise betrayer, though they can be hidden with costumes, make-up, or illusions.

If both characters keep their promise, a small patch of hair (or scales or rock, as appropriate for the race) on each character becomes the color of topaz, rubies, sapphires, or emeralds. When they meet after fulfilling the promise, the characters may immediately regain the penalty that making the promise cost them.

Characters may only swear one blood promise at a time.

Blood Sworn

The most potent Blood Magic oath is the blood-sworn oath. Only characters who hold Helpful attitudes toward each other may take the oath of the **blood sworn**. Each character must previously



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have demonstrated the depth of his loyalty to the other at least three times, usually by taking considerable risks for the benefit of the other character or otherwise behaving in a manner generally recognized as loyal. At least three years of loyal behavior must pass between the first loyal action and the time the characters become blood sworn. Characters may be blood sworn to only one other character.

The characters begin the blood-sworn ritual by cutting their foreheads and their chests over their hearts, drawing blood. This causes a permanent –1 penalty to Vigor rolls when resisting Fatigue.

One character then wipes the blood from his forehead with his left hand and presses his blood-smeared hand onto the forehead cut of the other character, reciting the first part of the oath as he does so. The other character then repeats this gesture. The first character then wipes the blood from his chest with his right hand and gently presses that hand against the cut in the other character's chest, reciting the second part of the oath as he does so. The second character repeats the gesture.

The blood-sworn oath varies according to area and race, but all include the same elements as the following example.

First Oath: *"As the sun rises each day, I shall think of you. As the stars shine each night, so shall you be constantly in my thoughts. As night follows day, so closely shall we share our separate thoughts. I shall know you as completely as you shall know me. This I swear to you."*

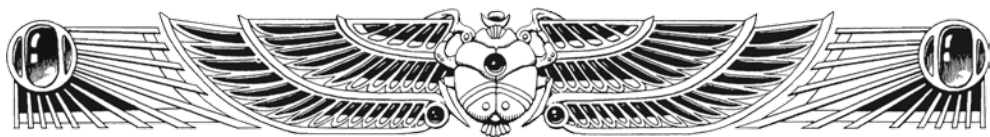
Second Oath: *"As the blood of my heart touches yours, so shall I touch your feelings. As your heart beats against my hand, so shall your feelings touch mine. My loyalty shall be yours. My courage shall be yours. The strength of my heart shall flow through your veins. When there is need, I shall be strong for both of us. This I swear to you. We are blood sworn."*

Blood Magic sustains the oath of the blood sworn for a lifetime. Blood-sworn characters must be loyal to each other, protect each other, and serve each other for the rest of their lives. The Game Master determines whether the characters fulfill their oath. A blood-sworn character who violates his oath receives a wound, struck by Blood Magic, that last for three years and three days from the day the oath is broken. After three years and three days, the wound can be healed naturally, but never before this time, no matter how powerful the magic (short of the magic from a Passion).

Blood-sworn characters who remain loyal friends gain several advantages for the duration of their friendship. First, each character increases one attribute value by 2 ranks and a second by 1 rank. This increase cannot be applied to Vigor. Second, each character gains the Blood Share Edge, even if they don't meet the requirements. Blood-sworn characters use the Blood Share Edge to transfer damage between themselves, rather than between a character and a mount (see **Chapter 5: Edges** in the *Player's Guide*). If a character already possesses the Blood Share Edge, she gains it again as a separate Edge.

Blood Share between two blood-sworn characters provides more power than the ordinary Edge by enabling a blood-sworn character to raise his friend from the dead. In order to raise a blood-sworn character from the dead, a character's Vigor die must equal or exceed the number of days her friend has been dead. The character must be able to absorb enough of the dead character's wounds to reduce the number of wounds to 3 or fewer. Each successful use of Blood Share in this way causes a permanent –1 penalty to the character's Vigor rolls.

Blood-sworn characters also gain the Thought Link and Empathic Sense Edges, even if they don't match the requirements (see **Chapter 5: Edges** in the *Player's Guide*). These Edges, however, can only be used between sworn characters.



CHAPTER 4: GM CHARACTERS

Follow me, my friends. I know this tavern's owner, and he always keeps a cask of a special brew behind the bar for me... Myrthion, my good man, five mugs of the good stuff, please. Zounds—you're not Myrthion!

—Swordmaster Luthan discovers that one more reliable fixture in his life has changed.

This section offers additional guidelines for making Game Master Characters an active and ongoing part of adventures and campaigns. This section also provides Game Master Character profiles who represent a variety of ordinary citizens of Barsaive that adventurers may encounter on a regular basis. You can drop these fully developed characters into your campaigns with very little work. Because the Player Characters may also meet extraordinary Game Master Characters who are Adepts like themselves, this section provides rules for creating such characters, who are usually equal or superior to the characters controlled by the players. Adept Game Master Characters usually appear as opponents rather than townspeople.

ROLES

Game Master Characters may fill several roles in an EARTHDAWN game. Player Characters may count some Game Master Characters as friends and supporters; some Game Master Characters act as opponents; others function simply as merchants and other neutral characters. All types of Game Master Characters hold various degrees of importance. Many Game Master Characters play small, unimportant roles in an adventure, serving mostly as arrow fodder; for example, the henchmen of the evil wizard or random ork scorchers that roam the countryside. Once they appear, these characters rarely survive to reappear in your campaign. Once revealed, they're dead or gone. Only those with an extraordinary gift for self-preservation make it past the first encounter; the Game Master may also make an effort to save and reintroduce those with an unusual (and fun) character.

Some Game Master Characters will play a more important role in your campaigns. For example, the characters may come to depend on the merchant from whom they buy their adventuring equipment, the tavern owner who always knows the latest rumors and gossip, and the blacksmith who understands horses better than anyone else. These characters are likely to become permanent fixtures in your campaign, and may become a part of the characters' lives.

The Game Master Characters who play the most significant roles in adventures or campaigns are those who will help unfold the story of EARTHDAWN, legendary characters such as King Varulus III, Queen Alachia, and Mountainshadow the dragon. These characters can become allies, employers, and opponents. Because RedBrick understands how useful this type of Game Master Character can be in a campaign or other long-term setting, certain characters may reappear from time to time in our published products. Their stories will provide examples for how to use similar characters of your own creation. For example, Garlthik One-Eye, ruler of Kratas, may be the mastermind behind the scheme of an adventure or a novel, or may marshal his forces to oppose the master-mind who hired the Player Characters. The plainly dressed storyteller in the local tavern may turn out to be the famed elven Troubadour Adept Millat.

Of course, we fully expect that you will decide to incorporate some of these same people into your campaigns as Game Master Characters. If the stories we create around these characters do not match the stories you tell about them, just remember that these are legends of EARTHDAWN; they live richly varied lives, and not everything said about them is true.



CHAPTER 4: GM CHARACTERS

TYPES

Though many different types of Game Master Characters appear in *EARTHDAWN* adventures and campaigns, the three types who have the most impact on the Player Characters are patrons, opponents, and supporters. Each type of Game Master Character can serve one specific or several different purposes in an adventure or campaign.

Patrons

Patrons are essentially Game Master Characters who help the players' characters on an ongoing basis. Though similar to supporters (see below), patrons perform a slightly different function: while supporters only help characters, patrons may also hire the characters to perform missions or to undertake quests or journeys.

For example, characters could enjoy the patronage of an important person such as the head librarian of the Library of Throal. In exchange for providing them assistance whenever the characters are in Throal, the librarian might trade favors by asking the characters to journey to the rumored location of a forgotten kaer to search for historically important records. The librarian might also take advantage of the group's experience and status and ask them to transport important documents from Throal to Jerris, or Travar, or some other important city in Barsaive.

The Game Master can use patrons as a springboard for adventures, a technique especially useful for those times when you have to nudge your players a bit to get them into an adventure. By establishing a patron, you essentially keep the characters on retainer; they are available to be hired on short notice because they feel a loyalty to and may "owe" their patron. A word of warning, however: avoid using the patron to draw the characters into the adventure too often. The characters may begin to act as if every adventure must be predetermined, and the players may feel that they have no control over which adventures their characters participate in. This will take the fun out of the game for everyone.

Patrons also provide a logical and convenient way to begin an *EARTHDAWN* game by giving individual characters a common purpose and goal. By the time they've journeyed together on an adventure or two, the characters may decide to stay together for reasons

unrelated to their patron. For example, the characters may find a magical treasure while fulfilling a mission for their patron, then decide to continue to adventure as a group in order to learn the history of the item and unlock its magical abilities.

The patron's mission can also serve as a device to get the characters to the "real adventure." For example, the patron may ask the characters to carry an item or scroll from Throal to the Dragon Mountains. On the way there, or en route to their next destination, the characters discover a deserted kaer. This is the heart of the adventure; the journey served to get the characters to that location so that they could uncover the lair of the Horror that has been feeding on the nearby locals since the end of the Scourge.

Patrons come from all walks of life. Some are sages, others are Questors of the Passions, still others hold posts in town or city government. The patrons in your game can be any of these types or any other person you may imagine.

Opponents

Game Master Character opponents are, simply put, the bad guys in an *EARTHDAWN* adventure. They are the evil Nethermancer who uses the population of a town for his experiments with the denizens of the netherworlds; Theran slavers, constantly on the lookout for towns and villages to raid for ever more slaves; the Questors of the Mad Passions, those who work to destroy the power of the other Passions and increase the power of their own.

Opponents represent the most common type of Game Master Characters you will use in your adventures. Good stories usually center around strong characters; the best stories have good opponents, fully realized characters with complex personalities, a variety of quirks, and everything else that makes up a real person. Make the opponents of your adventures as real as possible by giving them unique characteristics and goals. Give their actions a reason—don't create an evil Wizard who acts that way "just because he's evil." Figure out his motivation. Maybe he is evil because his desire to attain power overwhelms all else. Reaching his goal justifies the consequences of his actions, and he lets no one stand in his way.

One way to create well-rounded opponents for your adventures is to use the character creation

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system provided in the *Player's Guide*. Put as much thought into your opponent character as the players give to their characters; after all, Game Master Characters are your vehicle for creative expression in the game. Answer the questions in **Flesh Out Your Character** in the *Player's Guide* for each opponent you create. This will help prevent your opponents from becoming dime-a-dozen throwaway bad guys.

Most importantly, good opponents should live through more than one adventure. Make every effort to keep good opponents alive to plague the characters over and over again. If the characters face the same opponent several times over time, they are likely to feel more heroic when they finally defeat him for good than if they just beat the most recent in a long line of one-time opponents.

Supporters

Supporters are Game Master Characters who are allied with the players' characters and hold Neutral or better attitudes toward the characters. Supporters serve many functions; they act as additional eyes and ears for the character, keeping tabs on events in the character's absence. They can lend aid to the

character, and some supporters may even travel with the character from time to time. Supporters serve as supporting players to the character. They often provide vital clues or other assistance, but the character has to provide the heroic deeds.

Many legends describe heroes as being fated to meet their supporters. Other stories describe the bond between supporter and hero as a form of Blood Magic. Both accounts apparently carry some truth, because heroes are known to gain supporters through effort, destiny, and Blood Magic.

Rules for using supporters in your EARTHDOWN campaign will appear in forthcoming EARTHDOWN products.

Adepts

Game Masters who want to create more powerful and complex Game Master Characters can create Adepts. Adept Game Master Characters can be supporters, opponents, or patrons. For example, the characters might find a unique tavernkeeper and retired adventurer to act as their patron; a casual acquaintance often met in the same weapon shop could become a supporter.

GM CHARACTER PROFILES

So many Namegivers in this town. So much opportunity!

—Zethris, Thief of Kratas

The following profiles describe typical Game Master Characters for use as supporters, guards, opponents, and so on. Feel free to alter these profiles to suit your game. Game Master Characters denoted with a ☉ in their name are Wild Cards.

ELVEN SAGE

"So you need to know if that old sword you acquired is the Great Blade of Sanquadrada or just a lump of forged metal? You have come to the right place, friend. All heroes need magic, and I can tell you if you are holding it in your hands."

Both a historian and a source of magical information, the elven sage links the arcane



past with the magical present. Magic and knowledge represent power throughout the land, and the elven sage can provide access to both.

ELVEN SAGE

Attribute: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Healing d6, Investigation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Knowledge (History) d10, Stealth d6

Charisma: –; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4

Edges: Investigator, Scholar (Knowledge [Arcana], Knowledge [History])

Gear: Dagger, quill, ink, endless parchment, impressive library collection

Special Abilities

Low Light Vision: Elven eyes amplify light like a cat's, allowing them to see in the dark. Elves ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

QUOTES

"Remove this junk from my sight."

CHAPTER 4: GM CHARACTERS

"Runic carvings? Hmmm, very interesting. Hand me that book."

"Power? You don't know the meaning of power until you've held in your hands the Ruby Scimitar of Death!"

DWARF MERCHANT

"Welcome, welcome. Please take your time and browse. You'll find everything you want or need. If it's not here, it doesn't exist. You say your friend only speaks troll? Not to worry. I speak all the languages of the land fluently—just another service that I am happy to provide. Oh, you would like to trade? Please step into my office."

"Anything and Everything" is the dwarf merchant's motto. His shop is full to bursting with supplies from all over Barsaive and select items from Thera. The merchandise ranges from the mundane to the exotic: elven-made clothes, Thera tomes, t'skrang spices, dwarf tools, windling weapons. The merchant considers no item too bizarre to stock in his emporium, and sees every person who steps into his shop as a potential sale. On rare occasions he may offer a guarantee on his product after the transaction is complete.

DWARF MERCHANT

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Driving d8, Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d4, Streetwise d8, Taunt d6

Charisma: —; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Connections, Strong Willed

Gear: Draft horse, wagon, trade goods, dagger, light crossbow

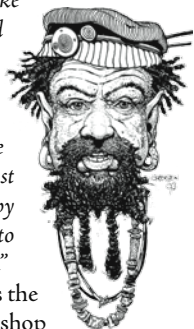
Special Abilities

Infravision: Dwarfven eyes are accustomed to the dark of the mountains. They ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

QUOTES

"It is a well-known fact that the legendary hero Thom Hammerblade bought fifty feet of rope from this length right here."

"Windling spears, windling spears—let me think. Ah yes, I stock them near the toothpicks."

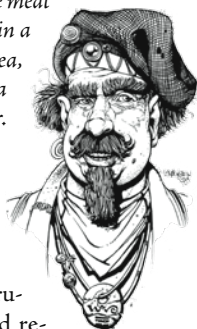


"I'm very sorry, but I do not have the item you seek at the moment. It seems my supplier angered some river pirates. We hope to find his body soon."

HUMAN TAVERN OWNER

"Sit down and have an ale. The meat is roasting and should be ready in a moment. You're new to this area, aren't you? Looking to forge a legend of your own, I'll wager. Well, rumor has it..."

People come to the tavern to eat, drink, be entertained, and to meet other people. The tavern owner wears many hats—bartender, entertainer, rumormonger. He watches and remembers the comings and goings of all characters who pass through his humble establishment and, with the help of some silver pieces, may be persuaded to share this information.



HUMAN TAVERN OWNER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Gambling d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d10, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8, Taunt d6

Charisma: —; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Edges: Connections, Strong Willed

Gear: His lucky club.

QUOTES

"Rumors are free. Facts, now that's another matter."
"Bitter?! That ale has aged for well over three days, Sir Connoisseur!"

"Hey! Keep your dirty hands off the servers!"

DWARF SCRIBE

"Please speak slowly and clearly. Remember, this will be stored in the Great Library of Throal. Your stories will be repeated throughout the land, and young and old alike will revere you for your deeds for generations to come."

The dwarf scribe is your ticket to immortality. He can transform a humiliating drubbing at the hands of a group of gargoyles into an epic battle between good and



EARTHDOWN GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

evil. He rarely involves himself personally in adventures, preferring to live vicariously through his employers' adventures. If a story is boring, he can make it interesting. And if a tale is interesting, he can make it legendary.

DWARF SCRIBE

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Investigation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Knowledge (History) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d6

Charisma: —; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 7

Edges: Linguist, Luck

Gear: Quill, ink, and endless parchment

Special Abilities

Infravision: Dwarven eyes are accustomed to the dark of the mountains. They ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

QUOTES

"Of course my name goes at the top of the page. I'm doing all the writing, am I not?"

"If you kill a dragon in the deepest woods but no one was there to write it down, did it really happen?"

"I would prefer you pay me in advance, good sir, before you fight the Horror."

ORK MERCENARY

"I fight for a living. It's never a pretty job and you only get paid if you survive, but I do it because I'm good at it. If you need an experienced fighter, I'm your man. I don't do work that requires me to think much, I don't look after mewing babes, and I don't fight for the Therans. Now, show me your silver and we'll hammer out the terms."



The ork mercenary knows only one thing, but he knows it well—how to fight. Highly opinionated and disdainful of anyone he considers incompetent, most employers value his skills enough to overlook his often abrasive personality. The ork mercenary is no fool, and always demands handsome compensation for high-risk tasks.

ORK MERCENARY

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Riding d8, Streetwise d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d8

Charisma: —2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Edges: Brawler, Combat Reflexes

Gear: Ringmail, broadsword, dagger, warhorse

Special Abilities

Low Light Vision: Orks eyes amplify light like a cat's, allowing them to see in the dark. Orks ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

QUOTES

"I have scars older than you, lad."

"Sharpen your blades, here come the Therans."

"Flank, shmank—just hit that fiend swinging the big axe. Yes, the one in front of you trying to take off your head."

T'SKRANG RIVER PIRATE

"Greetings and salutations, friends. Do not let my appearance deceive you. The stories you have heard about the t'skrang are most untrue. The dwarves started those vicious lies because they envy our ability to sail the river. They accuse us of stealing because they envy our, ah, resourcefulness. Take these elegant elven cloaks, for instance. I found them aboard an abandoned ship. It's not my fault the elves are so irresponsible as to allow an unmanned ship to float down the Serpent River."



The t'skrang river pirate's charismatic and flamboyant personality disguises her formidable fighting prowess. She operates under her own code of ethics, and no ship is safe from this scoundrel. On the whole an unpredictable lot, many pirate tales circulate through the land from the elven court to Throal and Thera. Some stories recount tales of vile torture and ruthless cruelty, while others describe practical jokes perpetrated on unwary travelers sailing the Serpent River. Though generalizing about such individualists is dangerous, most pirates harbor a strong sense of loyalty and will befriend for life someone who does them right. On the other hand, they show double-crossers no mercy.

T'SKRANG RIVER PIRATE

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

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Skills: Boating d12, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Streetwise d8, Swimming d10, Throwing d8

Charisma: -2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7 (1)

Edges: First Strike, Quick

Gear: Hardened leather armor, rapier, dagger

Special Abilities

Tail Attack: The t'skrang tail allows them to tail slap in combat for Str+d6 damage.

QUOTES

"We will board your ship, take all of your goods, and if you cooperate, we won't turn the Serpent River red with your blood."

"Stealing is such a strong word. I prefer to think of your contribution as a toll for using our section of the river."

"I threaten you not. Only question, good sir. Can you swim to shore from here?"

BLOOD ELF ELEMENTALIST

"A stranger to the ways of the Elven Court, are you? Well tread carefully, gentle lady. The magic that you outsiders wield is nothing compared to the dark forces we control. All that surrounds you breathes with life and keeps constant vigil."



Dark and brooding, the blood elf Elemental may aid you if it will gain him favor with the Elf Queen. But if he perceives you as a threat, he will hunt you like an animal. Factions and politics breed in the Blood Wood like nowhere else in Barsaive, so think hard before seeking the Elemental's aid. Alliances shift like the wind and woe betide the unlucky soul who suddenly finds himself backing the wrong faction.

BLOOD ELF ELEMENTALIST

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d8, Spellcasting d12, Stealth d8

Charisma: -; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5

Adept Edges: Air Speaking, Arcane Background (Elementalist), Bargain with Summoned Creature, Elemental Hold, Metal Ward, Summon

Discipline Edges: Elemental Adept

Gear: Dagger, staff, grimoire

Threads: 10

Spells: Any 14 Elementalism spells

Karma Points: 15

Special Abilities

Low Light Vision: Elven eyes amplify light like a cat's, allowing them to see in the dark. Elves ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

Pain Resistance: The constant pain caused by the Ritual of the Thorns allows blood elves a higher pain threshold than most other Namegivers. This grants blood elves a +2 bonus to any roll to resist a pain effect. In addition, penalties caused by Wounds are 1 less than normal (for example, -1 penalty for 2 Wounds rather than -2).

Spell Defense: The Ritual of the Thorns increases a blood elf's resistance to magic, granting him 4 points of Mystic Armor.

QUOTES

"Pain you know not."

"I do not cast my magic for the likes of you."

"The Queen alone commands my obedience."

WINDLING THERAN SPY

"Information can make you rich. Any information, no matter how trivial it might seem, is worth something to someone. Now, the Therans reward loyalty very handsomely, so when you hear something, tell only me. I would truly grieve if compelled to visit you in the dark of night. Hearing of a hero who dies in her sleep always saddens my heart—such a waste of potential."



The windling Theran spy is a master of stealth and cunning. Privy to some of the most closely guarded secrets in Barsaive, he plays an essential part in the political ambitions of many Therans. A ruthless and deadly character, many look at his unimposing appearance and judge him insignificant and harmless. Do not make this misjudgment. Many heroes have paid for it with their lives.

WINDLING THERAN SPY

Attributes: Agility d12+1, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d8, Investigation d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d12, Stealth d12, Streetwise d12, Survival d10

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 4

Edges: Linguist, Noble

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Gear: Dagger

Special Abilities

Flight: Windlings have a flying pace of 6".

QUOTES

"If they catch us, remember—you don't know me and I don't know you."

"We are only criminals if our side loses."

"You must be mistaking me for another windling. We all look the same to you, you know."

OBSIDIMAN MESSENGER

"Trustworthy, honest, and reliable—it's not just a motto, it's a way of life. Some messages I carry are inane, some are matters of life and death. I don't care, I get them through all the same. Don't try and stop me. I can fight if need be."

A strange single-mindedness seems to possess the obsidian messenger when he carries a missive. These individuals consider their tasks a sacred duty and perform them with unflagging dedication, regardless of the message's content. As a result of their impeccable reputation and personal integrity, people throughout Barsaive accord them great respect and so keep their services in great demand. Many obsidian messengers have reached legendary status by overcoming tremendous obstacles to deliver messages.



OBSIDIMAN MESSENGER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Notice d10, Survival d12, Tracking d8

Charisma: —; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 9

Edges: Fast Healer, Luck

Gear: Pack, 2 weeks worth of trail rations

QUOTES

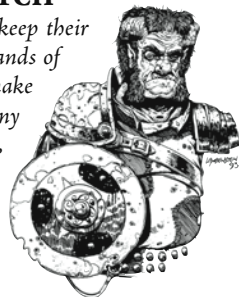
"I regret the damage to the guards, but I carry a message addressed to you."

"I am merely the messenger."

"Greetings. I carry a message from the city of Iopos. The missive is from Lady Nessel to one Sir Flower-of-my-Heart."

TROLL CITY WATCH

"The people pay me to keep their town secure, and roving bands of so-called heroes like you make my life difficult. And when my life gets difficult, I get mad, and when I get mad I like to take it out on roving bands of heroes. So I have only one rule—don't make my life difficult."



The troll city watch's job is to keep the peace, and if he has to break a few skulls to do it, so be it. He's got a bad attitude, a big weapon, and the law on his side. In short, he's your worst nightmare—a troll with a badge of office.

TROLL CITY WATCH

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+1, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8

Charisma: —2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Edges: Alertness, Brawler, Fleet Footed

Gear: Polearm, ring mail, dagger

Special Abilities

Infravision: Troll eyes are accustomed to the darkness of caves. They ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

QUOTES

"Meet my good friend Sir Pole-Axe."

"You're beginning to make my life difficult, young sir."

"Have you ever had a grown troll sit on your chest until your face turned purple and you begged for mercy? It can be quite easily arranged."

HUMAN CULTIST

"Have you not heard of the Shield of Slangue the Merciless? Its ancient power would dwarf your wildest imaginings. I will search for the Shield until my bones lie bleaching in the sun. Countless others would also gladly give their lives to return the Shield to its faithful worshippers."



Hope drives the cult member. Striving against all odds, he searches for one legendary artifact, though no proof exists to show that it is real. He believes the artifact

CHAPTER 4: GM CHARACTERS

holds the power to right the evils the Horrors wrought, and he will spend his entire life on his sacred quest. Some people question his sanity, others join him on his crusade, but none question his dedication.

HUMAN CULTIST

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Arcana) d8, Notice d8

Charisma: —; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

Hindrances: Delusional

Edges: Assassin, Brave, Danger Sense

Gear: Dagger, 3 darts, 3 doses of lethal poison

QUOTES

“What do you mean my map is wrong? Where’s the town that should be here?”

“The Shield is holy, that is all an infidel like you need know.”

“Only the holy Shield can remove the evil stain the Horrors left on the world and make our dwelling place pure again.”

IMPORTANT GM CHARACTERS

In this city, it’s not who you know. It’s how long you’ve known them.

—Garlthik One-Eye, Thief Adept

Game Master Characters play an important role in EARTHDAWN adventures and campaigns. The Game Master Characters described in this section are Barsaive’s movers and shakers, important people whose decisions and actions have consequences beyond their own personal spheres. When designing new adventures, Game Masters may find these characters useful as either central players or important background influences.

MAJOR PERSONALITIES

Though Barsaive abounds with fascinating cities, landmarks, and other notable places, the people of the province are what truly bring it to life. This section describes some of Barsaive’s best-known inhabitants, people who have made a name for themselves either through political power or by the fame of their deeds. Player Characters may interact with these Game Master Characters during adventures in any context the Game Master deems appropriate. They may, for example, become the characters’ patrons, enemies, or supporters.

The major personalities described in this section include such notables as Queen Alachia of Blood Wood, King Varulus III of Throal, and the Theran Overgovernor Kypros.

Because many of these characters are powerful individuals with concerns far more pressing than those faced by an ordinary band of adventurers, the Player Characters may not immediately meet these individuals face to face. Instead of a direct encounter with King Varulus, they might first meet one of his

messengers, just as they might first have dealings with the personal guard of Uhl Denairastas, leader of Iopos, rather than with the ruler himself. Whether or not the adventurers and the important figure meet in person, these Game Master Characters may still take an interest in the Player Characters and influence the course of the adventure.

Included in each character’s description is the character’s Discipline and the place he or she calls home. Those who call Barsaive their home tend to roam the land, rarely staying long in any one place for very long.

Acharuss

A Swordmaster Adept and notorious pirate, Acharuss is a green-scaled t’skrang nearly six feet tall, with silver-gray flecks along his spine. As he plies the Serpent River north of the Kingdom of Throal in his riverboat, the sight of the Gomius’ 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. Acharuss shares every scrap of profit with his loyal crew, each of whom would gladly die for him. (And on occasion some of them have.) Acharuss returns this loyalty in full measure, paying his crewmen well and looking after the families of those who have died in his service. 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.

Alachia, Elven Queen

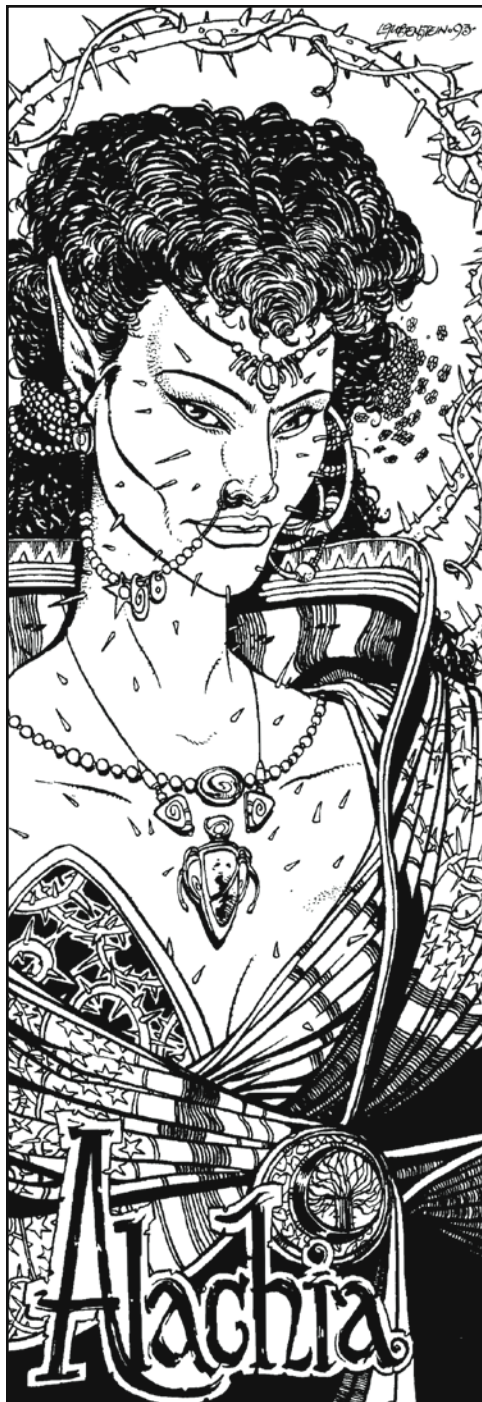
Beautiful, vain, generous, spoiled, clever, temperamental, and impatient, the Queen of the Elven Court inspires both love and fear beyond measure. Her skin glimmers with the whiteness of the full moon, and her long red hair flows down her back and curls around her shoulders like flames. The thorns that grow from her flesh, far from marring her beauty, give it the power and depth of anguish. Not only her terrible beauty, but also her talents as a masterful Troubadour Adept make the queen alluring to all who see or speak with her.

Determined to keep control of her court, Alachia admits to no one her secret fears that her people erred in escaping the Horrors by ruining their bodies and closing off their souls. She cannot help but remember the time before the Scourge, when all elvenkind was united under her rule. In those days, she commanded a kingdom to be reckoned with, a kingdom whose might and beauty outshone such upstarts as Throal and Thera. Where once other elven realms might have worked against rival states at her command, the diminished power of Blood Wood means that Alachia must deal directly with the other powers of Barsaive. Rather than choosing sides, she plays Throal and Thera against each other as she rebuilds the Elven Court's strength.

Bronze Eyes

This crafty ork is a Cavalryman Adept and the chieftain of the Iron Fist raider tribe. He is thin for his race and has black eyes that shine with unnerving intensity, seeming to penetrate the secret thoughts of everyone in his presence. Though his war-skilled people fight every battle with the practiced discipline of a scorcher cavalry, they are far too unruly to become anything more than raiders. They love violence and looting, and they hate to work with anyone else.

Bronze Eyes' daughter, Tresgg, causes him more than a few troubles. Some among the Iron Fist whisper that Tresgg is in love with Tarjak Stormcloud, the son of the Broken Fang tribe's chieftain. The Iron Fist and Broken Fang tribes thrive on the animosity between their two bands, and Bronze Eyes has ordered his daughter to stay away from the Stormcloud whelp. He is well aware, however, that his daughter has all his cleverness and then some.





She will find a way to disobey him if she so chooses, and Bronze Eyes knows it.

Bronze Eyes often lies awake at night, wondering if his daughter is lying to him. Besides being personally painful, the current state of affairs poses real dangers. Already his people have begun to grumble and make mocking jokes about his lack of authority. Bronze Eyes knows it is only a matter of time before some voices begin to whisper that an ork who cannot keep his daughter away from the son of his enemy has not the strength to lead the Iron Fist tribe. He is certain that some of his own people are plotting to remove him, kill his daughter, and take over the tribe.

Byth Vesten

An accomplished Warrior Adept, this gangling human walks and stands with a permanent stoop. Though he serves capably as magistrate of Jerris, his long, bony face wears a perpetual look of concern. Some suggest that the pressures of administrating such a strange city wear him down. Others with a more mystical bent claim that Byth is haunted by some past event that weighs heavily on his soul, or by a creature that lurks unseen in the city of Jerris.

Charok Redhand

Though aging and weary, this chieftain of the Broken Fang tribe can still turn cantankerous and violent. He is a veteran ork Cavalryman Adept, whose broad face is wrinkled with age and whose eyes are so white and cloudy that many mistakenly believe he is going blind. Turning his apparent weakness to advantage, Redhand plays up the supposed loss of his sight to throw opponents off balance. He can still throw a powerful punch, too, and few among his people would willingly antagonize him.

With his time running out, Charok has been grooming his son to take his place as chieftain and to carry on the tribe's tradition of plunder and mayhem. Though his advisors have tried to tell him of his son's amorous adventures with Tresgg Heatsky of the Iron Fist tribe, Charok dismisses such tales as gossip from people with too much time on their hands.

Chorak Bonecracker

A massive troll the size of a tree, this Sky Raider Adept almost always appears drenched in red paint



or blood. As the chieftain of the Blood Lore crystal raiders who live in the Twilight Peaks, Chorak believes he must set an example for his people and exceed every other living troll in his lust for blood and killing. In recent years, Chorak has taken to laughing unexpectedly in public. His trollmoot is divided on the debatable charm of this habit; some see it as a delightful extension of battle lust, while others wonder if he has taken one too many blows to the head. A third party suspects that this strange behavior may stem from the influence of a Horror, but has not dared say so openly.

Clystone

The beleaguered magistrate of Bartertown, this tall, gaunt human has gone prematurely gray. Clystone's face and body both show the strain of his thankless job, negotiating disputes between the inhabitants of Bartertown and the Kingdom of Throal. Though a clever Illusionist Adept, his talents have proved surprisingly useless in resolving the day-to-day difficulties of his job.

Clystone's own people cannot decide whether or not they want independence from Throal, making his task as magistrate that much more difficult. Fiercely committed to independence, Clystone feigned a middle-of-the-road position until receiving his appointment as magistrate. Once installed in office, he began to use his position to polarize the city, but justifies his actions by declaring that decisions are never made until the choices are clear.

Recently, Clystone ordered hikes in the city's import and export taxes in order to provide for more guards and civic improvements. Predictably, the measure led to the development of a burgeoning black market throughout the city. Oddly enough, the surge in smuggling surprised the normally able Clystone, who has scrambled to pull together mercenaries to keep a watchful eye on goods entering and leaving the city.

Crotias, Theran General

An ork from Thera and a great Warrior Adept, Crotias has traveled extensively throughout the Theran Empire, leading her Eighth Legion from victory to victory. She wears her fiery red hair in a long braid that hangs down to the small of her back, and rarely ventures out in public without her

heavy silver battle armor. She has recently brought the Eighth Legion to Sky Point, and her unbroken string of victories has made her overconfident of her ability to bring Barsaive back under the Theran yoke. For the Theran officials she met upon her arrival in Sky Point, Crotias has little but contempt. Not understanding why they have allowed the province to remain such a stumbling block for the past 30 years, she is eager to mount a series of campaigns to crack Barsaivian resistance. Ultimately, she dreams of leading a victorious army into Throal. Enough of a dissembler to survive Theran politics, she keeps her disdain of Overgovernor Kypros and Admiral Tularch to herself, outwardly agreeing to whatever they say while plotting ways to accomplish her own ends.

Uhl Denairastas

Ruler of the Denairastas clan of Iopos, this wizened human stands just under five feet tall, his skin wrinkled and his bones shrunk by advanced age. Though a masterful Wizard Adept with more than enough power to protect himself, he seldom leaves his fortresslike home for fear of assassination. His wealth allows him to bring his pleasures to his private chambers, and the loyalty of most of his subjects guarantees his getting virtually anything he demands. Unreachable in his fortress, Uhl conducts magical experiments disturbing in their implications, heedless of any harm he inflicts in the process. Occasional power struggles within his clan can still cause him concern, but he has safeguarded his own position by secretly killing every other Denairastas family member who gained too much power. These selective assassinations have sealed his power over any of his relatives.

Earyl Bloodstroke

An ork Cavalryman Adept, Earyl is the eldest son of Terath the Contemplative, chieftain of Terath's Chargers. A strapping young ork in his mid-twenties, he has already proven himself a capable warrior and worthy successor to his father. Scars cover his body, but the cheerful smile on his broad face belies the fierce impression left by his many war wounds. He bestows charming compliments with the eloquence of an elf and the vivacity of a t'skrang, and makes it a point to reward his troops after well-fought skirmishes.



As commander of the Chargers unit guarding the farmlands outside of Throal, Earyl has spent the past three years in constant contact with farmers, the citizens of Bartertown, and representatives of Throal. He has grown fond of the predominantly dwarf families he protects and does not know what he will do if the Chargers choose to cancel their contract with Throal. He has contemplated leaving the Chargers if such a thing comes to pass and volunteering to establish a force under his own command to serve King Varulus. Of course, he hopes very much that events will not force him to make that choice.

Fellidra Jer

A masterful Troubadour Adept, Fellidra Jer currently serves as the Chief Councilor of Urupa. She has led the council for the past eight 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 Kingdom of Throal. The influx of unique merchandise from across the Aras Sea has drawn many more merchants and traders from Throal and 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.

Garlthik One-Eye

This ancient ork is approaching at least one hundred years of age—if he has not already passed it. As is so often the case with Garlthik, no one knows for sure. His thick mop of hair has gone stark white, and a black patch tied with a leather cord covers one eye. Only one of his massive teeth still protrudes from his mouth, but he smiles with the same fierce joy that made him famous in his youth. A master Thief Adept, Garlthik rules Kratas, also known as the city of thieves. He likes to be called Magistrate Garlthik, relishing the grim joke of his position as the enforcer of laws in an outlaw city. His gang took control of Kratas 30 years ago during the Theran War, and for the past three decades Garlthik has ruled it with a tight rein, except for a few minor upheavals. A Thief to his very bones, the old ork truly loves



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Kratas and tries to do well by it. More than anything, he wishes to establish Kratas as an independent power capable of standing up to Thera, but knows that such a task will last beyond his lifetime.

Some claim that Garlthik's long life is due to his terrible fear of death and that he wills himself to stay alive each day. Whatever the truth of the matter, he has more than once said over drinks in a tavern, "The only thing I know how to do is be alive. I don't relish the prospect of doing something different."

Herok Shatterbone

Leader of Herok's Lancers and a fine Cavalryman Adept, this sturdy ork took over command of the cavalry unit three years ago, at the young age of twenty-two. After the death of his mother, the unit's previous commander, Herok declared that he would fill her place. For a full week he fought more than a duel a day against any who wished to challenge him, defeating every opponent until he collapsed from the pain of his wounds. Having won his right to command in honest battle, he took to bed to heal.

Several of Herok's challengers, however, would not accept their defeat. Bent on revenge, they bribed Herok's healer to poison the young champion. Though barely conscious, Herok perceived the healer's treachery. Still bleeding from his wounds, he grabbed his sword and leaped upon the healer. Just before Herok struck off his head, the healer confessed to the bribe he had taken. Not knowing which of his challengers had paid the healer to kill him, Herok rushed through the camp and slew every one of them, upholding the Lancers' tradition of harsh justice.

Hithorn

A crafty windling merchant with emerald-green wings, Hithorn makes his home in Bartertown. A Questor of Chorrolis, he travels the land in search of rare items to sell to those with too much money and not enough ways to spend it. One way or another, he hears most of the rumors that pass through Bartertown, paying particular attention to those concerning recent events. He knows little about magic or ancient treasures and cares for the latter only insofar as he might acquire and sell them.

When Hithorn hears of a treasure-hunting expedition, he frequently hires his own band of adventurers to race first to the prize and bring it back. Hithorn

pays large bonuses for careful, secret work so that the other merchants and explorers won't find out that he disrupted their plans.

Isam Derr

An obsidian Warrior Adept, Isam Derr has retired to the city of Wishon in the kingdom of Throal. Though few people know it, Isam is the eldest member of the Swords of Light, leaders of the Lightbearers. Isam's position among the Lightbearers, who strive to rid the world of the remaining Horrors and all they represent, has made him a valuable advisor to King Varulus of Throal. Though he has not undertaken adventures and quests for several years, Isam remains aware of such activities in Barsaive's many cities and towns through his work with the Lightbearers as well as through his associates and contacts in all the province's major cities.

Karak Bloodeyes

A battle-ragged but powerful ork Cavalryman Adept, Karak Bloodeyes seems to have stayed alive out of sheer spite. The scars that line his face look like the blue lines of rivers on a map, and dried blood more often than not stiffens his short brown hair. This violent chieftain of the Skull Whargs has led his tribes-people into one bloody battle after another. As he invariably throws himself into the thick of the battle, he has often come close to dying from the many wounds he has taken. Amazingly tough, Karak has always managed to keep himself alive just long enough for the Questors of Garlen among his folk to tend him. Karak believes and teaches his people that all other races of Barsaive sprang from the orks generations ago. He particularly hates the dwarfs of Throal, angered that another race has gained so much power. Despising orks who aid the dwarfs, he kills such "traitors" anytime he discovers one. Both Terath the Contemplative and King Varulus III are at the head of his death list.

Kerthale

A Sky Raider Adept, Kerthale leads the Stone-claws, the most civilized of the crystal raider trollmoots living in the Twilight Peaks. Tall and broad-shouldered, with disturbing red eyes and huge hands, Kerthale is a strange sight at the Throalic court, where he appears at least once a year. Following



in his father's footsteps, Kerthale works with his fellow Barsaivians to drive the Therans out of the province. His time at court has taught him to love things Throalic, and he often brings Throalic clothes, music, slang, and customs back to his people on the Twilight Peaks. Though his people respect his fighting prowess, most regard his cooperation with Throal as another of their chief's odd notions. They will go along with Kerthale most of the time, but he often has to argue them into putting themselves at risk for the anti-Theran cause. If he proposes a raid with guaranteed plunder, the Stoneclaws gladly rally to his side against the Therans.

Kypros, Theran Overgovernor

A 40-year-old human and an accomplished Troubadour Adept, Kypros remains handsome and strong, the gray streaks in his black hair the only sign of his difficult life. His years at Sky Point have taken their toll on this loyal Theran, but the empire's belief in its righteousness sustains him through every setback he suffers.

Kypros wants to reimpose Theran control over Barsaive, but the previous overgovernor's mistakes have used up most of the resources available to him. Therefore, Kypros must use subtler means of conquest, offering sugar rather than a stick. With a Theran's natural instinct for conquest, Kypros finds this approach slow and cumbersome, especially because the kingdom of Throal has its own sugar to offer to those who waver.

Like most Therans, Kypros never questions the empire's policies. He believes that injustices in the law, if they exist, will be worked out over time. To his way of thinking, addressing them immediately at the expense of moving forward would only weaken the empire. Despite his naivete about Theran government, Kypros is a shrewd man. Though it took him some years to get his bearings, he has begun to make progress in Barsaive. His policy of encouraging Barsaivians to make slave raids on each other is weakening the province from within, and he has also begun to build alliances with several of the larger towns near the Death's Sea.

Ultimately, he intends to conquer Throal, believing that resistance to Theran rule will crumble without dwarf leadership. He believes that his masters in Thera will reward him by making him overgovernor



of the entire province, with eight lesser governors reporting to him.

Listan Fromm

A red-headed, jovial dwarf and Troubadour Adept, Listan Fromm owns the Fromm Merchant Company of Jerris. His merchant house buys and transports goods by land and airship throughout Barsaive, delivering them wherever desired. Because his business depends on his possession of one of Barsaive's few airship fleets, Fromm often finds himself in conflict with airship builders. He constantly lobbies Throal to enforce annual limits on airship production and strict standards for buyers. In the face of Throal's silence on the matter, the Fromm Merchant Company has resorted to acts of sabotage against shipbuilders, especially in the city of Jerris, where Listan has considerable influence. Pihgram Tor's shipbuilding company, the largest in Jerris, is the primary target of Fromm's illegal activities.

Monus Byre

Monus Byre, a pale-skinned elf with golden hair, leads the Living Legend cult known as the Seekers of the Heart. Believing that Blood Wood can be saved from its taint and the Elven Court purified, the Seekers bend all their energies toward this great work. Byre's accession to leadership of the cult occurred under unfortunate circumstances, however. The group's former leader, an elf named Yoruial Tan, turned up dead one morning with his throat ripped open. As yet, no one has determined how Tan's unknown assailant got past the guards and murdered him without a struggle.

Utterly dedicated to her task, Monus Byre uses her considerable skills as a Wizard Adept to further her work whenever possible. Regarding her fellow elves as beloved kin, she wants to see the Elven Court cleansed and all the elven kingdoms reunited. To this end, she has even sent emissaries to the ancient elven land of Shosara to speak of reconciliation with the Elven Court. So far, no one knows what has come of such efforts.

In the past few months, Monus Byre has come to realize that a traitor may lurk among her peers. According to secret documents kept by Yoruial Tan, just two short years ago the elf leader had rooted out a cabal in the Seekers that had planned to destroy the

Elf Queen and her people. Tan ordered the conspirators executed and considered the matter closed. His murder, however, has raised new questions about those earlier six deaths, publicly blamed on the evil Hand of Corruption. In light of these revelations, Byre has become wary and keeps a close watch on her closest assistants, trying to form a core of loyalists with which to fend off possible corruption.

Neden, Prince of Throal

Son of Varulus III and heir to the throne of Throal, 36-year-old Neden has received the finest education for a future ruler that his father could bestow upon him. Despite the prince's training and formidable skill in combat, however, many people fear that Neden is too young to withstand the rigors of ruling Throal. His life has been threatened by political intrigues almost since his birth, including several assassination attempts and a diabolical plot to poison his mind with fluids taken from the body of a Horror.

Far from weakening Neden, such experiences have only served to strengthen him, giving him maturity beyond his years. He has all of his great father's strength and determination and has begun to develop his sire's wisdom. He has already become a skilled Warrior Adept, if a slightly overconfident one. Like his father, Neden believes that he can and should accomplish the impossible.

Niss Reeves

A prominent merchant in the city of Travar, Niss Reeves has served as magistrate for three consecutive terms, a total of nine years. A gregarious troll by nature, she enjoys the job very much. 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. Her Founding Champions are consistently a cut above others, mainly because adepts and magicians enjoy working with her. A master Weaponsmith Adept, Niss spent her youth forging weapons, but nowadays deals exclusively with precious stones and jewelry.

Nugh

A talented Thief Adept, Nugh leads the Assassins branch of the Hand of Corruption. Unusually tall for a t'skrang, Nugh combines his height with his



reptilian features and a lean build to make a terrifying impression. Some say that he need not draw a weapon to kill; his demonic appearance alone has frightened some people to death. He enjoys killing immensely and possesses not an ounce of kindness.

Omasu

An obsidianman and a Troubadour Adept, Omasu owns and runs Overland Trading, one of Barsaive's largest trading companies. Overland Trading is located in Travar and does business with almost all the province's major cities, including Throal, Urupa, and even Theran-controlled Vivane. Omasu cares nothing for politics, and will trade with any who can pay him well. As a Troubadour, Omasu traveled across Barsaive, sharing stories and telling tales. His wanderings taught him the importance of trade and the profit he could make from it. Using his troubadour abilities to aid him in making new acquaintances, Omasu formed a network of business relationships that made him immensely successful in a very short time. In recent years, Omasu has focused more on trading than on pursuing his Discipline. Though he remains a troubadour, he has taken few journeys of late, preferring to stay at his luxurious home in Travar.

Pihgram Tor

The windling Pihgram Tor, recognizable by her beautiful silver and blue wings, is a skilled Air Sailor Adept and a master airship builder. Her ship-building company, Silver Clouds Shipwrights, is the largest independent company not only in Jerris, but throughout all of Barsaive. Her desire to sell her ships to the highest bidder, without a middleman, has brought her into conflict with the airship merchants, who want such practices stopped. Paid assassins have attacked Tor more than once, and saboteurs have attacked her shipyards and stolen valuable supplies. Determined to overcome every setback, so far she has succeeded. She is generous to those who deal honestly with her, even giving drakkars to a few people who have sacrificed a great deal on her behalf.

Postrish

Dark-haired, beautiful, and voluptuous, 40-year-old Postrish has considerable, hidden influence over





events in Barsaive. As head of the Broker arm of the Hand of Corruption, she sees to it that farms fail, magistrates die, and mercenaries turn traitor to their employers. Like all members of the Hand of Corruption, she believes that the Scourge left the world diseased beyond redemption. Regarding it as her destiny to destroy all she can before she dies, she turns her considerable skills as a Nethermancer Adept toward accomplishing this end. With her identity concealed, she travels back and forth across Barsaive, usually disguised as a merchant and attended by a few loyal guards. She has several residences in the provinces, some well hidden and others in wealthy districts of Jerris and Kratas. Though apparently friendly to all who meet her, she can act without being swayed by emotion whenever necessary.

Preystia Tales

The most powerful Blood Warder Adept of the Elf Queen's Court, Preystia has attained the heights of his Discipline. Like all the corrupted elves of Blood Wood, narrow thorns pierce his otherwise handsome face and body from within. Not even his fellow Blood Warders know of his true ambition, which is to find the means to transcend mortality. Not satisfied with the impossibly long lives granted to elves by nature, he wishes to evade death in whatever form it might come. Corrupt and sinister, he will go to any lengths to achieve this goal. Even Queen Alachia knows nothing of his plans, though she is aware that he sometimes hires outsiders to procure unusual items and spell components.

Quarique Oathstone

Chosen by then Overgovernor Povelis to administer the Theran-controlled city of Vivane, Oathstone is a short, rotund, middle-aged human whose stubby fingers shake whenever he is forced to make a decision. He is remarkably cowardly for a Warrior Adept—a trait that endeared him to Povelis and won him his current position of apparent influence. Though Oathstone is the titular magistrate, he takes his order from the Therans, who make his decisions and then whisper them into his ear. Unfortunately for Oathstone, the Therans expect him to keep the city running smoothly and blame him when things go wrong.

Quarique Oathstone commands no respect among the people he rules and often gets no help from his masters. He affects a stiffly pointed gray beard in an attempt to look debonair, but succeeds only in looking ridiculous. The sumptuous food at his table does little to console him, and he suspects that all the pretty women at his beck and call laugh at him behind his back. Two desires, strong and contradictory, drive him. Most of all, he longs to capture Tribas Koar, the commander of the underground that works to weaken Theran authority in Vivane. Tired of being thought a fool, Oathstone believes that capturing the rebel leader will finally win him the respect of the Overgovernor and inspire a proper degree of fear in the citizens of Vivane.

Deep in his heart, Oathstone also wishes to overturn the Overgovernor. Despite his inherent laziness and fear of rocking the boat, he sometimes dreams of aiding Tribas and throwing the Therans out of Barsaive. Such mad ideas make the little magistrate toss and turn in his sleep, yet with each passing day the idea takes a stronger hold on his thoughts.

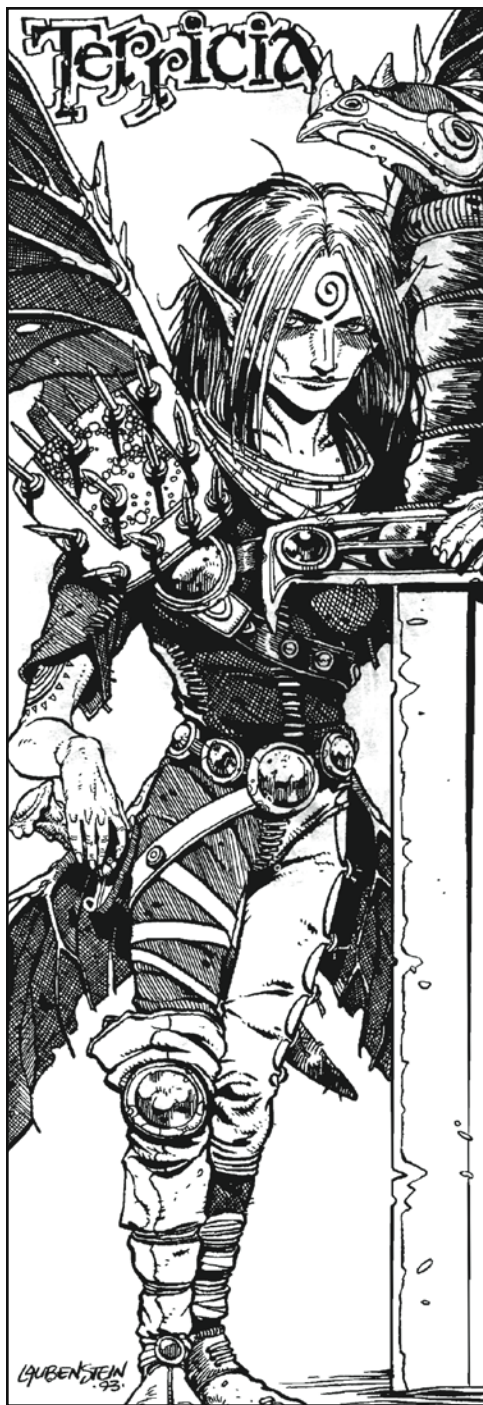
Shadowswift

A mere 20 years old, the human Shadowswift is golden-haired and slight of build. An escaped slave from Thera, he put his quick mind to use learning Throalic and studying the Troubadour Discipline. Within a few short years of settling in Bartertown, he had attained considerable skill as a Troubadour Adept and also became a successful smuggler. Though naturally high-spirited, Shadowswift reacts angrily to questions about Thera, refusing to speak of the place. He remembers nothing of the island where he grew up and does not know if he wants to.

As one of Bartertown's busiest smugglers, Shadowswift works hard to beat the city's newly enacted taxes. Though he supports Clystone's policies of strengthening the city because such measures ultimately make for better business, he feels no loyalty to the place. In his line of work, he knows any number of secret storage areas, fences who sell smuggled goods, and caravan owners willing to sneak contraband into Bartertown.

Terath the Contemplative

An ork Cavalryman Adept and commander of Terath's Chargers, Barsaive's best ork scorcher cavalry



unit, Terath is a pensive individual with reddish brown hair just beginning to turn silver. A brilliant tactician who runs a tight unit, his personal bent toward philosophizing has earned him his famous nickname. He has borrowed and studied many of King Varulus III's books, attempting to master the new legal system the king wishes to extend throughout Barsaive. Terath thinks such ideas noble but impractical, though he admires King Varulus greatly. As long as the king pays well for the services of Terath's troops and deals honestly with them, Terath willingly fights for Throal. Terath is aware of the growing rivalry between his two children, Zarass Icethought and Earal Bloodstroke, but he mistakenly believes it merely a stage of growth that will pass. He does not understand the murderous jealousy in his daughter's heart and has taken no action to dampen the rivalry between his offspring.

Terricia

This black-winged windling is a Thief Adept and serves as Garlthik One-Eye's enforcer and confidant in Kratas. Though several decades old, she retains all her skills and abilities as a thief and assassin. She is fiercely loyal to Garlthik, to whom she owes a debt for saving her life many years ago. Fiery-tempered Terricia has a strange sense of humor, often threatening to kill people even though she means them no harm. Having grown accustomed to this odd personality quirk, all of Garlthik's henchmen play Terricia's game along with her, laughing and joking as they threaten to kill each other for careless looks and words.

Torgak

A huge troll and formidable Warrior Adept, Torgak serves as magistrate of sorts for the town of Haven, the tiny community tucked into a corner of the ruins of Parlainth. Thick-bodied with almost-black skin, he looks like the rough-and-tumble adventurer he has been for most of his life. He and his cronies founded Haven years ago, and Torgak has spent the past decade trying to make his hardscrabble town a respectable place. He skims a cut from the profits on all supplies sold to adventurers who explore the ruins of Parlainth, as well as food and lodging fees paid by people entering or leaving Haven. Despite his desire to be the representative of law and order



CHAPTER 4: GM CHARACTERS

in Haven, Torgak's impulsive, violent nature often gets him into public brawls.

Tresgg Heatsky

Strong-boned and oddly beautiful for an ork, Tresgg is a Cavalryman Adept and the daughter of Bronze Eyes, chieftain of the Iron Fist tribe. Against her father's wishes, she continues to see her lover Tarjak Stormcloud, son of a rival ork chieftain. She dreams of the day when her and Tarjak's fathers have passed away so that she and Tarjak can unite the two tribes into one huge band of raiders. She pursues this difficult dream partly because of her love for Tarjak, but also to satisfy her own ambitions. Both she and Tarjak believe that their tradition-bound fathers cannot see the potential of such a union. By accomplishing this alliance that their parents lack the imagination to support, Tresgg and Tarjak hope to gain power beyond that of any ork raiding tribe. In spite of her frustration with her father's old-fashioned thinking, Tresgg loves Bronze Eyes and would not willingly hurt him.

Tribas Koar

A young human with dashing good looks and an intellect to match, Tribas Koar wants nothing more than to drive the Therans from Vivane and keep them out of Barsaive. Though he receives funds and occasional, other help from Throal, he manages on his own most of the time. His greatest challenge is to inspire those around him to risk their lives in the struggle against Thera. Many people in Barsaive still too willingly accept Theran rule out of fear or simply force of habit. Tribas desperately wants to see the kinder, more just laws of Throal spread throughout Barsaive and uses his considerable skill as an Illusionist Adept to make his case more persuasively. So great is his enthusiasm for the wisdom of Throal that when he speaks of the new laws, the words tumble out faster than he can control.

Tularch, Theran Admiral

A tall elven woman with bronze skin, silver hair, and a strong-boned face that might be handsome were its expression less grim, Admiral Tularch commands the Theran airship fleet in Barsaive from the Theran outpost at Sky Point. Years ago, before becoming admiral, Tularch assisted Overgovernor

Povelis in administering Barsaive. Povelis regarded her as a promising protege, and the two became quite close. When the soldiers of Barsaive killed the overgovernor during the Theran War, Tularch almost went mad with grief. When the Therans appointed her to succeed Povelis as overgovernor, she used her power to exact bloody revenge against the people of Barsaive. Tularch's passion for violence led to one political blunder after another, provoking fierce resistance among the local people and the loss of troops in fruitless battles designed more to kill than to conquer.

The officials back in Thera relieved her of the post, but before they could recall Tularch to Thera for discipline, the new Overgovernor Kypros pulled strings on her behalf. The two had been friends ever since the days of their apprenticeship in the Theran bureaucracy. Citing her familiarity with southern Barsaive and her exceptional abilities as an Air Sailor Adept, Kypros arranged for her promotion to admiral.

In the fifth decade of her life, Tularch wields enormous power and continues to use it for revenge. Over the past decade she has honed her battle tactics, and her raids rarely fail to inflict suffering and death on the people of Barsaive. Competent and dangerous, the only thing that keeps her from being the most dangerous woman in Barsaive is her lack of skill at playing political power games.

Varulus III, King of Barsaive

Though almost two hundred years old, Barsaive's great reformer King Varulus III of Throal remains in fine physical and mental shape. He retains his skill as a Warrior Adept by engaging in daily mock combat with his guards and through an ongoing game of *pratee*, which he plays every day with his son, Neden. Despite all this, Varulus worries as his death draws nearer. He has done his best to train Neden for the awesome burden of kingship and to mold his kingdom upon the virtues taught him by his own father, Varulus II, but he fears that he has done too little. Bartertown remains a constant source of concern at Throal's very gates, and racial brawls still sometimes break out in Throal's cities. In spite of the king's best efforts, the Therans are gaining influence in Barsaive and may gain more once Varulus is gone.



Wise though he is, even Varulus may be led to the brink of folly by his fear of death. He has secretly set his court wizards to devising a way to extend his life with “good” magic, yet embarking on such a quest might lead him to depend on strange forms of nethermancy or even on Horrors. Only time will tell whether this great ruler succumbs to such temptations.

Vellunium

Captain Vellunium, a t’skrang with silver-blue scales and a heart of gold, sails the Serpent River in his pride and joy, the *Breeton II*. Son of the famous Captain Patrochian who sailed the first *Breeton*, Vellunium is a Swordmaster Adept as well as a sailor, who trades goods, fights pirates, and helps those in need. For all his good-heartedness, he drives a hard bargain with those who can afford to pay, and his ship brings prosperity to his crew covenant.

Vistrosh

Formerly a highly-placed Blood Warder Adept, Vistrosh left the Elven Court to seek his fortune outside Blood Wood. Several years ago he settled in Kratas, within a short time becoming the leader of a powerful gang known as Brocher’s Brood, second in strength only to Garlthik One-Eye’s gang. Even those who have seen the thorn-pierced elves of Blood Wood find Vistrosh’s looks disturbing, even terrifying. He enjoys frightening people into submission, and plays up his dreadful appearance. Ultimately he hopes to supplant Garlthik as ruler of Kratas.

Yassal

A Troubadour Adept known throughout Barsaive for her eloquence and power, the tall, elegantly dressed elf Yassal has an exotic and wonderful appearance. Her travels take her across the Theran Empire and beyond the farthest borders of Barsaive, and much of what she wears and carries comes from those strange and distant lands.

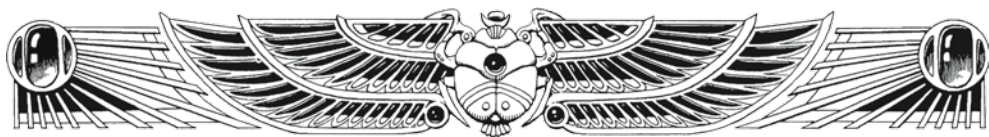
Yassal has devoted her life to continuing the work of Shantaya Nightstar. She maps the land as she journeys to its remotest regions, and faithfully teaches the travelers she meets how to use Shantaya’s sextant. Yassal frequently visits the Kingdom of Throal, sharing with the library the tales of her adventures and her revised maps of Barsaive.



Said to hail originally from the elven nation of Shosara, Yassal's favorite tales describe the adventures and accomplishments of Shantaya Nightstar. Yassal possesses an impressive repertoire of legends and tales of the time before the Scourge, of the terror and despair brought by the Scourge and the Horrors, and of the hope for the future that kept the peoples of Barsaive alive.

Zarass Icethought

An ork Cavalrywoman Adept and the only daughter of Terath's Contemplative, Zarass is strong-minded and bitter. Having watched her brother, Earyl Bloodstroke, become more and more attached to the kingdom of Throal, she believes he intends to take his half of Terath's Chargers away from their father if Terath should ever choose not to renegotiate his cavalry's contract with the dwarf kingdom. Jealousy sharpens her concern, for she has always resented her father's seeming preference for Earyl and believes Terath so blinded by his love for his son that he cannot see the coming betrayal. Already she nurtures secret thoughts of violence toward Earyl. Given time, she may yet act on them.



CHAPTER 5: TREASURES

*Keep that gleam in your eye, boy. Treasure such as I have seen gleams even more.
See what I have seen, and you too will risk death to hold it, to call it yours.*

—Garlthik One-Eye, Thief Adept

The world of EARTHDAWN is filled with fantastic magical treasures. These treasures are precious not only for their uniqueness, but because they hold within them the history of Barsaive. These treasures hold the key to the past, and allow the heroes of today to become the legends of tomorrow.

The quest for magical treasure is an important EARTHDAWN adventure goal. Though the characters will often seek out and destroy Horrors that remain in their world, the search for magical weapons to use against the Horrors is an equally important goal. The characters' heroic status makes them perfect candidates for researching and learning about magical items, and through these items rediscovering the history of Barsaive and its people.

This section provides specific rules for using Thread Magic to learn about and use magical weapons and items. Players and Game Masters may find it useful to reread the explanation of Thread Magic in **Chapter 6: Magic** of the *Player's Guide*. That information, together with Using the Treasures, below, allows characters to successfully research magical items and power them with magic—continuously activating more of each item's unique powers and properties. We have left much of the information about individual items vague enough to allow the Game Master to flesh out the details as appropriate to his group of players and current campaign.

THE NATURE OF TREASURE

Most of the treasures described here are one-of-a-kind items. These items never appear on the open market; they must be found, not bought. For this reason, your characters will never find just any old magic battle-axe. Instead, they might discover

Lorm's Axe, once wielded by Lorm the troll, and used by him to blood the Horror that claimed Kaer Jalendale. Lorm's Axe, like all treasures, has a history. The events that compose an item's history are a part of what makes the item unique. Each item's magical abilities also make it unique. It is unlikely that another magical battle-axe in all the world has the same powers as Lorm's Axe. By carefully creating descriptions of their history and abilities, all treasures in EARTHDAWN can be made individual and distinctive.

USING THE TREASURES

Characters must have the Thread Weaving Adept Edge to use the magical treasures described below. Using this Edge, a character must create a thread and attach it to the item, as explained in the *Player's Guide*. Without the thread to power these items with magical energy, these treasures often appear rather ordinary. Once powered, however, the items become extraordinary.

PATTERN KNOWLEDGE

All magical treasures have a history integral to their properties. Without the knowledge of this history, a character is wasting his time attaching a thread to the item. He ends up pouring magical energy into the wrong places; the item continues to function as an ordinary example of that item. Through studying an item's history, a character can learn the Pattern Knowledge of the item, which represents the events of its history and its True Pattern. Pattern Knowledge includes the item's name and the significant events in its history. Learning this knowledge allows the character to bring the item's magic alive and make it work for him.



CHAPTER 5: TREASURES

An item's Pattern Knowledge is made up several parts, known as Key Knowledges. An item may have any number of Key Knowledges. In order to learn the complete Pattern Knowledge of an item, a character must learn all the item's Key Knowledges. Most items have Key Knowledges at various Thread Ranks, and the character must learn the knowledge at each rank before he can increase the thread to that rank. For example, a character must learn the Rank 3 Key Knowledge before he can increase his item thread to Rank 3.

See **Chapter 6: Magic** in the *Player's Guide* for more information regarding Pattern Knowledge and Key Knowledges.

KEY KNOWLEDGES

Characters can learn an item's Key Knowledges through special Adept Edges such as Weapon History (see **Chapter 5: Edges** in the *Player's Guide*) and by researching legends, libraries, tavern lore, and other sources to find the information they need. The Key Knowledges of the treasures described in this section can only be obtained through research and adventuring.

Each **Key Knowledge** of magical items has two distinct elements: the general type of information the Key Knowledge represents, called Test Knowledge, and the specific details of that information, called Research Knowledge.

The **Test Knowledge** of a Key Knowledge is the general information that can be learned only by using the Weapon History Edge. Test Knowledge tells the character what Key Knowledge he needs to discover in order to use the item. For example:

1. The Name of the fire elemental that helped to forge Kegel's Sword.
2. The Name of the mountain that produced the iron ore used to forge Kegel's Sword.
3. The last event in which Kegel's Sword was wielded.

The **Research Knowledge** of a Key Knowledge represents the specifics of the Test Knowledge that can be learned only through research or adventuring. For example:

1. The Name of the fire elemental that helped to forge Kegel's Sword is Nogul.
2. The ore used to forge Kegel's Sword came from Mount Frost, in the Thunder Peaks.

3. Kegel's Sword was last used in the Battle of Fornn during the last days of the Theran War, when Kegel used it to kill General Timyo, leader of the Theran forces.

LEARNING KEY KNOWLEDGES

In order to learn Key Knowledges, characters must first learn the Test Knowledges by using Weapon History (refer to the Edge description in the *Player's Guide*). A character can learn only a limited amount of information with each use of the Weapon History Edge. A character can learn item Key Knowledges of Thread Ranks no greater than half of his or her Smarts die.

First Key Knowledge

The first Key Knowledge of an item is always listed at Thread Rank 1. This Key Knowledge contains the information that will give the character a starting place from which to learn the rest of the item's Key Knowledges. This first Key Knowledge always contains the following:

Test Knowledge:

1. How many Thread Ranks the item has.
2. Whether or not the item has any Deeds associated with it.

Research Knowledge:

3. The Name of the item

A successful Weapon History usage reveals the number of Thread Ranks the item has, and whether or not the character can perform a Deed in order to attach a thread to the item or increase the rank of a thread. The character must learn the Name of the item through research and adventuring.

Research Knowledge

The Key Knowledges given in the treasure descriptions are the Test Knowledges for each item. A character learns these using the Weapon History Edge and/or through research. Once a character learns the Test Knowledge, he can then decide how to find the Research Knowledge.

The Research Knowledge must be learned through either research or adventuring. Characters cannot use the Weapon History Adept Edge to learn this information. The characters must obtain it by researching legends, seeking lost kaers or citadels, finding historical tomes that contain the information



they need, and so on. Exactly how this takes place in the game is up to the Game Master.

When a Game Master introduces a magical treasure into his game, he must determine the Research Knowledges of each of its Key Knowledges. Each Research Knowledge can serve as the objective of a short adventure, and these adventures may make up a campaign to fully understand a weapon and wield it at its fullest power—probably to kill that pesky Horror that keeps getting in the characters' way.

The Game Master can set up such adventures in any way he finds appropriate, but the following guidelines may also be helpful.

CREATING KEY KNOWLEDGES

Finding the Research Knowledge of a Key Knowledge should require effort on the part of the characters seeking the knowledge. The characters should not get something for nothing. For example, a character should have to undertake a journey of some distance to find a tome that has the information he seeks, rather than merely walking to the nearest collection of books and flipping through the pages for

a few minutes. Once he arrives at his destination, he might also have to persuade the caretaker of the collection to allow him to look through the tome. To accomplish that, he may have to agree to do a favor.

The character must understand how the Key Knowledge fits into the history of the item. If, for example, a character must learn the Name of the jungle that produced the wood used to create a staff, it isn't enough for him to guess the name of the jungle, even if he manages to guess correctly. The character may research different kinds of wood to pinpoint the type used to make the staff, in the process learning about where different types of trees grow, then discovering important stands or forests of those trees. Through this process, he will understand the significance of the wood used to make the staff.

Make finding the Research Knowledge a challenge, but don't make it impossible. For example, asking a character to learn whether the person who created an item was left- or right-handed is probably an impossible task. Another impossible task might be to learn the Name of an elemental or other powerful entity. If the Game Master wants to use information

CHAPTER 5: TREASURES

of this type as Research Knowledges, he or she must take care to create a way for the characters to obtain it through clever roleplaying or unusual plans of action. The key is to create information that is difficult, but not impossible, to obtain.

The risk or cost of obtaining the information must be worth the new ability of the item. For example, having to enter the lair of a dragon to earn the Key Knowledge for a Rank 2 Thread is probably too high a cost.

The table below lists typical Key Knowledges for items, with a suggested Thread Rank for each. The Game Master can alter both the Key Knowledges and the Thread ranks as needed or desired. These suggestions may not match the Key Knowledges and ranks for the magical treasures described in this section.

Key Knowledge Table

Key Knowledge Thread Rank	Type of Knowledge
1	The Name of the item
2–3	The Name of the person who created the item or the item's specific magical abilities
4–5	The source of the material from which the item was constructed or the Name of the creature that aided in the item's construction
6–7	The Name of the last known owner/wielder of the item
8+	The last known event in which the item was used

LEARNING MAGICAL EFFECTS

When a character weaves a thread to a magical item, the item's powers become available to him. The exact effect discovered is determined by the rank of the thread the character weaves. When a character learns the Test Knowledge of an item's Key Knowledge, he also learns the type of magical effect granted at that Thread Rank. For example, the character might know that, "The sword will inflict even greater damage than normal on those struck by it." When a character learns the Research Knowledge of a Key Knowledge by adventuring, he learns the specific effect.

A character may also research the legend of an item to gain general knowledge of what abilities have been

attributed to the item during its history. Information gained in this way is rarely completely accurate, for legends often exaggerate events in favor of heroes.

Me'gana is researching the legend of Kegel's Sword. In a book contained in the Throal Library, she learns that during a battle, "a bolt of flame leapt from the blade's tip." Now Me'gana knows that the sword has some kind of flame ability, though perhaps not exactly the one described in the legend.

WEAVING THREADS TO AN ITEM

Once a character learns the Research Knowledge of the item's Key Knowledge, he may weave a thread to the item. The Difficulty Number for attaching the thread to the item with the Thread Weaving skill is determined by the rank of the thread being woven.

For more information on attaching threads to an item, refer to **Chapter 6: Magic** in the *Player's Guide*.

DEEDS

Some treasures allow characters to perform Deeds in order to earn experience points. This Deed usually relates to the history of the item, requiring a character to undertake a task similar to a task for which the item was once used, or else complete a task left undone by a former wielder of the item.

Any Deeds of a magical item must be learned in the same way as Key Knowledges; a Deed listed at a Thread Rank is the Key Knowledge for that Thread Rank. When a character makes the Weapon History roll, he learns that the Key Knowledge for a Thread Rank is a Deed, and the nature and objective of the Deed. Performing the Deed provides the Research Knowledge.

Performing the Deeds associated with an item is not always mandatory. In some cases, the Deed must be performed in order for the character to increase the item's Thread Rank. In some cases, the character makes the choice. However, the character always earns experience points for completing the Deed.

Before undertaking a Deed, a character must have learned all the Key Knowledges for Thread Ranks up to and including the Thread Rank at which the Deed is listed. If a Deed is listed at Thread Rank 4, then the character must have learned all Key Knowledges from Thread Ranks 1 through 4 before trying the Deed.

CUSTOMIZING TREASURES

The treasures listed in this section represent a small percentage of the magical items in the world of EARTHDOWN, a sampling of the treasures to be found during a campaign. Though the Game Master can use them exactly as described, we encourage the Game Master to customize the items to suit his or her campaign. To that end, we offer the following suggestions.

Our first suggestion: yes, customize! Tinker with the items. Change the Key Knowledge descriptions, the Deeds, even the effects of the items to suit events and characters from your campaign. Most players will enjoy finding truly mysterious treasure and then unraveling that mystery. Customizing treasures also lets you tie them into events and to characters that already mean something to your players. A treasure is not just an item of power, it is a link to the past. Using treasures to tie characters to the history of your campaign helps make the world more real for them.

Our second suggestion: resist the urge to make the items more powerful. By giving them more effects, or increasing the effects they have, you could inadvertently create an item that will unbalance your game. The items have been created with an eye toward game balance. Many are powerful enough as they stand.

CREATING NEW TREASURES

The following section describes new Thread Magic treasures. Though this amount should last any gaming group a while, most Game Masters will want to create their own unique magical treasures.

Go right ahead. Use the items given here as a model. But first, a word of caution: make the treasures truly unusual rather than simply powerful. If you absolutely cannot resist creating an item more powerful than those described here, extend the Thread Ranks beyond that of any item listed. For example, if a player needs to weave a Rank 12 thread before getting the “kill dragon” power of a magical sword, you have some time to see how the item works and consider changes you might want to make before your campaign goes up in a puff of magical smoke.

If you create an item that turns out to be too powerful, the best way to deal with it is to just say: oops! Explain to the players that the treasure is out

of game balance. Take it away from the characters, modify it, then let them have it back. If the item is simply too grossly unbalanced to fix, swallow hard and remove the item from play. You will be spending too much time running EARTHDOWN to let one magical treasure ruin the game for you.

THE TREASURES

The treasures described in this chapter are grouped into two categories. The first contains items which represent a general type of item (e.g., staffs with common properties). The second category contains unique, “only one like it ever” items. Each treasure description provides the item’s game information and history. The following information explains the terms used in each item description (see also Key Knowledges and Deeds, above).

Maximum Threads: A character may only weave one thread to a magic item. However, most items will hold more than one thread, so they may act magically for more than one character. If more than one character attaches a thread to an item, the character touching the item gets to use it. If an item already has the maximum number of threads woven to it and another character attaches a new thread, the thread of the lowest Rank is replaced. For example, *Monturk’s Carpet* can have, at most, two threads woven to it. If it already has two threads attached to it, one at Rank 4, the other at Rank 2 and someone weaves a new thread to the Carpet, the new thread would displace the Rank 2 thread.

Thread Ranks: This lists the Thread Rank, Key Knowledges, Deeds, and Effects the treasure has at each Thread Rank. Each item has a maximum number of Thread Ranks. A character cannot increase the rank of the thread he weaves to an item beyond the maximum listed. For example, a character with a *counterspell staff* may only increase the rank of the thread attached to the staff to Rank 6. It is simply not possible to weave a Rank 7 thread to a *counterspell staff*. Any attempt to weave a thread with a rank higher than the maximum automatically fails.

New effects are listed at each Thread Rank. If a higher Rank does not list a new effect, assume it is the same as at the previous Thread Rank. Newer, more potent effects replace lesser abilities of the same type. Unless specifically noted, the effects are not cumulative.

GENERAL TREASURES

This section describes magical items of general types. More than one item of a type may exist that exhibits the same magical properties.



BRACERS OF ARAS

Maximum Threads: 3

Bracers of Aras are made of flexible, silvery metal that wraps around the wrists and forearms of the wearer. The flexibility is a result of the elemental water that has been forged into the bracers. The elemental water pieces resemble aquamarine gems approximately 1 inch in diameter. The color of the elemental water gems is constantly changing, oscillating with a swirling effect across the spectrum from deep aqua to bright blue.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: These arm bands are made from metals found only in mines located along the shore of the Aras Sea, and are encrusted with pieces of elemental water. Each set of these bracers is Named by their creator. The wearer must learn the Name of the bracers.

Effect: The character gains a +1 bonus to his armor while wearing the bracers.

THREAD RANK TWO

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the name of the mine from which came the metals used to create of the bracers.

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to his armor while wearing the bracers.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: *Bracers of Aras* are made with elemental water gathered from the Aras Sea. When powered by a thread, the magic inherent in the elemental water protects the wearer from various

physical and magical attacks. Each set of bracers is designed to defend against a specific class or Discipline of spells. The wearer must learn the type of spells against which the bracers protect.

Effect: The character gains an additional +1 to his armor while wearing the bracers against the class/Discipline of spells.

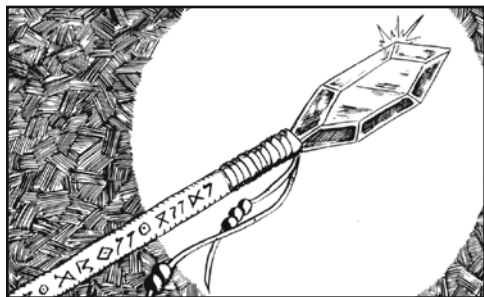
THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The character gains an additional +2 to his armor while wearing the bracers against the class/Discipline of spells.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: As mundane water contains oxygen, elemental water contains elemental air. The creators of the *bracers of Aras* formed the gems of elemental air. The ratio of water to air varies from bracers to bracers. The wearer must learn the exact ratio of water to air used to create the bracers he wears.

Effect: The bracers grant the wearer the ability to breathe underwater for a period equal to 10 minutes times the Thread Rank. This ability costs the wearer 1 Karma Point each time it is used.



COUNTERSPELL STAFF

Maximum Threads: 2

A *counterspell staff* is usually 6 feet long, topped with a finely carved crystal. The crystal is carved into any number of shapes or figures, depending on the whim of the staff's creator. *Counterspell staffs* are made of wood, usually mahogany, but on occasion maple, oak, or ebony.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the *counterspell staff*.

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Effect: Allows the wielder to cast *counterspell*, a seasoned Wizardry spell (see **Chapter 7: Spells** in the *Player's Guide*), once per day, with a range of 15".

THREAD RANK TWO

Key Knowledge: *Counterspell staffs* are designed to work against more and more magic as the Thread Rank increases. Initially they protect better against the spells of one magic Discipline. The wielder must know which magic Discipline the staff affects most strongly.

Effect: +2 bonus to counterspell spells of that particular magic Discipline. The staff's effect can now be used twice per day.

THREAD RANK THREE

Effect: Against the primary magic Discipline's spells, the bonus increases to +4. The staff affects the spells of a second magic Discipline with a +2.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Deed: The wielder may bind his or her magical energy to that of the staff, using Blood Magic to increase the staff's effectiveness. The wielder suffers a permanent -1 penalty to Vigor rolls. The ritual leaves a scar that occasionally oozes a drop of blood. The drop of blood is magically drawn to a notch in the staff; the notch glistens red for three hours after the drop hits it. As soon as the glisten fades, another drop of blood falls from the scar. This Deed must be performed in the jungle or forest where the wood of the staff originated. The Deed is worth 2 experience points.

Effect: Against the primary magic Discipline's spells, the bonus increases to +6. Against the secondary, the bonus rises to +4. The staff's effect can now be used 3 times per day.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the magician who created the staff.

Effect: Against the primary magic Discipline's spells, the bonus increases to +8. Against the secondary, the bonus rises to +6.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: Against the primary magic Discipline's spells, the bonus increases to +10. Against the secondary, the bonus rises to +8. The staff's effect can now be used 4 times per day.



CRYSTAL SPEAR

Maximum Threads: 2

As the name indicates, these magical items are spears made of solid crystal. The shafts of the spears are pentagonal (five-sided) and polished to a fine sheen. The head of the spear has a rougher finish, similar to that of the *devastator spear*, which is also made of crystal. The magic of the spear keeps the blade razor-sharp. It has a range of 3/6/12.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: *Crystal spears* were created by troll Weaponsmiths in ancient times to arm the crystal raiders in their attacks against Theran ships. No one knows how many were created or remain intact. The trolls used each spear for a single attack. Each crystal spear is Named by its creator. The wielder must learn the Name of the spear.

Effect: The damage of the spear is Str+d8.

THREAD RANK TWO

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the spear's creator.

Effect: The damage of the spear is Str+d10.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the troll Sky Raider Adept for whom the spear was created (the spear's first owner).

Effect: The spear's range increment increases to 5/10/20.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the first Theran killed by the spear.

Effect: The character may choose to spend 1 Karma Point to gain a +2 bonus to Parry while wielding the spear. The spear glows a pale blue while this bonus is in effect. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the rank of the thread woven to the spear or until the wielder attacks with the spear, whichever comes first.

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THREAD RANK FIVE

Effect: While wielding the spear, the character can draw two cards for his Initiative, keeping whichever card he prefers.

THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the name of the last person to own the weapon.

Effect: The character may choose to spend 1 Karma Point to increase the spear's damage by +d6. The spear glows a bright red when this bonus is in effect. The effect lasts for only one attack.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

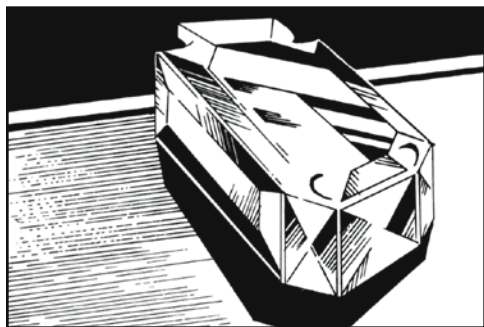
Deed: The wielder must make a pilgrimage to the trollmoot to which the spear's creator, and most likely, first owner, belonged. At the trollmoot, the character must swear a Blood Magic oath with the trollmoot's leader, suffering a permanent -1 penalty to Vigor rolls. This Deed is worth 2 experience points.

Effect: The damage of the spear is now Str+d12.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Deed: The wielder must command an airship in an attack. During the attack the character must invoke the Names of the creator, the original owner, and the trollmoot from which they came, then re-Name the spear in his or her own Name. This Deed is worth 2 experience points.

Effect: At a cost of 2 Karma Points, the wielder can cause fear in his enemies and rally his own troops. This effect causes the spear to glow bright white, the light pulsing like a heartbeat. All allies of the wielder within 50" gain a +4 bonus to attacks and damage. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Thread Rank or until the wielder uses the spear to attack.



CRYSTAL SPELL BOX

Maximum Threads: 2

A *crystal spell box* is a small box made of crystal and metal. The sides, top, and bottom are all solid pieces of crystal, with the seams between the pieces made of precious metals, most often silver or gold. The boxes are not designed to be opened. The crystal used in these boxes is usually deep amber in color, though clear and blackened crystal is used occasionally.

A *crystal spell box* measures roughly 8 inches long by 5 inches wide by 3 inches high. When such a box contains a spell, it radiates a faint glow, which intensifies as more and more spells are captured within it.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must know the Name of the item.

Crystal spell boxes were designed by the great mage Masym. The spell boxes capture spells cast by enemies and store them for later release. Whenever the box contains the maximum number of spells, a spell currently in the box must be released before another spell can be captured.

To capture a spell, the wielder of the box makes a Spellcasting roll. The TN for this roll is equal to 4 + the spell's Rank + the caster's Spirit die. The wielder may not capture his own spell. To release a spell, the wielder must make the usual rolls (if any), as if he were the spell's original caster.

Effect: The box holds 1 spell.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The box can hold up to 2 spells.

THREAD RANK THREE

Deed: Masym did not personally build every box. Apprentices worked for hundreds of hours to build the rudiments of a single box; Masym chose to complete only the best of those boxes. Discovering the Name of an apprentice and then taking the box to the grave (or final resting place) of the apprentice and leaving an offering of thanks is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: The box can hold up to 3 spells.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Key Knowledge: The wielder must know the Name of the mountain from which the crystal originated.

Effect: The box can hold up to 4 spells.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Effect: The box can hold up to 5 spells.

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THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the last person to have owned or used the box.

Effect: The box can hold up to 6 spells.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Effect: The box can hold up to 7 spells.



ESPAGRA BOOTS

Maximum Threads: 2

These fine boots are made from the hides of espagra, dragonlike, flying predators. Because of their origin, *espagra boots* are usually bright blue, interwoven with brown leather. The espagra scales also give the boots a brilliant luster, a trademark of espagra-skin products. Similar in appearance to espagra saddles, these boots are often worn by those whose work requires stealth, secrecy, or great agility.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the boots.

In present times worn mostly by thieves and rogues seeking an advantage of stealth and secrecy, these boots are spoken about in legends that tell that Theran soldiers and mercenaries wore this type of boots in the years before the Scourge. These legends contradict those stories that say these boots were first made in the city of Kratas, commissioned by the legendary ork Thief Adept, Garlthik One-Eye.

Effect: The character gains a +1 bonus to Avoid Blow rolls. If the character does not possess this Edge, he may use it as if he does.

THREAD RANK TWO

Key Knowledge: The characters must learn the Name of the person who created the boots.

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to Avoid Blow rolls.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the first Thief to wear the boots.

Effect: The character gains the Silent Walk Edge. If he already has the Silent Walk Edge, he gains a +6 bonus instead of +4.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The character gains an additional +2 bonus to his Silent Walk Edge, in addition to the bonuses of the previous Rank.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the number of espagra hides used to create the boots.

Effect: The character gains a +3 bonus to Avoid Blow rolls.

THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the place where the espagra whose hide was used for the boots originally made its home.

Effect: By spending 1 Karma Point, the character gains the ability to fly up to 20' as a move action. This ability can only be used once per day.

ESPAGRA SADDLE

Maximum Threads: 2

These horse saddles are constructed using a combination of the hide and scales of the flying, dragonlike predators known as espagra. The shimmering blue espagra scales give these saddles a beautiful luster that makes them immediately recognizable.

The hanging flaps of an espagra saddle are made entirely of the creature's hide.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the saddle.

Cavalrymen and others who depend upon their mounts covet these saddles. Legend says that Guyak Jorann used the first *espagra saddle*, but these saddles were probably being stitched and enchanted centuries before the ork hero was born.

Effect: Increase the mount's Pace by 2".

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The mount gains a +1 Armor bonus.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn how many espagra hides the maker used to create the saddle. One saddle typically requires three to seven hides.

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Effect: Increase the mount's Pace by 3".

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The mount gains a +2 Armor bonus.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the person who built the saddle.

Effect: The mount may run through the air as if it were running on solid ground. Use the mount's normal Pace for determining speed for running through the air; the mount no longer benefits from the speed increases the saddle provides while using this power.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The rider and mount may each roll 1 additional Karma Point when using the Durability and Durability (Mount) Edges, for a +2 bonus. If the rider does not have these Edges, he may use each once per day.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the last person to use the saddle.

Effect: The saddle allows the mount to run through the air at increased speed. Increase the mount's Flying Pace by 2". The rider gains a +2 bonus to all Riding rolls while in the saddle. The mount gains a +3 Armor bonus.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Effect: The riders gains a +4 bonus to all Riding rolls while in the saddle, in addition to a +2 bonus to Parry while in the saddle.

THREAD RANK NINE

Key Knowledge: The character must discover the Name of the place where the saddle's last owner died.

Effect: The character gains a +6 bonus to all Riding rolls while in the saddle, in addition to a +4 bonus to Parry while in the saddle.

FAERIE CHAINMAIL

Maximum Threads: 2

Faerie chainmail is very high-quality armor made of fine links. Because the links of this armor may be as small as one-half the size of normal chainmail, suits of *faerie chainmail* fit the wearers better. *Faerie chainmail* varies in color: most are the steel-gray of typical armor, but some suits have a bronze color or a color similar to that of orichalcum.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the suit of armor.

Faerie chainmail is made from iron rings tempered in a mixture of water, elemental water, and faerie blood. The tempering process makes the rings tougher, lighter, and better able to contain magical energy.

Effect: The chainmail grants 3 Armor.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The armor's weight reduces to 20 lbs.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The character must find out what type of faerie creature or enchanted beast gave its blood for the armor.

Effect: For 1 Karma Point, the armor covers the wearer's entire body for one round.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The chainmail grants 4 Armor.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the magician/smith who created the armor.

Effect: The armor weighs only 10 lbs.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The chainmail grants 5 Armor.



FROST POUCH

Maximum Threads: 2

These are small pouches, usually 3 by 5 inches in size and made of white or blue cloth. The pouches always feel cool to the touch. Air elementals are essential for making a *frost pouch*.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the pouch.

Effect: The pouch allows the character to use bits of frost as throwing weapons. The user reaches into the pouch and grabs some bits of frost. As a ranged attack, he hurls the frost at a target with a range of 10/20/40. The damage of the frost is 2d4.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The range increases to 15/30/60.

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THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The frost in the pouch originally came from mountain snow or glacier ice. The character must learn the Name of the mountain or glacier.

Deed: Return to the mountain or glacier of origin, and fill the pouch with snow or ice. The Deed is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: The damage of the frost increases to 2d6.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The frost becomes more powerful. It now has a power called Freezing Frost. If frost of this Thread Rank hits a target, the target must succeed at a Vigor roll, using the damage as the target number, or become locked into position as if frozen. The effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Thread Rank or until the victim makes a successful Vigor roll.

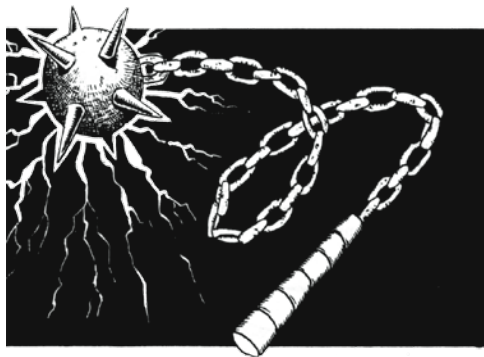
THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the air elemental who lent its power to the pouch.

Effect: The damage of the frost is now 2d8.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The damage of the frost is now 2d10.



LIGHTNING MACE

Maximum Threads: 2

Lightning maces can be of as many different shapes and sizes as normal maces. The head of a *lightning mace* is always made of metal and often shows many small burn marks. When a character wielding a *lightning mace* activates its magic, the head of the mace crackles with small bolts of lightning.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: Every *lightning mace* is Named by its creator. The wielder must learn the Name of the individual mace.

Effect: The damage of the mace is Str+d6. For the cost of 1 Karma Point, the mace crackles with lightning, increasing the damage to Str+d8. The lightning effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Thread Rank.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The damage of the mace is Str+d8. When activated, the *lightning mace* does Str+d10 damage.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn how the mace became separated from its last wielder.

Deed: The character must visit the site where the last wielder lost the weapon. The character must pledge that he shall never part with the mace, using Blood Magic (permanent -1 penalty to Vigor rolls) to seal the oath. The Deed is worth 2 experience points.

Effect: The damage of the mace is Str+d10. When activated, the *lightning mace* does Str+d12 damage.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The damage of the mace is Str+d12. When activated, the *lightning mace* does Str+2d6. The wielder may shoot bolts of lightning from the mace, for 1 Karma Point. The wielder may target a number of characters equal to the mace's Thread Rank, no two of which can be farther than 1' apart. The wielder makes a Shooting roll for each bolt. The bolts do 2d6 damage each.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the person who created the mace.

Effect: The lightning bolts now do 2d8 damage each.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The mace can now produce flashes of lightning that deflect attacks. The wielder gains a +2 bonus to his Parry while wielding the mace with its lightning activated.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the last wielder of the mace. If that individual died, the character must also learn how he died. If the previous wielder is still alive, the character must learn where he is currently living.

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Effect: The damage of the mace is now Str+2d6. When activated, the *lightning mace* does Str+2d8 damage.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Deed: The character must pledge to complete the last wielder's unfinished task. Upon completing the mission, the character earns 1 experience point. If the last wielder left no unfinished task, this Deed cannot be performed.

Effect: The Parry bonus rises to +4.

ORATORY NECKLACE

Maximum Threads: 5

Oratory necklaces are strings of eight to twelve semiprecious stones such as turquoise or tourmaline. The stones measure roughly one-half inch in diameter. The stones of most oratory necklaces vary widely in color, making each necklace unique.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the necklace.

The creator of an *oratory necklace* usually uses silver and semiprecious stones to make this magical item, though only five of the stones are magically active. The wielder must attach his thread to one of those five stones.

Effect: The wearer gains a +1 bonus to all Persuasion rolls.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The wearer gains a +2 bonus to all Persuasion rolls.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the magician who created the necklace.

Effect: The character gains a +3 bonus to all Persuasion rolls.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The necklace allows the wearer to spend up to 2 Karma Points on any Persuasion roll, gaining a +2 bonus for each point spent.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Deed: One of the first recorded uses of an oratory necklace was by the Troubadour Adept Eustacia. Disguising herself as a dwarf, she whipped a placid gathering of dwarfs into a howling mob demanding rough justice for their overlord. The exact nature of the injustices the overlord supposedly perpetrated were never recorded. Eustacia fell behind as the

vengeful crowd moved on the overlord's manor. The mob caught the household unprepared and quickly carved their way through the manor's defenses. As they dragged the overlord out to hang him, Eustacia dropped her disguise and appeared as herself. Masterfully playing on the crowd's emotions, her speech calmed the crowd and saved the beleaguered overlord, who made Eustacia his most trusted advisor, as she "really knew how to handle people."

To complete the Deed, the character wearing the necklace must convince a group of at least twenty people to take a certain action. As they go about the first action, the character must convince the same group to take a different action. The Deed is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: Crowds react as if their attitude were one degree more favorable toward the wearer.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The character gains a +4 bonus to all Persuasion rolls.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the last owner of the necklace.

Effect: The character gains a +5 bonus to all Persuasion rolls.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Effect: The character gains a +6 bonus to all Persuasion rolls.



POTION OF LIFE

Maximum Threads: 2

Potions of life vary greatly in color and consistency, depending on the alchemists who create them. The containers holding these potions are most often porcelain, but sometimes glass or metal.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: A *potion of life* is stored in a magical flask. The flask refills itself once the potion has

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been drunk. The character tosses a silver coin over his shoulder, proposing a toast to the alchemist; a flare of green fire consumes the coin, and the flask fills with the *potion of life*. The character must learn the Name of the flask and potion.

Effect: When drunk by a character, the potion automatically heals 1 wound. The character can use this effect once per day.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The character can now use the potion up to two times in one day.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the alchemist who created the potion.

Effect: The character can now use the potion up to three times in one day.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The potion now heals 2 wounds when drunk.

PUPPET FAMILIAR

Maximum Threads: 2

Puppet familiars consist of small puppets formed in the shape of one of the Namegiver races. The puppets usually measure only one to one-and-a-half feet tall. The faces of puppet familiars usually express an exaggerated emotion ranging from astonishment to fear to joy and so on.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the *puppet familiar*.

Effect: The *puppet familiar* is an inanimate puppet whose enchanted wood has been shaped to hold a spell. A magician may cast a spell, with the usual Thread cost, to store in her *puppet familiar*. The spell may later be cast from the puppet at no additional Thread cost.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The familiar now can hold up to 2 spells.

THREAD RANK THREE

Effect: The familiar can now hold up to 3 spells.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the person who created the *puppet familiar* and the Name of the last person to have a thread attached to the *puppet familiar*.

Deed: The character can re-Name the *puppet familiar*. This Blood Magic ritual animates the puppet.

The owner Names the puppet, and sacrifices six drops of blood (permanent -1 penalty to all Vigor rolls) to give it life. The puppet comes to life as an animated object. The puppet is completely loyal to its owner, and usually possesses all of its owner's annoying personality traits. This Deed is worth 2 experience points.

PUPPET FAMILIAR

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities

• **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage; does not suffer from disease or poison.

• **Size -2:** *Puppet familiars* are only 1 to 1½ feet in height.

Effect: None. Isn't that enough?

THREAD RANK FIVE

Effect: The puppet can now cast any of the spells it has stored within it by itself.

THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: *Puppet familiars* are made from enchanted wood. The character must learn what type of wood was used and the Name of the forest or woods where the wood originated.

Effect: The puppet familiar now holds up to 4 spells.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Effect: The *puppet familiar* now holds up to 5 spells.

PURSE EVER BOUNTIFUL

Maximum Threads: 5

These small, leather purses close with a drawstring. These purses look very ordinary and in no way reveal their magical properties.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The owner must learn the Name of the purse.

To use the purse, the owner places a coin in an inside pocket of the purse and spends a Karma Point, then makes a Spirit roll. The result is the number of coins that the purse creates from the original coin. If the Spirit roll is less than 4, the owner takes 1 level of Fatigue.

Effect: The purse duplicates only copper coins.

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THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The owner now gains a +1 bonus to his Spirit rolls when using the purse to make coins.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The owner must learn the Name of the Elementalist who created the purse.

Effect: The purse can duplicate silver coins up to 3 times per day.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Key Knowledge: The owner must learn the type of coin that the purse first duplicated.

Deed: Obtain one of those coins minted in the same era and of the same denomination, and duplicate it. The Deed is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: The purse can duplicate silver coins up to 4 times per day.

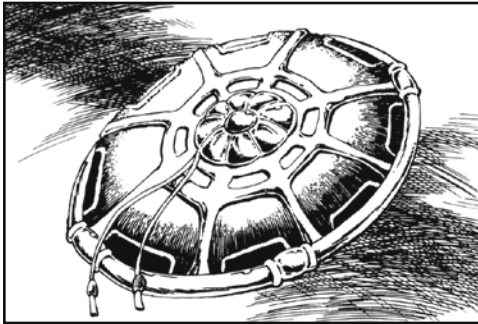
THREAD RANK FIVE

Effect: The purse can duplicate silver coins up to 5 times per day.

THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: The owner must learn the Name of the last person to own the purse.

Effect: The purse can duplicate silver coins up to 6 times per day. The purse can also duplicate gold coins up to 3 times per day.



SILVERED SHIELD

Maximum Threads: 4

A *silvered shield* can appear as a shield of any size. All have fine silver lines decorating their edges, making them appear of more than average worth. Many of these shields have sigils and designs outlined in silver.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: Crafted from elementally charged earth, the shield gains some of its power from an

earth elemental. The wielder must learn the Name of the shield.

Effect: The shield grants a +1 bonus to armor and a +1 Parry bonus.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The shield grants a +1 Mystic Armor bonus.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the person who created the shield.

Effect: The wielder may spend 1 Karma Point to attempt to repel a spell as a free action. The character must succeed at an opposed Spirit roll against the caster's Spellcasting roll.

If the roll is successful, the spell is sent back to affect its caster. The wielder can only attempt this once per round.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The shield grants a +2 armor bonus.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must determine the source of the elemental earth used in the creation of the shield.

Effect: The shield adds a +1 bonus to repelling spells.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The shield adds a +2 bonus to repelling spells.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the earth elemental who helped create the shield.

Effect: The shield grants a +2 Parry bonus.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Deed: The wielder must find the earth elemental who imbued the shield with a fraction of its own power. The wielder pledges to defend the elemental against all enemies and to help protect elemental earth from those who would steal its power without permission, such as wildcat miners and Therans. The wielder makes a Blood Magic oath to seal the pact (permanent -1 penalty to Vigor rolls). The Deed is worth 2 experience points. If the wielder ever breaks the oath, the shield immediately shatters, destroyed beyond repair.

Effect: The Blood Magic improves the quality of the wielder's shield, giving it a permanent +2 Armor bonus.

SPELL SWORD

Maximum Threads: 3

Spell swords come in differing styles and sizes, though most are broadswords. The elemental earth and air used to forge these swords mark the flat sides of their blades with an unusual swirled appearance.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the sword.

The people of Barsaive no longer possess the art of making *spell swords*, though rumors say that the Therans have revived the art. These broadswords are created from a delicate mix of forged steel, elemental earth, and elemental air, usually in the following percentages: steel, 40 percent; elemental earth, 40 percent; and elemental air, 20 percent. These percentages can vary by plus or minus 5 percentage points each.

Effect: The sword functions as any sword, gaining a +1 bonus to damage. The sword can be of any type. The sword also holds 1 spell. A magician may place a spell in the sword by casting it on the weapon. The wielder may then cast the spell, making the usual rolls (if any), as if he were the spell's original caster.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The sword's damage bonus increases to +2.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the last person to wield the sword and the greatest Deed that person performed with the sword. The character must inscribe the Name and the Deed along the blade.

Effect: The sword now holds up to 2 spells.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Deed: The wielder must decide upon a Deed to perform using the blade and then publicly declare his intention of doing it. Once the character accomplishes the Deed, he gains 1 or 2 experience points, relative to the difficulty of the Deed.

A Deed need not involve slaying a monster. For example, while mediating between two warring ork tribes, the hero Guyak Fairtongue swore not to draw his sword on either ork faction as long as a chance of peace still existed. He kept his word, refusing to draw his sword even after being struck by one side's ork champion. Fairtongue eventually worked out an acceptable peace.

Effect: The sword's damage bonus increases to +3.

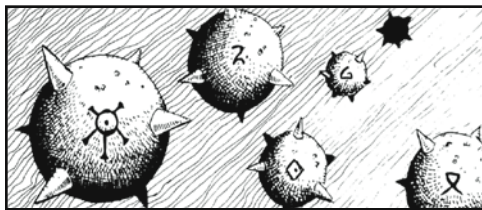
THREAD RANK FIVE

Effect: By spending 1 Karma Point, the wielder gains a Parry bonus equal to the Thread Rank for the duration of the round.

THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: The wielder must determine the exact percentages of the magical elements used to create the sword. When he is confident that he knows the percentages and chooses to weave the thread, if he is wrong, it will automatically fail, and he cannot attempt to weave the thread again for 1 week.

Effect: The sword can now hold up to 3 spells.



SPIKE BOMBS

Maximum Threads: 2

Spike bombs are small (four inches in diameter) metal balls covered with magical symbols. These symbols are usually arcane markings of no particular significance.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: *Spike bombs* were first invented by the t'skrang alchemist Vreesfyf, but the technique eventually spread throughout Barsaive.

Spike bombs are throwing weapons. Throwing a *spike bomb* has a range increment of 5/10/20. A *spike bomb* with low-rank threads have a blast diameter of 2'. A *spike bomb* is destroyed as soon as it is used, but the wielder can recreate a bomb by spending 1 Karma Point as a move action, which reforms the *spike bomb* and returns it to the thrower's hand. A character may only recreate the *spike bomb* whenever the target character is in throwing range. The wielder must learn the Name of the alchemist who created the *spike bomb*.

Effect: The *spike bomb* deals 2d6 damage.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The *spike bomb* deals 3d6 damage.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the name of the battle in which this alchemist's *spike bombs*

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had the greatest impact. For most living alchemists, this battle was the Siege of Throal.

Effect: The range increment increases to 10/20/40.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The *spike bomb* deals 4d6 damage.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Deed: The wielder must damage a Horror or Horror construct with the *spike bomb*. *Spike bombs* were invented during the Scourge to help battle the Horrors. Damaging a Horror is worth an extra 1 experience point; killing one is worth an extra 2 experience points. (Note: The Deed can only be performed once.)

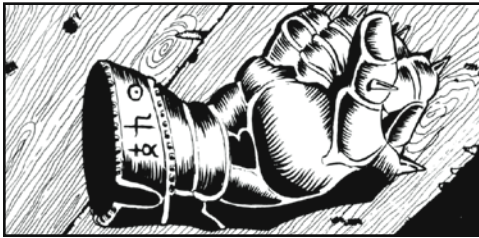
Effect: The *spike bomb* deals 5d6 damage.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The range increment increases to 15/30/60.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Effect: The *spike bomb* deals 6d6 damage.



SPIKE GAUNTLETS

Maximum Threads: 2

Spike gauntlets are metal gauntlets bristling with many small, slender, steel spikes. These spikes are usually highly polished and sharply pointed.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: *Spike gauntlets* are made from metal mined in the Caucavik Mountains, despite earth elemental objections to the mining activities. The gauntlets draw power from the mountains themselves. The wielder must learn the Name of the gauntlets.

Effect: The character receives a +1 Armor bonus while wearing the gauntlets.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The character gains a +1 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the gauntlets.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the person who created the gauntlets.

Effect: The character gains a +2 Armor bonus and a +2 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the gauntlets.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: For a cost of 1 Karma Point, the gauntlets increase the length of the spikes for one attack that deal Str+d6 damage on a successful hit.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the previous owner of the gauntlets.

Effect: The character gains a +3 Armor bonus and a +3 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the gauntlets.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: For a cost of 1 Karma Point, the gauntlets increase the length of the spikes for one attack that deal Str+d8 damage on a successful hit.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the mountain that produced the metal used to create the gauntlets.

Effect: The character gains a +4 Armor bonus and a +4 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the gauntlets.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Effect: The character gains a +5 Armor bonus and a +5 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the gauntlets.

TALISMAN STATUE

Maximum Threads: 2

Talisman statues are small statuettes, usually 3 to 4 inches tall, fashioned from stone, wood, or clay. Some rare statues measure up to 7 inches tall. Their creators usually carve intricate runes into *talisman statues*; some creators make their statues even rarer by imbedding small gems into the statuette's eyes.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the *talisman statue*.

Talisman statues can enhance the magical abilities of spellcasters. According to legend, each statue is made to complement only one form of spell magic, though half-remembered stories dispute these legends.

Effect: The character gains a +1 bonus to his Spellcasting roll.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to his Spellcasting roll.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the wizard who created the *talisman statue*.

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Effect: The character gains a +3 bonus to his Spellcasting roll.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The character gains a +4 bonus to his Spellcasting roll.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the mountain/mine/forest from which the material used to create the *talisman statue* originated.

Effect: The character gains a +5 bonus to his Spellcasting roll.

THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name, race, and Discipline of the last person to use the *talisman statue* before the Scourge.

Effect: By taking a permanent -1 penalty to his Vigor rolls, the character can increase his maximum Karma Points by 10. He can only increase it one time with this effect.



WAR HELM OF LANDIS

Maximum Threads: 2

The *war helm of Landis* is a metal helmet adorned with the symbol of the ancient human kingdom of Landis. The helm has a faceplate that can swing down or up, depending on whether the wearer wants to protect his face or wishes to see better.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: Mages and Weaponsmiths worked together to provide this protection to important military commanders of the kingdom of Landis. Many of these helmets were lost in the battles against the mindless ravagers who were the forerunners of the Horrors and marked the beginning of the Scourge. The wearer must learn the Name of the helmet.

Deed: The character must polish and repair the helmet. Replacing the unit insignia on the helmet

reactivates the magic within the helmet. The Deed is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: The character gains a +1 bonus to his armor while wearing the helmet. The character also gains a +1 bonus to Spirit rolls while wearing the helmet.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The character also gains a +2 bonus to Spirit rolls while wearing the helmet.

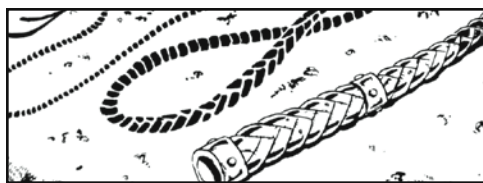
THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The character must know what military unit was under the command of the helmet's original owner.

Effect: The character gains a +1 bonus to Mystic Armor while wearing the helmet.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to his armor while wearing the helmet.



WHIP OF DEFENSE

Maximum Threads: 2

A *whip of defense* can be made from a variety of different materials. The most common is leather, but some are made of espagra skin, lizard skin, and very infrequently, dragon skin. The main cord of the whip is 12 feet long, composed of several strands of skin braided together. On certain rare whips, each strand is of a different skin, giving the whipcord an unusual appearance.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: These whips are made from leather and more exotic skins. The whip has one main cord, 12 feet long, used for attacking. The wielder must learn the Name of the whip.

Effect: The whip deals Str+d4 damage.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The whip produces a number of cords of vibrant magical energy equal to its Thread Rank. Each energy cord can help the wielder deflect or block one attack while he or she is using the whip. These cords add a +1 bonus to the character's Parry versus up to one attack that round.

CHAPTER 5: TREASURES

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the person who created the whip.

Effect: The whip deals Str+d6 damage.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The cords now each add a +2 bonus to Parry against one attack.

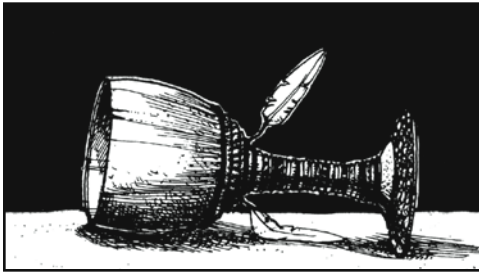
THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The character must know all the types of skins used to make the whip.

Effect: The cords now each add a +3 bonus to Parry against one attack.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The cords now each add a +4 bonus to Parry against one attack.



WINDLING CUP OF FRIENDSHIP

Maximum Threads: 5

These small (windling-sized), carved wooden cups sit atop a long wooden stem. Thin woven cords of various colors are braided around the stem, usually in shades of green and brown, though brighter colors such as blue, red, and yellow sometimes are used.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: These small cups are made by windling villages all across Barsaive for use in community ceremonies. Though the cups were originally used only by windlings, that race has recently begun crafting friendship cups to use when solidifying relations with other Namegiver races. Each cup is Named when created. The character must learn the Name of the *windling cup of friendship*.

Effect: The cup fills on command with either clear water or windling wine when its Name is spoken.

THREAD RANK TWO

Key Knowledge: The character must discover the windling clan or tribe from which the friendship cup originated.

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to any Persuasion roll against non-windling Namegiver races.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: Each cup has a special windling Name. The character must learn that Name.

Effect: The character gains a +4 bonus to any Persuasion roll against non-windling Namegiver races.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Deed: The character must share a drink with a windling he has never met, both parties drinking from the same cup. The Deed is only successful if the two part as friends who have shared tales with one another.

Effect: If the cup's owner shares wine from the cup with a stranger, the stranger's attitude toward the cup's owner improves by one degree.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Deed: The character must discover the Name of the last person to own the cup.

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to any Persuasion roll against windlings.

THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: The character must discover how the previous owner came into possession of the cup.

Effect: The character gains a +4 bonus to any Persuasion roll against windlings.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: Each cup has a special command word in the windling language. The character must discover that word.

Effect: The cup fills on command with a windling-sized healing potion. The effects work only on windlings.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Deed: The character must visit the village or clan where the cup was fashioned and return the cup to the village elders. In a formal ritual known as the cup ceremony, the character receives the cup back from the village elders. This is not automatic, however. The village may require that a second Deed be accomplished before the ceremony takes place to allow the cup's holder to prove his worthiness to own the cup.

The cup ceremony is an elaborate ritual, originally used by windling villages when joining with or swearing loyalty to another village. Since the Scourge most windling villages remain isolated. They view all who approach as enemies rather than potential friends

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and so the ceremony has been largely forgotten. Part of the Deed is to convince the villagers to perform the ritual, which involves Blood Magic oaths (most often a blood-sworn oath between the two villages' leaders). In this case, the cup's holder must take this oath with the village's leader.

The ritual concludes with a wind dance, a three-hour long celebration in which participants dance both on land and in the air. Namegivers bound to the ground can only perform the land-based movements of the dance, but are asked to mimic the flying movements as best they can. This Deed is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: The cup can grant its owner temporary versions of many windling racial abilities. These versions are less powerful than the racial ability being mimicked, and the cup holder must spend 1 Karma Point to use them (unlike the windlings, who use

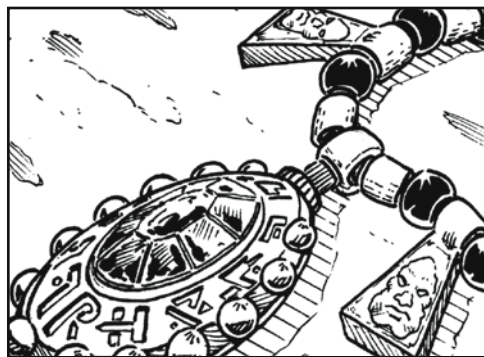
the abilities naturally). In this sense, the abilities granted are temporary. These abilities include astral sight and flight. The cupholder can only use one of these abilities at a time. Each use of each ability costs the cup holder 1 Karma Point. The abilities function as follows.

Astral-Sight: This works as the racial ability described for windlings in **Chapter 3: Characters** of the *Player's Guide*. This ability can be used for a number of rounds equal to the Thread Rank.

Flight: This is a version of the ability windlings have to fly. This ability allows the cup holder to fly at a Pace of 6" per round. This distance can be increased by the cup holder by spending more Karma: for each additional Karma Point spent, the cup holder can increase the flying Pace by 1" per round, to a maximum Pace of 3 × Thread Rank". This ability can only be used once per day.

UNIQUE TREASURES

This section describes magical items that are unique in the world. Only one of each item exists; if one of these items is destroyed, it will never exist in this world again (unless magic spontaneously reproduces its True Pattern to answer a threat that only this item can destroy...). If a Thread Rank provides only a Deed, the character must perform the Deed.



AMULET OF AGAMON

Maximum Threads: 2

This amulet consists of a ruby gem fastened into a gold setting fashioned in the shape of a scarab. The amulet's red cord boasts a number of smaller gems, all in settings similar to that framing the large gem.

The amulet's settings are made of a gold/orichalcum alloy that gives the jewelry an unusual luster and means that the metal never needs polishing and cannot be scratched.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn that the amulet is Named the *Amulet of Agamon*. This rare treasure is one of relatively few magical items created since the Scourge. The magician Agamon hailed from a citadel nestled in the Thunder Mountains. He led a party of heroes out into Barsaive shortly after the end of the Scourge. He created this amulet during his travels as a means of storing additional spells, but the amulet gained additional defensive power as his journeys continued.

Effect: The character gains a +1 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the amulet.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The character gains a +2 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the amulet.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the place where Agamon created the amulet.

Effect: The character gains a +3 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the amulet.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The amulet can hold 1 spell.

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THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: Legends say that Agamon enchanted the gems in the amulet with a special, high-level spell. The character must learn the Name of the spell used to enchant the gem in the amulet.

Effect: The character gains a +4 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the amulet.

THREAD RANK SIX

Deed: Agamon successfully confronted many hostile creatures and Horrors during his adventures, but one such encounter ended in tragedy for him and his companions. The traveling group found a band of escaped Theran slaves desperately in need of aid. Agamon led the slaves to a nearby town for shelter and assistance.

Once they received assurances that the slaves would be well cared for, Agamon and his companions left the town and continued their quest to restore Barsaive to its people. Unfortunately for the town, one of the slaves was possessed by a Horror and brought the Horror into the town after Agamon left. The Horror killed most of the townsfolk outright, keeping only a few alive to further torture and terrorize.

When Agamon's group returned to the town, they discovered the awful truth of their effort to help those in need. Determined to undo the damage, the heroes confronted the Horror in an attempt to destroy it. Despite their best efforts, the Horror proved too powerful for Agamon's heroes, and slayed them all. The amulet was eventually recovered from the abandoned town, and has passed through generations of Barsaivians since Agamon's death.

The character must find the town from the legend and confront and destroy the Horror that killed Agamon. This Deed is worth 2 experience points.

Effect: The amulet now holds 2 spells.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: Since the death of Agamon, many heroes have wielded this amulet. The character must learn the Name of the last hero to wield the amulet.

Effect: The character gains a +5 Mystic Armor bonus while wearing the amulet.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Key Knowledge: Legends and stories of Agamon often portray the magician as following one of several Disciplines. Some say the legendary figure was

a Wizard, while others insist that he followed the Nethermancer Discipline. The character must learn which spellcasting Discipline Agamon followed.

Effect: The amulet can now hold up to 4 spells.



DENNA'S BROOCH

Maximum Threads: 2

Denna's Brooch is made of silver edged with fine gold. The shape of the brooch is an inverted triangle, two inches to each side. In the center of the triangle is a starburst fashioned from red jewels.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: Denna was an elven Elementalist Adept who lived in Wyrn Wood before the Scourge. Though she left the Wyrn Wood to find surer protection against the Horrors, she remained loyal in mind and heart to the Elven Court, hoping it would survive the coming devastation. Determined to help if she could, Denna studied elemental wood and its magics. Before she left Blood Wood, Denna's father, one of Queen Alachia's advisors, gave her this brooch to remind her of her home. The wielder must learn that the brooch is *Denna's Brooch*.

Effect: The brooch adds +2 to the wielder's Spellcasting rolls.

THREAD RANK TWO

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the spellcasting Discipline that Denna followed.

Effect: The brooch adds +4 to the wielder's Spellcasting rolls when casting Elementalism spells, and +2 to all other spells.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: Denna also undertook the task of recording the history of the Elven Court from the separation of the Court from Shosara to the present. The wielder must learn the Name of Denna's father.

Effect: The brooch adds a +2 bonus to any roll made while researching the history of Barsaive.

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THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The brooch adds +6 to the wielder's Spell-casting rolls when casting Elementalism spells, and +4 to all other spells.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Deed: The wielder must travel to the site of Denna's home within Wyrn Wood, now Blood Wood, and remain there for five days and nights. During this time, the wielder can take no action against any living denizen of the Blood Wood. This Deed is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: The brooch adds a +4 bonus to any roll made while researching the history of Barsaive.

THREAD RANK SIX

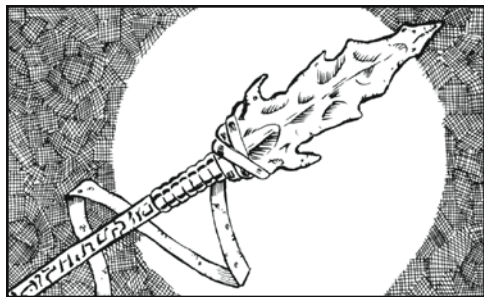
Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the last person to weave a thread to the brooch.

Effect: The brooch adds a +5 bonus to any roll made while researching the history of Barsaive.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn where Denna traveled after leaving Wyrn Wood.

Effect: The brooch adds +6 to the wielder's Spell-casting rolls when casting any spell within Blood Wood. This bonus increases to +8 when casting any spells that affect plant life while within Blood Wood.



DEVASTATOR SPEAR

Maximum Threads: 2

Frightening in appearance, this spear is an eight-foot length of dark brown wood lined with runes that depict its origins. Rumor claims that the spear was constructed using the blood of a Horror as the source of its enchantment. The tip of the spear is made of chiseled obsidian, polished to a blinding sheen. The magic of the spear maintains the shine of its tip, which never dulls.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must know that this spear is Named the *Devastator Spear*.

Effect: The spear inflicts Str+d6 damage. When thrown, the spear splits into a number of spears equal to its Thread Rank. The wielder may choose to throw fewer than the maximum number of spears. These spears may be targeted against one character or against different characters, as long as no two characters are farther than 2" apart.

The thrower makes only one attack roll, which is compared against each target individually. After the attack, all the image-spears disappear, and the *Devastator Spear* returns to the hand of its wielder.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The damage of the spear rises to Str+d8.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must know the Name of the first victim slain by the spear.

Effect: The damage of the spear rises to Str+d10.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The damage of the spear rises to Str+d12.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Deed: The wielder must defeat a monster in single combat. The wielder may throw the *Devastator Spear* only once, and that attack must either kill or knock the creature unconscious. Accomplishing this Deed earns the character 2 experience points.

Effect: The damage of the spear rises to Str+2d6.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The spear increases the wielder's nimbleness. He gains a +2 bonus to Parry while wielding the spear.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the person who created the spear.

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to hit when throwing the spear.



CHAPTER 5: TREASURES

FARLISS' DAGGER

Maximum Threads: 2

Farliss' Dagger has an ebony handle distinguished by a deep blue gem set in its pommel. The blade is made of shining steel, with blackened runes etched on either side.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: Farliss the Great once wielded this dagger. A Troubadour Adept in the time before the Scourge, Farliss told stories describing the legends of the Martyr Scholar and of Jaron the Everliving and he personally battled the Horrors throughout Barsaive. The wielder must learn that this is *Farliss' Dagger*.

Effect: The dagger deals Str+d6 damage.

THREAD RANK TWO

Key Knowledge: In the early days of the Scourge, Farliss traveled all across the province battling Horrors. At the end, when he was forced to retreat into a kaer, he chose to join the village of Tardim. The new wielder must learn where Farliss lived during the Scourge, and how he died.

Effect: The dagger deals Str+d8 damage.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: Farliss fought a series of confrontations with a Horror Named R'shann. Though he was constantly searching for a way to finally defeat the Horror, Farliss only obtained the dagger, which he learned was destined to destroy Horrors, between their final two battles. Farliss managed to wound the Horror using the dagger. The wielder must learn the Name of the Horror from whom Farliss drew blood while using the dagger.

Effect: The dagger now deals an extra d6 damage against Horrors and Horror constructs.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the person who last owned the dagger, and where he or she now lives or is buried.

Effect: The dagger now deals an extra d8 damage against Horror and Horror constructs.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Deed: The wielder must go to Farliss' tomb. There he must pledge to spread the legend of Farliss across Barsaive, sealing this pledge with a Blood Magic ritual, which causes a permanent -1 penalty to his Vigor rolls. This Deed is worth 2 experience points.

Effect: The dagger can now detect the presence of Horrors and Horror constructs. The wielder must make a Notice roll. If the roll is successful, the gem in the pommel of the dagger glows a faint blue. The range of this ability is 30'. This ability does not provide direction to the Horror, but simply indicates that a Horror is within range.



KEGEL'S SWORD

Maximum Threads: 2

Kegel's Sword is a broadsword of shorter-than-average length. The sword's hilt contains a small ruby that glows when the sword's magic is activated. The blade is a dull steel-gray, with fine runes carved along it. These runes describe some of Kegel's adventures. The tip of this sword is blackened, as if by long exposure to soot and ash.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The dwarven Warrior Adept Kegel used this sword for nearly 20 years. It was buried with him when he died, but stolen by tomb robbers. Rumors of its subsequent appearances and disappearances still make the rounds of tavern gossip. The character must know that the sword is Kegel's and must also know the name of Kegel's beloved, to whom he pledged the sword.

Effect: *Kegel's Sword* is a broadsword that deals Str+d10 damage.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The tip of the sword can blaze into flame as if it were a torch. This ability costs the wielder 1 Karma Point. Each use of this effect lasts up to an hour or until the flame is extinguished. Add +d6 damage with a successful hit.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the Weaponsmith Adept who created the sword.

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Effect: For a cost of 1 Karma Point, the character can more firmly attach himself to the earth, gaining a +10 bonus on any roll to resist being knocked prone. This attachment lasts an hour or until used, whichever comes first. The sword also gives the wielder a +1 bonus to Parry while wielding it.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: At a cost of 1 Karma Point, the character may take on a more fluid form. Though retaining his basic shape, the character can flow around an attacker's blow. The character chooses when to flow; flowing reduces the damage taken from the blow by 6 + Thread Rank points. The form lasts for an hour or until used, whichever comes first. The sword also gives the wielder a +2 bonus to his Parry while wielding it.

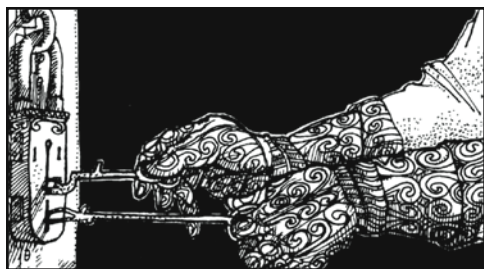
THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the elementals with whom Kegel bargained to empower his sword. Kegel undertook a quest for a fire elemental, an earth elemental, a water elemental, and an air elemental. The wielder must learn the names of all four elementals.

Effect: The sword's damage increases to Str+d12. The power of the winds can chill the blade edge to bone-freezing cold. This costs the wielder 1 Karma Point. When used, it deals an extra d6 cold damage on a successful hit. The chilled edge lasts an hour or until used, whichever comes first. This can be used with its flaming tip ability.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The sword's damage increases to Str+2d6.



KOLLDAR'S GLOVES

Maximum Threads: 3

These gloves are made of fine, light brown leather, stitched with an intricate pattern in bright blue thread.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: These gloves belonged to Koll-dar the Thief, an ork who lived in the ancient ork kingdom of Cara Fahd. The wielder must learn that the Name of the gloves is *Kolldar's Gloves*.

Effect: Though sized for an ork, the gloves magically adjust to fit any size hand. The gloves increase the user's Stealth skill by one die while wearing the gloves. This translates to an extra +1 if above d12.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The gloves increase the user's Stealth skill by two dice while wearing the gloves. This translates to an extra +1 for each point above d12.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The gloves once belonged to a wealthy merchant who flaunted the gloves in public. Koll-dar saw the merchant's attitude as a challenge, and stole the gloves to use in his training as a Thief Adept. The wielder must learn the Name of the person from whom Koll-dar stole the gloves.

Effect: The gloves increase the user's Stealth skill by three dice while wearing the gloves. This translates to an extra +1 for each point above d12.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The gloves increase the user's Stealth skill by four dice while wearing the gloves. This translates to an extra +1 for each point above d12.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Deed: Koll-dar became a legendary figure before the Scourge, and many tales tell of his wondrous abilities, each tale more glorious than the last. The wielder must learn the tale of one of Koll-dar's legendary feats and tell the story to a group of no less than 100, among which one-tenth must be thieves, mundane or Adept. This Deed is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: The gloves can help the wearer talk his way out of troublesome situations. The wearer gains a +4 bonus on any Trait roll he or she uses to get or stay out of trouble.

THREAD RANK SIX

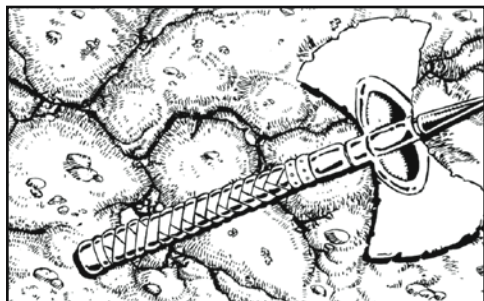
Key Knowledge: Koll-dar was also known for his talent for dealing with traps, both magical and mundane. His prowess in this area is generally attributed to his gloves, which the ork considered a lucky charm. The wearer must learn the nickname Koll-dar gave his gloves.

CHAPTER 5: TREASURES

Effect: The gloves increase the user's Lockpicking skill by one die. This translates to an extra +1 if over d12.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Effect: The gloves increase the user's Lockpicking skill by two dice while wearing the gloves. This translates to an extra +1 for each point above d12.



LORM'S AXE

Maximum Threads: 2

Lorm's Axe is a large battle-axe that weighs more than 15 pounds. The handle is made of light-colored oak. The blade has large black stains on both edges.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: This axe belonged to Lorm, a fledgling troll hero who died in Kaer Jalendale. The wielder must learn that the axe is Named *Lorm's Axe*.

Effect: This axe's damage is Str+d12.

THREAD RANK TWO

Deed: The axe is destined to blood Horrors and their constructs. A character should inscribe his own name on the haft of the axe. The character then hunts down a Horror construct, or a Horror itself, invokes Lorm's name, and strikes the opponent in combat. If he damages the opponent, he earns experience points. For striking a construct, the character earns 1 experience point; for striking a Horror, the character earns 2 experience points; for striking the wormskull that killed Lorm, the character earns 3 experience points.

Effect: The damage of the battle-axe increases to Str+2d6.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the Weaponsmith Adept who created the axe.

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to Parry while wielding the axe.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The damage of the axe increases to Str+2d8.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the trollmoot to which Lorm belonged.

Effect: The character gains a +4 bonus to Parry while wielding the axe.

MASK OF OLTION

Maximum Threads: 2

The *Mask of Oltion* is a fine silken mask with eye and mouth slits. When affixed properly, it covers a person's entire face. The mask is a deep royal blue, and the eye and mouth slits are embroidered in pale blue.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: Oltion was a Wizard Adept known for his intricate devices and peculiar sense of humor. He created dozens of items, most of them utilitarian, most not meant for use in combat. The character must always think of the mask as the "Mask of Oltion," but never refer to it as the "*Mask of Oltion*." In game terms, the player must always use the exact phrase when telling the Game Master that his character is using the *Mask of Oltion*. If he fails to say "Mask of Oltion," the item will not work. On the other hand, if the player character ever refers to the mask in conversation or explanation as the *Mask of Oltion*, the mask freezes its magic for a period of d4 hours. The wearer must know that the mask is Named the *Mask of Oltion*.



Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to his Soak rolls.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The mask will mimic the face of any character the wearer can remember. It grants a +2 bonus to any roll when attempting to deceive others into believing he is the person whose face he wears.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn Oltion's race.

Effect: The mask grants the wearer an ability that mimics astral sense (refer to the Wizardry spells in the Player's Guide). Using this ability costs the character 1 Karma Point and lasts for 10 minutes per Thread Rank.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to Spirit rolls while wearing the mask.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The wearer must learn the Name of the adventuring group to which Oltion belonged.

Effect: The mask can create a giant column of flame that erupts essentially on top of a target within 20". To hit the target, the wearer must succeed at a normal ranged attack. Success deals 5d6 fire damage, +1d6 per Karma point spent. The character can spend up to 5 additional Karma Points.

Oltion built this last effect into the mask primarily because no one else had figured out how to build such a big effect into a device with so many other innocuous effects. He also apparently grew weary of all those fighter-types asking, "When are you going to build something useful?"



MONTURK'S CARPET

Maximum Threads: 2

Monturk's Carpet is a small, 6-by-4-foot carpet, its edges fringed in fine golden silk. The multi-colored designs and patterns on the carpet are of Theran origin, set against a striped background of blue, red, and yellow. Woven into these stripes are threads of gold and luminescent elemental air.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: Monturk was a Theran Wizard Adept, a dwarf killed for throwing his lot in with the wrong Theran faction. Though he failed in his attempt to create a permanent flying carpet, he ended up creating a far more unusual object than just a flying rug. The character must know that the carpet is Named *Monturk's Carpet*.

Effect: The carpet is alive, but remains dormant until a thread is attached to it. The mystical energy from the thread revives the carpet. *Monturk's Carpet* can fly, but is not really strong enough to carry anyone. In addition, its temperament is ill-suited for flying-carpethood. *Monturk's Carpet* generally refuses to carry other living beings. The carpet is sometimes willing to carry letters or small packages that weigh no more than five pounds.

Monturk's Carpet will serve its master in other ways. It can scout ahead, fight alongside its master, and use other abilities as the Thread Rank increases.

MONTURK'S CARPET

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Notice d10, Stealth d10

Pace: 2; Parry: 2; Toughness: 8

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage; does not suffer from disease or poison.

- ♦ **Flight:** Monturk's Carpet has a Flying Pace of 15".

THREAD RANK TWO

Key Knowledge: The character must learn how and in what year Monturk was killed.

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to Soak rolls. He must be in physical contact with the carpet to use this ability.

THREAD RANK THREE

Deed: The carpet was worked with threads of gold and elemental air, worth 2,500 silver pieces (500 for the gold, 2,000 for the elemental air).

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Neglect and a harrowing escape from Monturk's enemies have damaged these threads. Having the rug rewoven strengthens the magic in the carpet. The Deed is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: The carpet gains a +4 Armor bonus.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the carpet's last owner.

Effect: The carpet forms a telepathic link with its master through which both can transmit speech-like thoughts. The link has a range of 75", and does not require an action to use. Increase the carpet's Flying Pace by 3".

THREAD RANK FIVE

Effect: The carpet gains the spell-like ability of *levitate*, as per the Wizardry spell in the *Player's Guide*. It can cast this spell up to three times per day.



Nioku's Bow

Maximum Threads: 2

Nioku's Bow is a longer-than-average longbow, made of dark oak with small grooves along its sides lined with fine red crystal. The bowstring is made of catgut lined with elemental air.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: Nioku was a troll Archer Adept, a female hero of an earlier time. She is one of the very few heroes who could truthfully claim to have killed a dragon in one-on-one combat. The wielder must know that the bow is Named *Nioku's Bow*.

Effect: The longbow deals 2d8 damage and has a range of 20/40/80.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The range of the bow increases to 25/50/100.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: Nioku made arrowheads from the bones of slain enemies. The wielder must know the Name of one of Nioku's enemies.

Deed: The character must carve twelve arrowheads from the bones of one of his enemies. He or she receives 1 experience point for this Deed.

Effect: The longbow deals 2d10 damage.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The longbow deals 2d12 damage.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the last person killed by the bow before the bow came into his possession.

Effect: The range of the bow increases to 30/60/120.

THREAD RANK SIX

Effect: The longbow now deals 3d6 damage.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Key Knowledge: Legends tell of a long-running competition between Nioku and an elven Archer Adept named Talondel. Talondel had been corrupted by a Horror, though he did not fall under its control. He and Nioku crossed paths and competed in feats of archery, which always ended in a tie, for more than seven years. Nioku finally defeated Talondel, who was shortly thereafter captured and held in rune chains in a dwarven prison. Several months after she defeated Talondel, Nioku uncovered the lair of a Horror that had been terrorizing Sky Raiders, including members of her trollmoot. Nioku could not defeat the Horror's magic because the creature knew too much about her. Soon after her failed attack, the Horror ravaged another Sky Raider camp, killing Nioku's uncle and younger brother.

Nioku traveled to the dwarven prison where Talondel lay chained and asked the elf to slay the Horror that was killing her kinsmen. In exchange, she would convince the dwarfs to pardon the elf. Talondel laughed at her proposal, asking how he could kill a Horror that Nioku and her mighty bow had not been able to touch.

Nioku swore a blood oath and offered Talondel her bow to use against the Horror, and to keep if he killed it. Impressed by her willing sacrifice, Talondel accepted the offer. The power of the oath somehow allowed Talondel to use the bow while it still drew power from Nioku's thread.

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Talondel slew the Horror, then disappeared. Nearly fourteen months later he returned and gave the bow back to Nioku, saying that from this day forward he must use his own magic. As Nioku touched her bow, it began to glow, then became translucent with a silvery sheen. The bow had taken its most powerful form.

Deed: The character must give the bow to a previously defeated enemy. The enemy will perform a Deed with the bow and is then entitled to keep it. Whether or not the enemy character returns the bow is up to him or her. The Archer may not accompany the other character, nor send anyone else along with him, either to help or keep an eye on the enemy. The former enemy is on his own. The bow continues to draw power from the Archer's thread. If the enemy character returns the bow, the character receives 4 experience points.

Effect: The character gains a +1 bonus to his Parry whenever he wields the bow.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Effect: The damage of the bow increases to 3d8.

THREAD RANK NINE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the Horror that Talondel killed using *Nioku's Bow*.

Effect: The damage of the bow increases to 3d10.

THREAD RANK TEN

Effect: The bow becomes translucent and silvery like a silver-speckled moonbeam. The damage of the bow increases to 3d12. The character can also spend 1 Karma Point on attack rolls with the bow, gaining a +4 bonus to hit, and also 1 Karma Point on damage rolls with the bow, gaining a +2 bonus to damage on each die.



PURIFIER

Maximum Threads: 2

Purifier appears as a worn, rusty broadsword, damaged from several years' use by many different heroes. Carved along the blade's flat side are runes bearing the symbols of both the kingdom of Throal and King Varulus I.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: *Purifier* was created at the direction of King Varulus I of Throal when the Horrors first began to enter the world, and was used by many of the heroes of the pre-Scourge world. According to legend, a powerful Wizard Adept cast a spell on the sword to make it look old and rusted.

Before a character can weave any threads to *Purifier*, he must first remove the spell that changes its appearance using Dispel Magic or some other power. The sword resists Dispel Magic as if it were cast by a Legendary status magician (refer to the spell description in the *Player's Guide* for more information). Having removed the spell, the character can weave threads to *Purifier*.

The wielder must know that the sword's name is *Purifier*.

Effect: The sword can be wielded by anyone, regardless of size or strength. It functions as a broadsword and deals Str+d10 damage.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: When used against Horrors and Horror constructs, the blade glows red hot, dealing an extra d6 damage.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Names of the Weaponsmith Adepts who created the sword.

Effect: Against Horrors and Horror constructs, the sword now deals an extra 2d6 damage on a successful hit.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: When used against Horrors and Horror constructs, the sword now deals an extra 2d8 damage on a successful hit.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the last wielder of the sword.

Effect: The sword can detect those who have been corrupted by a Horror. The wielder makes

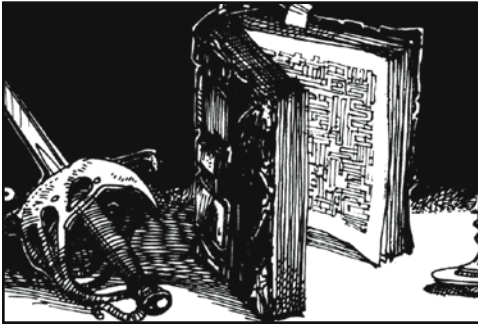
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a Notice roll. A successful result alerts the wielder to the Horror's presence.

THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: The wielder must learn the Name of the Wizard Adept who cast the illusion spell on the sword.

Effect: For the permanent cost of 4 Karma Points, which can never be regained, the wielder can use Blood Magic to use *Purifier* to attempt to slay a Horror with one blow. When the wielder invokes this power, the blade becomes searing hot. A successful hit against a Horror deals an extra 10d10 damage.



TOME OF MEMORY

Maximum Threads: 3

The *Tome of Memory* is a small book, only four inches by six inches by two inches thick. The covers of the book are a flat black, and the edges of the pages are blood red. The tome looks very old and worn, as if it would fall apart if not handled properly.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The *Tome of Memory* was created by the Theran Nethermancer Adept Ulan Ya before the Scourge. Unsure of what to expect from the Scourge and afraid of losing or forgetting his skills, he created this tome to "help him maintain the facilities to manipulate the facets of magic." The players must learn that this is Ulan Ya's *Tome of Memory*.

Effect: The wielder of the tome gains a +1 bonus to Spellcasting rolls.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: Each page of the *Tome of Memory* contains a pictograph, drawing, maze, or other visual puzzle. In order to "read" each page of this tome

and decipher the puzzles, the character must make a Smarts roll. Each success deciphers 10% of the book. Each raise adds another 10%. Each failure adds a cumulative -1 penalty for any further rolls. For every 10% of the tome deciphered, the character gains a permanent bonus to his Knowledge (arcana) rolls.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the last person to weave a thread to the *Tome of Memory*.

Effect: The character gains a +2 bonus to Spirit rolls.

THREAD RANK FOUR

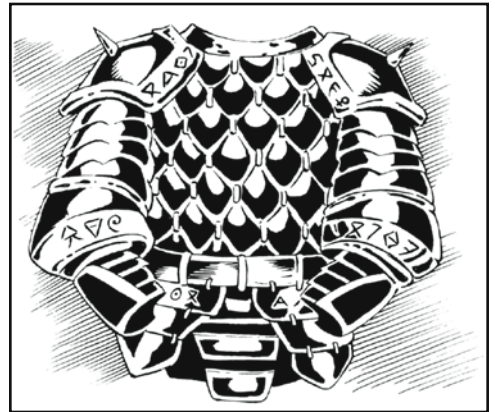
Key Knowledge: The character must learn how it was that the *Tome of Memory* left Thera and ended up in Barsaive.

Effect: The character gains a +4 bonus to Spirit rolls.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Deed: The character must create a puzzle and draw it on a blank page in the Tome. Inscribing the puzzle into the book requires a Blood Magic ritual, during which the wielder suffers 1 permanent penalty point to all Vigor rolls. This Deed is worth 1 experience point.

Effect: The wielder can store up to 5 separate spells in the tome.



VENNA'S ARMOR

Maximum Threads: 2

Venna's Armor is a set of finely wrought plate mail armor with runes etched on its surfaces. The

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construction of this armor is somewhat different than the plate mail found in Barsaive. Though the armor looks old, it does not appear worn or damaged.

THREAD RANK ONE

Key Knowledge: The armor was worn by a female hero named Venna nearly five millennia ago. Lost records makes it uncertain whether she was human or elven. The character must know that the armor is *Venna's Armor*.

Effect: This finely crafted suit of plate mail grants a +4 armor bonus.

THREAD RANK TWO

Effect: The armor's weight is reduced to 25 lbs.

THREAD RANK THREE

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the Horror who slew Venna.

Effect: The armor gains a +1 Mystic Armor bonus.

THREAD RANK FOUR

Effect: The armor gains a +2 Mystic Armor bonus.

THREAD RANK FIVE

Deed: The character must learn the fate, or the location, of the Horror who killed Venna. Having discovered the Horror's fate or its whereabouts, the character earns 1 experience point.

Effect: A character may store Karma Points within the armor. The character may store Karma Points up to a number equal to the armor's Thread Rank. These Karma Points do not count as part of a character's maximum Karma. The character stores Karma in the armor by using his or her Karma

Ritual. Karma Points stored in the armor can be spent in the same manner as normal Karma Points.

THREAD RANK SIX

Key Knowledge: The character must find out whether Venna was a human or an elf.

Effect: The armor now grants a +5 Armor bonus.

THREAD RANK SEVEN

Effect: The weight of the armor is reduced to 15 lbs.

THREAD RANK EIGHT

Key Knowledge: Before her defeat, Venna won many battles. The character must learn the legend of her greatest battle. Who did she defeat and how did she do it?

Deed: Travel to the spot of Venna's greatest victory and build a memorial to her. The character must personally help build the memorial. The memorial need not be flashy or large, but it must be durable. The character must write an inscription declaring the memorial's purpose. The Deed is worth 1 experience points.

Effect: The character may hold a number of Karma Points within the armor equal to twice the Thread Rank.

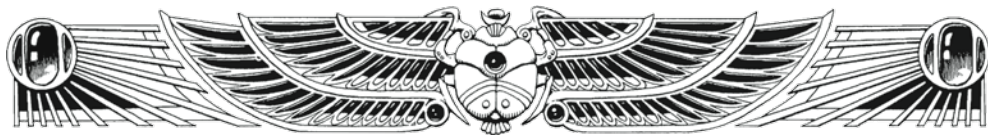
THREAD RANK NINE

Effect: The armor now grants a +1 Parry bonus, a +6 Armor bonus, and a +3 Mystic Armor bonus.

THREAD RANK TEN

Key Knowledge: The character must learn the Name of the armor's previous owner.

Effect: The armor now grants a +7 Armor bonus and +4 Mystic Armor bonus.



CHAPTER 6: BESTIARY

The jungle crawled with horrific creatures of both this world and others.
—Ardis Foarr the Wizard, speaking to a gathering of the village of Tardim

A wide array of magical and mundane creatures inhabit the world of EARTHDAWN. The animals of the forests and jungles, the creatures of legends, and the Horrors all roam the lands of Barsaive, and many pose real dangers to the unwary traveler or adventurer. The Game Master controls the creatures in every EARTHDAWN adventure. The entries in this section describe the average specimens of EARTHDAWN's creatures, so feel free to modify the information given to suit your campaigns.

A partial list of the creatures of EARTHDAWN follows. Each entry includes a physical description of the creature, its habitat and behavior, and any unique abilities or magical effects the creature possesses. Each entry also includes the creature's game statistics.

Note that some creatures possess Smarts relative to the animal world, denoted with (A) following their Smarts die. Creatures denoted with a ☼ in their name are Wild Cards. Wild Cards are usually dragons or Horrors, but some especially tough, and

often solitary, creatures may also be encountered as Wild Cards.

OTHER CREATURES

The following creatures from the *Savage Worlds Core Rulebook* can also be found throughout the province of Barsaive:

Alligator	Shark, great white
Crocodile	Shark, medium
Bear, large	maneater
Bull	Skeleton
Cat, small	Snake, constrictor
Dog	Snake, venomous
Ghost	Spider, giant
Horse, riding	Swarm
Horse, war	Vampire, ancient
Lion	Vampire, young
Mule	Wolf
Ogre	

CREATURES

Critters. Hate 'em all. Especially the ones that taste like chicken.
—Sandalar of Jerris



BLOOD MONKEYS

Blood monkeys are small simian creatures that inhabit Blood Wood. Barely two feet tall, they have prehensile tails that extend an additional two feet beyond their overall body length. Their entire bodies are covered with a fine, deep red fur. Though blood monkeys may seem to be harmless, they have proven quite vicious. Each finger ends in a sharp claw, and long, needle-sharp fangs protrude from both their lower and upper jaws.



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Blood monkeys are territorial and will attack single individuals as often as they do entire caravans of wagons. In the initial attack, up to 15 of the strongest males drop silently from the thick treetops of Blood Wood, almost always surprising their victims.

If any character becomes wounded by a blood monkey, the monkeys screech to summon additional groups of 5 to 15 blood monkeys, which will arrive every other round. If the characters can defend themselves for 10 rounds, the monkeys will try to escape.

Blood monkeys live in groups of up to 100, but terrifying legends tell of attacks by multiple groups numbering into the thousands.

BLOOD MONKEY

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d8, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Bite/Claw:** Str
- ♦ **Brachiation:** Blood monkeys increase their Pace by 2 while in trees.
- ♦ **Frenzy:** If a target becomes wounded, blood monkeys enter a frenzy, gaining a +1 bonus to all Trait rolls until combat has ended.



Bog Gob

Not native to Barsaive, bog gobs are squat, ugly, wicked creatures with glowing yellow eyes set in mottled-gray heads. Standing 4 to 5 feet tall, they weigh a staggering 200 pounds. The same magic that holds their mud-colored, bipedal bodies together also acts as resilient natural armor. They gather in groups numbering from 10–60 throughout the wilderness of Barsaive. According to legends, these

creatures came to Barsaive from faraway swamps in the lands to the north.

Bog gobs often attack simply to injure victims, as well as to kill and loot. These creatures always leave survivors, although the larger the attacking group, the fewer the survivors. The reason for this behavior remains a mystery, though some believe the gobs leave survivors because they enjoy the tales that inevitably spread following these attacks.

BOG GOB

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6, Tracking d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Gob:** Bog gobs' bodies can transform into amorphous masses and attach themselves to victims, gaining a +2 bonus to grapple attacks. Bog gobs may continue to attack a grappled victim with its weapon as normal.
- ♦ **Mud Spear:** Str + d6.



BRITHAN

Dwarf hunters have described the brithan as a cross between a bear and an elemental having a bad day. Luminescent flecks color these animals' eyes, and their large heads sit atop ursine bodies covered with shaggy, deep brown or blue-black fur.

Brithans are territorial and will stand on their hind legs and roar a challenge to anything that enters their domain. If a single character answers the challenge, the brithan enters into ritual combat with him, and the two fight until one submits. A character need not kill the brithan in order to win the combat; battering a brithan to unconsciousness is also a victory. A brithan's submission lasts for about 72 hours, after which the creature tends to forget who beat him.

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Any character who submits to a brithan must move himself and his team at least half a mile away from the victorious creature, or the brithan will attack the character in an attempt to kill him.

If more than one character attacks a brithan during the challenge, the animal fights back savagely, entering into a rage and gaining a +2 bonus to all Trait rolls until the end of the battle.

BRITHAN

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Swimming d6

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10

Special Abilities

♦ **Charge:** Brithans charge to ram their opponents with their horns. If they can move at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.

♦ **Claws:** Str+d6.

♦ **Size +2:** These creatures can stand up to 8' tall and weigh over 1,000 pounds.



❁ BROCCHA

Broccha live on what are known as *fool's islands* in Death's Sea. Broccha are reptilian in nature, with that species' characteristic snake-like head, four stocky legs, and long tail lined with short spikes. The creature's skin has the odor and texture of the clenkas it lies on, a resemblance accentuated by small, bright-red welts, each roughly an inch in diameter, that dot the broccha's skin. These welts show the

elemental fire that runs through the broccha's blood. Their coloration allows broccha to lie motionless on the fool's islands and to blend in perfectly with their environment. Intruders never know the creature is there until too late. Though they look slow and sluggish, they are deadly opponents, made even more so by their two unique attack forms, the *tail strike* and the *fire spit*.

Broccha apparently possess an unlimited capacity for *fire spit*, though the bright red welts on their skin seem to fade the more they use *fire spit*. Some tales tell of broccha that have no red welts and never use the *fire spit* attack, but no one can begin to understand the implications of these rumors.

BROCCHA

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 11 (2)

Special Abilities

♦ **Armor +2:** Thick skin.

♦ **Claws/Bite:** Str+d6.

♦ **Ferocious:** If a broccha does not use its fire spit attack, it may make 2 claw/bite attacks instead.

♦ **Fire Spit:** A broccha can spit a small sphere of flame up to 5" away. When it reaches its destination, the spit explodes, dealing 2d6 fire damage to all creatures within a Small Burst Template. Broccha are immune to this fire damage.

♦ **Size +2:** These creatures weigh between 800 and 1,000 lbs.

♦ **Tail Frenzy:** Instead of taking a move action, broccha can whip their ferocious tails about in violent and unpredictable patterns. Any creature to its rear facing within a 2" by 2" square are subject to a standard Fighting attack that deals Str+d4 damage.

♦ **Tail Spikes:** Broccha can attack any creature to its rear facing using its savage tail attack, which deals Str+d8 damage.

CADAVER MAN

During the Scourge, some residents of citadels infested by Horrors chose death rather than face such evil beings. From these suicide victims, some of the more intelligent Horrors created the animated corpses known as "cadaver men," undead beings capable of feeling only pain. Although most cadaver men retain their human intelligence, their miserable existences have filled them with hatred of the living and driven most insane. As a result, social contact



with cadaver men, though possible, is unsettling for living beings. Cadaver men are also cannibals, but contrary to popular myth do not require sentient flesh for survival.

CADAVER MAN

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities

♦ **Claws:** Str+d4.



♦ **Fearless:** Cadaver men are immune to fear and intimidation.

♦ **Savage Rage:** A cadaver man that suffers any damage flies into a rage and gains the Improved Frenzy Edge.

♦ **Undead:** +2 Toughness; +2 to recover from being Shaken.

CAVE TROLL

Cave trolls descended from tribes of trolls who took to the deep places of the Earth when the Horrors came. Their isolation from the rest of the world led to cultural stagnation, and in some cases, degeneration among these tribes. Elemental magic has raised the strength of these cave trolls beyond that of civilized trolls, however, and in recent years they have emerged from their tunnels to explore the world above. Rude and often violent, the cave trolls' habit of mixing trade with raiding has made them unwelcome visitors in most of Barsaive.

Cave trolls use large stone weapons called cave axes, little more than crude stone axes bolstered with elemental magic. Wielding a cave axe requires a Strength value of d10. Any less, and the character wielding the cave axe suffers a -2 penalty to both attack and damage. Because demand for these weapons is low, cave axes are undervalued at 50 silver pieces each. Cave trolls take offense at anyone other than a fellow cave troll using one of their axes.

CAVE TROLL

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

Gear: Cave-axe (Str+d8).

Special Abilities

♦ **Infravision:** Cave troll eyes are accustomed to the darkness of caves. They ignore attack penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

♦ **Size +2:** Cave trolls are large and strong.

CHAKTA BIRD

Chakta birds resemble large ravens with red-tipped wings and gold-flecked feathers. These social animals usually travel in flocks of 1-24 birds, and can use their limited telepathy to communicate with intelligent beings. They often approach travelers to share news of the air (or road)

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ahead, an example of the “civilized” behavior that has prompted some scholars to speculate about their origins.

Courteous animals, chakta birds expect courtesy in return. Any rude behavior or omission of simple road courtesies, such as sharing of bread or hunting catch, proper introductions, or offering of places at a fire, enrages chakta birds.

When angered, most chakta birds attack the offending character, and some almost always attack the offender’s companions. Chaktas begin an attack by flying around their targets in a whirling circle, cawing, and screeching madly. The whirling birds then use their magic to paralyze the offending character. The character can break the paralysis before the rounds have expired if he apologizes profusely to the bird (through stiffened, rigid lips).

CHAKTA BIRD

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d10

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities

♦ **Flight:** Chakta birds have a flight pace of 18.

♦ **Paralyzing Stare:** Once every d4 rounds, a chakta bird can choose a target within 10” and force that creature to make a Vigor roll with a –4 penalty. If that creature fails its roll, it becomes completely paralyzed for a number of rounds equal to the difference between its roll and 4.

♦ **Peck:** Str.

♦ **Precise Peck:** Against paralyzed opponents, a chakta bird’s peck damage increases to Str+d6.

♦ **Size –2:** Chakta birds are small creatures, weighing on average only 5 lbs.

CRAKBILL

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

♦ **Paralyzing Breath:** Crakbills can unleash a spray of orange gas from their beaks in a cone (use the Cone Template). Any creature caught in this cone must succeed at a Vigor roll with a –2 penalty or become paralyzed for d4 rounds.

♦ **Peck:** Str+d4.

♦ **Run-by Spray:** Crakbills can use their Paralyzing Breath ability while in the middle of movement with no penalty.

♦ **Skullcrack:** Against a paralyzed foe, a crakbill’s peck damage gains a +4 bonus.



CRAKBILL

Using their heavy bills like stone hatchets, these large flightless birds crack open the skulls of recent kills or paralyzed prey and feast on the brains of their victims. The bills are less useful against mobile targets than their fearsome appearance suggests. Though crakbills have skulls and body and leg bones, their necks contain no vertebrae. Instead, a crakbill’s neck is a thin tube of interwoven muscle. A flexible spiral of magical material that looks like burnished copper connects the skull to the body and reinforces the neck muscles. This neck cord is worth d6×10 silver pieces.

CROJEN

Crojen are deadly predators that hunt in packs of five to ten males and females in the Servos and Liaj jungles. Small black tigers that resemble panther cubs even when fully grown, crojen are roughly two feet long and one foot tall at the shoulder. Their tails add another foot to their body length, though adventurers who have come into contact with them swear that these creatures are larger.

Crojen patiently hunt their prey for days if necessary, using both normal vision and *astral sight*. This special power makes it hard to elude these creatures except by magic. Crojen have a ferocious

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bite-and-claw attack, which legend says can rip apart a full-grown troll in just over a minute once the beasts are frenzied. No armor can long withstand a crojen attack.

CROJEN

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d10

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Astral Sight:** Crojen can sense creatures and objects in astral space, using its Notice dice for detecting such targets per normal.

- ♦ **Claws/Bite:** Str+d4.

- ♦ **Feeding Frenzy:** A crojen that wounds a target goes into a feeding frenzy, gaining a +2 bonus to all Trait rolls against the wounded creature until it or the crojen is killed.

- ♦ **Low Light Vision:** Crojen ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

- ♦ **Size -1:** Crojen are two feet long and weigh about 100 lbs.

DEMIWRAITH

Demiwraiths are an unusual type of animated dead. Not the same kind of undead as vampires or ghosts, these hateful spirits possessed victims during the long years of the Scourge and eventually merged with the host body. Some of these spirits could not separate themselves from their hosts when the hosts died, and became demiwraiths. The demiwraiths animate the dead flesh that imprisons them, and revel in destroying the living.

A black, foggy, astral substance often shrouds a demiwraith's body, giving these beings an appearance similar to that of a true wraith.

DEMIWRAITH

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Claws:** Str+d4.

- ♦ **Shroud:** The black, foggy substance surrounding the demiwraith causes opponents to suffer an additional -2 penalty to Attack rolls when battling the demiwraith in Dim or Dark lighting.

- ♦ **Undead:** +2 Toughness.



ESPAGRA

Flying predators colored a brilliant shade of blue, espagras resemble small dragons except for their iguana-like heads. An espagra's wingspan often reaches 12 feet. Though quick and agile flyers, espagras do not strike opponents while in flight, preferring to swoop down upon an enemy, knock him down, and continue the struggle on the ground.

Some of an espagra's scales exude elemental air magic. These scales add luster and brilliance to the other scales, making the creature shimmer in a way that other espagra—and many races—find appealing. Master clothiers can tailor garments using espagra scales; such clothes look richer than other fine garments, even those decorated with precious jewels. Cloaks made from espagra scales protect the wearer much like leather armor, but also add to the wearer's Mystic Armor (see **Chapter 8: Gear** in the *Player's Guide*).

ESPAGRA

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8, Stealth d10

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (2)

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Armor +2:** Thick hide

- ♦ **Claw/Bite:** Str+d4.

- ♦ **Flight:** Espagra have a Flying Pace of 12".

- ♦ **Pounce:** Espagra often pounce on their prey to best bring their mass and claws to bear. It can leap d6" to gain +4 to its attack and damage. Its Parry is reduced by -2 until its next action when performing the maneuver, however.



FIRE EAGLE

Fire eagles are predatory birds that nest atop the bizarre rock formations that form along the shores of Death's Sea. Their twelve-foot wingspan makes these birds resemble large eagles with continually flaming feathers, the flames fueled by the elemental fire in their blood. The razor-sharp claws of fire eagles are a shiny black and usually more than four inches long. These birds are fiercely territorial; only one person has ever claimed to have tamed one, and that was the great beastmaster Nil Tasio of the Dragon Mountains.

Fire eagle feathers do not remain on fire if taken from its body; the fire is a side-effect of the elemental fire that courses through its blood. The feathers possess certain other qualities that alchemists, Elementalists, and sages find valuable, however, and can be sold for considerable profit. Fire eagle eggs throb with elemental fire. They are extremely rare and extremely valuable, mostly because many magic items based on elemental fire contain pieces of fire eagle egg.

FIRE EAGLE

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d6

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

♦ **Claw/Bite:** Str.

♦ **Fire Aura:** Any creature that begins its turn within 1" of a fire eagle suffers 2d6 fire damage.

♦ **Flight:** Fire eagles have a Flying Pace of 14".

FIRE WRAITH

Fire wraiths figure in most legends about Death's Sea, where they are said to lie in wait for over-confident adventurers. Similar in shape and size to demiwraiths, fire wraiths are composed entirely of living flame and are found only near Death's Sea. Their ghostly movement and appearance create a haunting experience for those confronted by fire wraiths. The most-repeated legend says that these creatures represent the souls of the first to die when Death was imprisoned.

FIRE WRAITH

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities

♦ **Claws:** Str+d6.

♦ **Flaming Strike:** Any creature struck by a fire wraith's claws must check to see if they catch on fire (see the *Savage Worlds Core Rulebook*).





GARGOYLE

Enchanted creatures of elemental earth and stone, gargoyles stand about 5 feet 6 inches tall and weigh an impressive 900 pounds. Their heads are elongated and distorted. Their hands end in long claws that they use to rake opponents, often in fly-by attacks.

Despite their nasty dispositions, gargoyles usually attack only to defend their territory or to protect other elemental earth. Though they gather in groups of 6–10 gargoyles, similar to lion prides, gargoyles are not social creatures. Individual gargoyles sometimes leave the pride for months, wandering the skies alone or in pairs. Because many of these wandering gargoyles are staking a claim to new territory, they act more aggressively than full prides. Occasionally an entire pride of gargoyles migrates, for unknown reasons.

GARGOYLE

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Special Abilities

♦ **Armor +2:** Stony hide.

♦ **Claws:** Str+d6.

♦ **Flight:** Gargoyles have a Flying Pace of 12".

dead. They live along trade routes where they ambush passing travelers, in cemeteries where they feed on the newly dead, or in city sewers, crawling out at night to hunt their victims. Though some travelers have reported seeing ghoul hordes comprised of as many as 50 members, such huge bands have become rare since the departure of the Horrors.

Ghouls produce a magical toxin called *cacofian* that remains inert until activated by a ghoul. The poison slowly paralyzes its victim so the ghoul can devour the still-living meal at its leisure. When a ghoul dies, its *cacofian* becomes inert. Many Nethermancer Adepts have attempted to use this toxin, but so far none have succeeded.

GHOUL

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

♦ **Claw/Bite:** Str.

♦ **Poison:** Any creature damaged by a ghoul must succeed at a Vigor roll or become paralyzed for d4 rounds. This effect is cumulative.

♦ **Undead:** +2 Toughness

GRANLAIN

Granlain are unusually large, strong horses that often serve as draft animals. They stand seven feet tall at the shoulder and commonly reach ten feet in



GHOUL

Ghouls are undead creatures created by the Horrors' arcane magics. To sustain themselves, ghouls must eat the vital organs of the living or recently

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length. Granlain are stubborn animals, and trolls are often the only Namegivers strong enough to deal with these massive, willful beasts. Granlain are not common. Wild granlain live only in the plains and foothills near mountainous regions.

GRANLAIN

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+4, Vigor d10
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 10
Special Abilities
 ♦ **Fleet-Footed:** Granlain roll a d8 when running instead of a d6.
 ♦ **Kick:** Str+d6.
 ♦ **Size +4:** Granlain are much larger than their horse cousins.



GRIFFIN

These strange, four-legged creatures combine a lion's body with the head, legs, and wings of a large eagle. Like an eagle's, a griffin's front legs are covered in feathers and end in sharp talons; its hind legs resemble those of a lion, covered in soft fur and ending in a paw. A typical griffin stands four feet tall at the shoulder, and is five to six feet long with an average wingspan of seven to nine feet. The head of a griffin resembles that of an eagle, with large, keen eyes and a sharp beak. Its wings are covered with bright feathers, usually yellow and white, but sometimes red and orange.

Griffins gather in nests of up to ten individuals, but more commonly live in flocks of four or five. They nest in mountainous regions, and rarely venture into the jungles or forests of Barsaive. Griffins seldom attack travelers on foot, unless their territory is threatened. Their strong taste for horse meat occasionally leads them to attack travelers on horseback, in order to feed on the horse.

Humanoids of average human size and smaller, except for windlings, can use griffins as aerial mounts. Though difficult to train, tame griffins make excellent steeds.

GRIFFIN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6
Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8
Special Abilities
 ♦ **Claws:** Str+d6.
 ♦ **Flight:** Griffins have a Flying Pace of 12".
 ♦ **Improved Frenzy:** Griffins may take two Fighting attacks each at no penalty.
 ♦ **Low Light Vision:** Griffins ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.
 ♦ **Pounce:** Griffins often fly down to pounce on their prey to best bring their mass and claws to bear, gaining +4 to its attack and damage. Its Parry is reduced by -2 until its next action when performing the maneuver however.
 ♦ **Size +2:** Griffins weigh up to 750 lbs.

GUARD VETERAN

A soldier with years of experience, a guard veteran has loyally served his city, house, or master for a lengthy period of time. Most have encountered Horrors or their constructs at least once and none care to repeat the experience. Though steadfast, guard veterans do not give their employers blind loyalty. Most consider themselves guardians of justice, and if a character can prove that an employer has evil intentions, many guard veterans will cease to defend him.

Guard veterans can be of any race. The example below is human. The GM should make adjustments to accommodate different racial abilities for non-human guard veterans.

GUARD VETERAN

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d12, Notice d10+2, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8, Swimming d10, Throwing d8
Charisma: -; **Pace:** 5; **Parry:** 9; **Toughness:** 8 (2)
Gear: Chainmail (+2), broadsword (Str+d8), throwing dagger (Str+d4; range 3/6/12).
Hindrances: Code of Honor
Edges: Alertness, Block, Brave, Counterattack

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Special Abilities

- ♦ **Lie Detector:** A guard veteran may make a Notice roll to detect if someone is lying or hiding the truth.



HUTTAWA

The huttawa's body resembles that of a lion or tiger, but it has an eagle-like head with a large beak and bird-like eyes. Four feet at the shoulder and six feet long, huttawa are a favored mount for dwarf Cavalryman Adepts, and often help pull caravan wagons belonging to dwarf trading companies.

HUTTAWA

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d12, Stealth d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Bite/Claws:** Str+2.
- ♦ **Grapple:** If a huttawa gets a raise while performing a grapple, it has knocked its foe to the ground and pinned it with its paws. Bite attacks against a pinned foe are made at +2.
- ♦ **Improved Frenzy:** Huttawa may make two Fighting attacks each action at no penalty.
- ♦ **Size +2:** Huttawa weigh over 500 pounds.

ICE FLYER

Ice flyers resemble white, winged baboons, standing roughly six feet tall and weighing up to 700 pounds. Some, though not all, of their feathers gleam as if

made of crystal. They often gather in flocks of 4 to 24 individuals, one of which leads the flock. The leader usually stays out of direct combat, using its abilities rather than entering the melee.

Ice flyers can use a special magical effect on a target called ice flyer shackles. The ice flyer makes a ranged attack against any target within 6". If successful, a band of magical frost wraps the victim, who becomes entangled as if grappled. To escape, a trapped creature must make an opposed Strength or Agility roll against the ice flyer's attack roll result. A successful escape from the band ends the effect. If left alone, the shackles melt after 3d6 rounds.

Ice flyers have enchanted feathers that stay cold even in tropical heat, allowing the creatures to live in tropical or arid environments.

ICE FLYER

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Claw/Bite:** Str+d6.
- ♦ **Flight:** Ice flyers have a Flying Pace of 15".
- ♦ **Uncanny Initiative:** An ice flyer with a higher Initiative than the target's by 1 card receives a +1 bonus to its Parry against that opponent. If its Initiative is higher than 1, it gains a +2 bonus against that opponent.

JEHUTHRA

Jehuthras are constructs of the Horrors, first formed during the early years of the Horrors' manifestation. These seven-foot-long, spiderlike beings have eight legs, each ten feet long, and their bristly bodies end in humanoid faces. Though their eyes look vacant, jehuthras possess considerable cunning and intelligence. They prefer traps and ambushes to a straight confrontation, and an overmatched jehuthra will flee rather than fight. Only if flight looks difficult or impossible does a jehuthra defend itself with its magical powers. The metallic deposits on a jehuthra's chest form a thorax web, which the monster uses to create its web effects.

Frost web is targeted against a single character, who must be within 20" of the jehuthra. The jehuthra rubs its thorax web and points at the target, then makes an attack. A successful result entangles the victim in an icy, barbed web, and the extreme cold

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does 2d8 damage. Breaking free of the frost web requires a successful Strength roll with a -2 penalty.

Lacerators are cold, icy spikes that form on two of the jehuthra's legs. They last for 2d6 rounds, adding +2 cold damage to each of the jehuthra's claw attacks.

Iron web is a defensive effect, allowing a jehuthra to create an iron maze. After tracing a pattern upon its thorax web and spending a full-round action, the jehuthra causes the web springs into being in a 15" radius around it. Iron web creates a maze 2" high and closed over the top of the maze walls, consisting of independent paths that lead to the center. The paths can vary in width. The jehuthra can create the eight paths in any way it sees fit, creating a literal labyrinth, zig-zagging across the area of effect and isolating each character. The paths lead only to the center and they do not intersect. The jehuthra is aware of every living creature within its iron web and their locations at all times, allowing it to pick off creatures one at a time. The iron web turns to a pile of rust after 24 hours.

JEHUTHRA

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 13 (2)

Special Abilities

- **Armor +2:** Exoskeleton.



- **Claws:** Str+d6.

- **Size +3:** Jehuthra are large creatures and terrible to behold.

- **Thorax Web:** Jehuthra have three different magical thorax web effects: *frost web*, *lacerators*, and *iron web* (see description). They can use one effect each round.

KRILWORM

Krilworms are nocturnal flyers, traveling in swarms ranging from 8 to 80 members and feeding off of large insects and small mammals. Their needle-like teeth drip a foul-smelling toxic substance. They have segmented bodies about 18 inches long, with bat-like wings sprouting near the front.

On occasion, swarms of krilworms attack large animals and humanoids, but a determined character can easily drive off these swarms. For each krilworm that dies fighting large animals, the swarm makes a Spirit roll, with a -1 penalty for each krilworm killed. If the roll fails, the swarm leaves to find easier pickings.

Krilworms have a peculiar affinity for Nethermancer Adepts, and Nethermancer Adepts in turn often harbor a soft spot for these loathsome creatures. This unusual affinity allows Nethermancer Adepts to gain a +2 bonus to all interactions with these creatures.

KRILWORM

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d10

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities

- **Bite:** Str.
- **Flight:** Krilworms have a Flying Pace of 15".
- **Poison:** Any creature bitten by a krilworm suffers from venomous poison.
- **Size -2:** Krilworms are only 1 to 2 feet long.
- **Small:** Anyone attacking a krilworm subtracts 2 from his attack roll.

KUE

The kue resembles a cross between a lizard and a cat, with a reptilian body and feline mannerisms and facial features. Like cats, kue possess excellent night vision, and sometimes serve windling communities as watch animals. A kue has long, slender legs rather than the short squat legs typical of most lizards. They are about two feet tall at the shoulder, three to four feet long, and have horns on their heads and tails.



Kues are native to jungles and forests, and make ideal mounts for the windling Cavalryman and Warrior Adepts who protect windling communities and villages. Kues are generally sold only in larger cities and those towns located near jungles.

KUE

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 3; **Toughness:** 4

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Acrobat:** +2 to Agility rolls to perform acrobatic maneuvers; +1 to Parry if unencumbered.

- ♦ **Bite/Claw:** Str.

- ♦ **Low Light Vision:** Kue ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

- ♦ **Size -1** Kue are typically no more than two feet high.

- ♦ **Small:** Attackers subtract 2 from their attacks to hit.

and weigh roughly 200 pounds. When dry, their yellow-and-green skin glistens as though oiled. Lizards bloated from feeding within the past 48 hours (in which they eat one-third of their body weight), are docile unless provoked. Hungry lizards, by contrast, show remarkable aggression.

Once per day, lightning lizards can use a standard action to surround itself with bolts of lightning that crackle a mere inch from its skin. *Crackling armor* grants the lizard a +3 Armor bonus. In addition, anytime a creature physically strikes it with an unarmed or melee attack, the creature must succeed at an Agility roll or suffer 2d8 damage from the lightning. *Crackling armor* lasts for 3d4 rounds.

A lightning lizard can use another ability every 1d4 rounds called *twinbolts*. *Twinbolts* sends two streaks of lightning toward a target from the lizard's eyes. For a standard action, the lightning lizard can target any creature within 5", dealing 2d6 damage per bolt. A separate Shooting roll is required for each bolt.

LIGHTNING LIZARD

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6

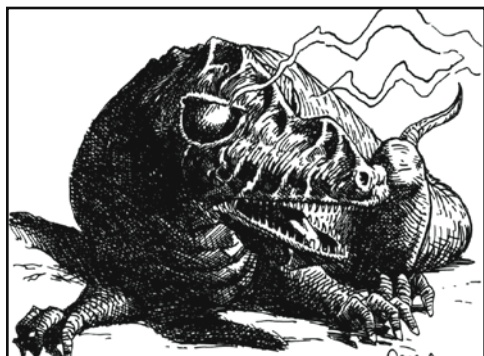
Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 9 (2)

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Armor +2:** Thick skin.

- ♦ **Claw/Bite:** Str+d6.

- ♦ **Lightning Use:** Lightning lizards have two special lightning abilities, *crackling armor* and *twinbolts* (see description).



OGRE TWIN

Ogre twins are two identical ogres, only one of whom can inhabit the material plane at a time. Like conventional ogres, ogre twins can sense precious metals and magically harden their clubs. Ogre twins are indistinguishable from their single counterparts, unless a character can sense connections between a twin and the astral plane. If a character uses arcane sight or a similar ability, he can see a pair of faint, white lines trailing from the ogre twin's head and disappearing into astral space.

Ogre twins can switch places with a thought as a free action. Each twin's physical possessions remain on the material plane; the second twin's body appears in the same spot occupied by the first twin, in the same position, even in mid-action if the twins

LIGHTNING LIZARD

Traveling in prides of 3 to 13 individuals, lightning lizards are four feet long with three-foot long tails

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so desire. The displaced twin inhabits a small, dimensional pocket between the astral and material planes. The white lines magically connect the displaced twin with the thoughts of the material twin, and also provide the displaced twin with air.

If one of the ogres is killed, the other immediately appears on the physical plane to avenge its twin's death. Killing both twins in quick succession is the only way to defeat them.

OGRE TWIN

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d4, Throwing d6

Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (1)

Gear: Thick hides (+1), giant club (Str+d8)

Special Abilities

• **Size +3:** Most ogre twins stand over 8' tall with powerful upper bodies and massive limbs.

• **Sweep:** May attack all adjacent characters at a -2 penalty.

SHADOWMANT

Eight feet wide with a five-foot tail, shadowmants resemble large, flying stingrays. A shadowmant's outer side is black, its underside dark gray, and its tail ends in a crystalline stinger. A shadowmant has two eyes and a small mouth lined with rows of tiny, needle-sharp teeth. Nocturnal creatures, shadowmants roam at night, spending daylight hours underground.

SHADOWMANT

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 2; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

• **Flight:** Shadowmants have a Flying Pace of 12".

• **Low Light Vision:** Shadowmants ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

• **Stinger:** Str.

• **Poison:** Those struck by a shadowmant's stinger are injected with Venomous poison on a Shaken result (refer to the *Savage Worlds Core Rulebook*).

SPECTRAL DANCER

Undead creations of the Horrors, spectral dancers are individuals who possessed considerable charisma and social skill in life. They appear as phantoms of the bodies they once inhabited. To make a spectral dancer, the Horror severs the dancer's spirit from his body in a grisly ritual, so that the dancer loses almost all ability to communicate with other sentient beings. He can occasionally see, hear, smell, and taste the world of the living, but cannot make contact with his fellows. The spectral dancer can only speak in garbled howls, and loses all ability to write, draw, or communicate in any way. The desire to communicate and the need for companionship remain, heightened by the ritual to the point of torment.

Their utter isolation drives spectral dancers insane. The spirits flit in and out of humanity, moving in a chaotic, frenzied dance. Desperate to communicate, a spectral dancer approaches a character and dances for one to three rounds, waiting for the character to join it. If the character turns down the "invitation," the spectral dancer attacks with desperate fury, using its spell-like ability. It continues to attack until the character dies or the dancer is destroyed.

A character may also join a spectral dancer in a dance, which will prevent it from attacking, but this carries its own danger. The character and the dancer remain locked in the dance until the character either dies or manages to assuage the dancer's terrible loneliness for a brief moment. Once joined, the character must see the dance through to its conclusion. During each round that the dance continues, the dancer's movements cause damage to the character equal to the number of rounds the dance has lasted, dealing 1d6 damage on round 1, 2d6 damage on round 2, and so on. During any round of the dance, the character can try to make contact with the dancer in order to ease its loneliness. To do this, the character makes an opposed Spirit roll. Once the character succeeds, the spectral dancer's motions slow, then



stop. The dancer thanks the character for giving it brief companionship, then fades away.

SPECTRAL DANCER

- Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d4, Vigor d6
Skills: Fighting d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d8
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5
Special Abilities
 ♦ **Ghostly Strike:** Str+2d4.
 ♦ **Undead:** Cannot be shaken.

STORM WOLF

An excellent hunter, the handsome storm wolf stands taller and is a little stronger than a normal wolf. Storm wolves travel in packs of 8 to 24 animals, and hunt travelers only if desperately hungry or if they sense evil emanating from the traveling party. A storm wolf's pure, elemental spirit detests impurities commonly found in evil spirits, and the wolves go out of their way to destroy such impurities. Legends say storm wolves have hunted undead creatures across hundreds of leagues.

In the same way that they sense evil, storm wolves can also often sense good within a party. In the past, storm wolves have led "good" parties to sites of evil they wish to see destroyed, creating a storm to let a party approach safely. The leader of the storm wolf pack can also heal a wounded character by placing his muzzle in the character's lap, thereby transferring the healing power of the storm to the character. The wolf can do this once per day per character. The effects automatically heal 1 wound.

Storm wolves unleash an eerie, whistling howl that summons a storm when they use this ability. The ability summons a windstorm at 50 mph, which arrives in 1d6 rounds. For each storm wolf that participates in the summoning beyond the first, the windstorm increases by 10 mph, to a maximum of 200 mph. The storm wolves are immune to the powerful winds and lashing rain, as well as any creature they deem as allies. The storm lasts for d6 hours, or until dispelled by the wolves. The storm covers a half-mile radius per storm wolf involved in the summoning.

A storm wolf pelt is worth 75 silver pieces. Elementalist Adepts are forbidden by their Discipline to take storm wolf pelts. A character who has skinned a storm wolf for its pelt can never receive aid from

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another storm wolf, because every wolf's spirit can sense the character's desecration of its fellow wolf.

STORM WOLF

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6
Pace: 10; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6
Special Abilities
 ♦ **Bite:** Str+d6.
 ♦ **Go for the Throat:** Storm wolves instinctively go for an opponent's soft spots. With a raise on its attack roll, it hits the target's most weakly armored location.
 ♦ **Fleet-Footed:** Storm wolves roll d10s instead of d6s when running.

THORN MAN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d10, Stealth d10
Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6
Gear: Spear Str+d6.
Special Abilities
 ♦ **Construct:** +2 to recover from being Shaken; called shots do no extra damage; does not suffer from disease or poison.
 ♦ **Fearless:** Thorn men are immune to fear and Intimidation, but are just smart enough to react to fear-causing situations appropriately.
 ♦ **Woodland Stealth:** Thorn men gain a +4 bonus to Stealth rolls while in Blood Wood.



THUNDRABEAST

This large, four-legged animal looks like a cross between a rhinoceros and a dinosaur, with a tough, rock-like skin covering its entire body. Thundra beasts stand 7 feet tall at the shoulder, are 10 to 12 feet long, and weigh nearly 1,000 pounds. Each thundra beast has a large horn in the center of its forehead, which it uses to attack opponents. Ork cavalry groups and others frequently ride thundra beasts; adventurers rarely encounter a thundra beast in the wild. Thundra beasts attack by charging their targets and goring them or trampling them.

THUNDRABEAST

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d12+3, Vigor d12
Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8
Pace: 7; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14 (2)
Special Abilities
 ♦ **Armor +2:** Thick skin.
 ♦ **Charge:** Thundra beasts use the charge maneuver to ram their opponents with their horns. If they can move at least 6" before attacking, they add +4 to their damage total.
 ♦ **Claw/Bite:** Str+d4.
 ♦ **Size +4:** Thundra beasts stand 7 feet tall and weigh up to 1,000 lbs.

THORN MAN

Thorn men are creations of the blood warders, the magicians who serve Queen Alachia of the Blood Wood. These animated, human-shaped bundles of thorns stand roughly 6 feet tall, weigh 60 pounds, and possess rudimentary intelligence.

Thorn men patrol the Blood Wood, searching for intruders to bring before Queen Alachia. They carry wooden spears tipped with polished stone.

TRIPLICANT

Solitary creatures, triplicants stand about five feet tall and have bluish-white skin and purple eyes. Their hands look huge in proportion to their slender bodies. Triplicants wander the land, eking out a living through hunting and theft. Though of subhuman intelligence, they display great cunning, ambushing

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unwary travelers in search of ordinary items that they consider treasure. According to rumor, triplicants sometimes manage to collect items of real value along with the everyday odds and ends they hoard.

Triplicants can conjure copies of themselves to engage in combat. Only the original triplicant, called the core triplicant, can reproduce. By using an action, two duplicates appear adjacent to the original. These duplicates remain for 3d6 hours before dissolving into a frothy mush. The copies may act individually or together, and even under the influence of magical charms refuse to harm the core triplicant. A core triplicant can make an unlimited number of duplicates, and always gives itself numerical superiority before ambushing a party. Each triplicant produced causes a -1 penalty to the triplicant's Vigor rolls. This penalty vanishes after the copy is destroyed.

TRIPLICANT

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Throwing d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

♦ **Claws:** Str.

♦ **Superior Numbers:** When ganging up on a target, triplicants gain a +2 bonus for each additional adjacent attack instead of the usual +1, with a maximum +8 bonus to each attacker.

TROAJIN

Troajin are tiger-like animals native to jungle and mountain country. The average troajin stands approximately four feet at the shoulder and is eight feet long—a combination of a five-foot-long body and a three foot tail. Wild troajin are fiercely territorial and defend themselves with sharp claws and



teeth. Troajin often become animal companions for Beastmaster Adepts.

TROAJIN

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d8

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8

Special Abilities

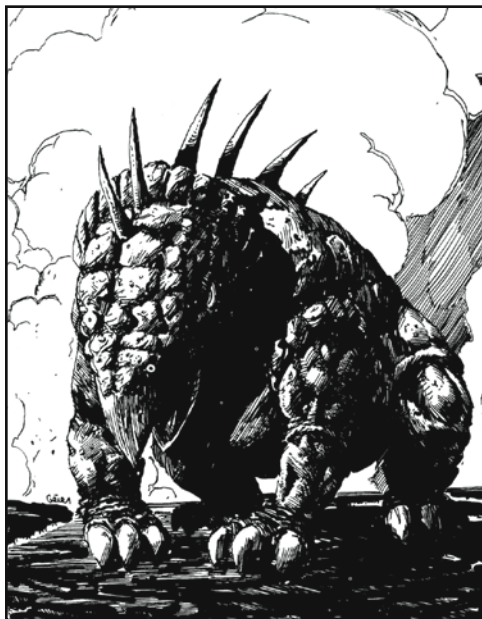
♦ **Bite or Claw:** Str+ d6.

♦ **Improved Frenzy:** Troajin may make two Fighting attacks each action at no penalty.

♦ **Low Light Vision:** Troajin ignore penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

♦ **Pounce:** Troajin often pounce on their prey to best bring their mass and claws to bear. It can leap 1d6" to gain +4 to its attack and damage. Its Parry is reduced by -2 until its next action when performing the maneuver however.

♦ **Size +2:** Troajin can weigh over 500 pounds.



VIRAAS

Viraas are lizards that live on the massed clenkas in Death's Sea known as *fool's islands*, usually hiding in relatively cool pockets beneath the surface of the island. Viraas measure five feet long, and stand three feet high at the shoulder. Their thick skin is most often a dark beige or tan color, and is covered

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with what appear to be warts. These are actually scars from touching the hottest molten stone of Death's Sea. Viraas are very rare. Legends state that Death kept them as pets and that they await his return. Death supposedly loved these creatures so well because they can kill a person with a single bite.

VIRAAS

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d8

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 9

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Bite:** Str+2d6.
- ♦ **Size +2:** Viraas are large and powerful creatures.
- ♦ **Vicious Jaws:** A viraas's beak has AP 2.



WITHERFANG

Large snakes inhabiting Blood Wood, witherfangs have thick bodies terminating in flared heads (similar to a cobra). These creatures were named for the powerful poison transmitted through a stinger at the end of their tails, capable of withering a victim's limb to uselessness. Their standard coloration varies, though most are a dull gray-green. What makes witherfangs unique among snakes is an entire mouth of teeth they use to hold their victims immobile.

WITHERFANG

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d10, Notice d12

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 5

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Bite:** Str.
- ♦ **Withering Poison:** A creature bit by a witherfang must succeed at a Vigor roll with a -4 penalty or gain the Lame hindrance until cured.

ZOAK

The zoak looks like a cross between a large bird and a bat, with feathers on its body and head and a leathery neck, wings, and tail. The creature's feathered legs each end in four eagle-like talons. Zoaks measure roughly four feet from beak to tail-tip. Their necks are long and flexible, similar in appearance to the crakbill's, but with vertebrae instead of muscle.

These jungle and forest animals are favored by windling Cavalryman Adepts and often serve as companions for Beastmaster Adepts. Because they are difficult to train, zoaks are rarely offered for sale, although some Throalic merchants are known to buy and sell them.

ZOAK

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d6

Pace: 3; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 3

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Flight:** Pace 6", Climb 4".
- ♦ **Size -2:** Zoak are 1' tall.

DRAGONS

"Wise heroes leave dragons alone, yet the hero's destiny always crosses the dragon's path. The trick is discerning whether the hero is on the path to greatness or simply on today's menu."

—Guyak Fairtongue, Cavalryman Adept

For as long as any race can remember, dragons have existed. Every culture in Barsaive has stories about dragons, many of them millennia old. Some scholars of the ancient races teach that dragons were the first of the world's living creatures, though little support exists for this theory. The dragons, who

know the truth, generally decline to answer questions about their past.

Dragons are solitary creatures, living alone by choice. Despite unsubstantiated rumors of dragon moots or councils, cooperation among dragons remains the stuff of legends.

All dragons are dangerous. Few tolerate other races meddling in their affairs, unless the dragon initiates the contact. Though some, such as the great dragon Icewing, have established a protocol by which the races of Barsaive may talk to them, most dragons prefer to be left alone.

DRAGON POWERS

All dragons possess at least a few of the powers listed below, though not every dragon has all the dragon powers. Individual dragons may have or lack whatever powers from the following list the Game Master deems appropriate.

Armored Scales: A dragon's armored skin provides superb physical and magical protection against attack. According to legend, some dragons have armor that no assault can breach. Armored scales negate a weapon's AP bonus on a 1 for 1 basis.

Disrupt Fate: Dragons with this power can alter the fate of other creatures. To use this ability, the dragon spends a Karma Point, which forces a target within range to make a Spirit roll with a -4 penalty. If the character fails his roll, he must immediately repeat the most recent roll he made. The new result stands, and cannot be disrupted a second time. Disrupt Fate is a free action, but the dragon can only use it a number of times per round listed in the power's entry.

Karma Points: All dragons have Karma Points that they may use to augment any roll they wish. A dragon may spend only 1 Karma Point per roll. A dragon regains spent Karma Points at a rate of 1 or 2 points per day, until it reaches its listed maximum. Cathay and common dragons regain 1 Karma Point per day; the more powerful great dragons regain 2 Karma Points per day. Every Karma Point spent adds +4 to the dragon's roll. A dragon can only spend 1 Karma Point on any one roll, unless stated otherwise in the dragon's entry.

Lair Sense: A dragon makes its lair an extension of itself, and can use Lair Sense to notice characters anywhere within its lair. Whenever a character rolls a die for an action within the confines of the dragon's lair, he triggers the dragon's Lair Sense. Simple movement and quiet conversation tend not to activate this power, though they can on occasion. To use this ability, the dragon makes a Notice roll with the bonus listed in this ability's entry. If the roll

succeeds, the dragon detects the character and his location within the lair. Dragons often booby-trap their lairs to take advantage of this power, forcing characters to beat the traps by performing an action that reveals their presence.

Suppress Magic: Most dragons can suppress magic used by other creatures. To use the Suppress Magic ability, the dragon must spend 1 Karma Point. All creatures within the aura's range must make a successful opposed Spirit roll with the dragon or suffer the listed penalty to all magic, including action rolls for abilities, damage rolls for spells, and so on. The effect lasts for d6 rounds.



CATHAY DRAGON

Cathay dragons come from a land beyond the reach of the Theran Empire. Some legends, allegedly told by Cathay dragons and recorded by sages, claim that these dragons descended from the stars.

A Cathay dragon's head and body measure 50 feet long, and its tail adds another 50 feet to the dragon's total length. The legs end in dextrous paws, each with four fingers. The broad head is half again as wide as the dragon's body. Horns rise behind the deep and mysterious eyes that seem to contain the wisdom learned over centuries. Cathay dragons tend toward iridescent green or yellow, their base shades often augmented with streaks or splashes of other colors. Though wingless, Cathay dragons can fly by tucking their legs into their sides and "swimming" through the air as an eel swims through water.

The most sociable breed of dragon, Cathay dragons occasionally hire servants and keep slaves. They sometimes invite travelers to dine with them, to tell tales of other places and exciting times. Though sufficiently skilled entreaties can entice them to show off their treasures, Cathay dragons allow no one to touch or take any of their truly valuable possessions.

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CATHAY DRAGON

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d12+7, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Healing d12, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Knowledge (other) d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d12, Shooting d10, Survival d12, Swimming d12, Taunt d8, Throwing d8, Tracking d12

Pace: 8; Parry: 7; Toughness: 20 (4)

Special Abilities

- **Armor +4:** Scaly hide.
- **Armored Scales:** Two points.
- **Change Shape:** The Cathay dragon can assume the form of other creatures and animals at will at the cost of 1 Karma Point.
- **Claw/Bite:** Str+d8.
- **Cloudwalking:** A Cathay dragon can tread on clouds or fog as though on solid ground.
- **Disrupt Fate:** The Cathay dragon may use this dragon power twice in one round.
- **Fiery Breath:** The Cathay dragon may breathe fire in a cone 9" long and 3" wide at its widest point. Every target within this cone may make an Agility roll at -2 to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d10 damage and must check to see if they catch fire. A dragon may not attack with its claws or bite in the round it breathes fire.
- **Flight:** Dragons have a Flying Pace of 24" and Climb 0.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Huge:** Attackers add +4 to their Fighting or Shooting rolls when attacking a dragon due to its massive size.
- **Improved Frenzy:** If a Cathay dragon does not use its Fiery Breath ability, it may make two Fighting attacks with no penalty.
- **Karma Points:** The Cathay dragon has 40 Karma Points.
- **Lair Sense:** The Cathay dragon gains a +2 bonus to its Notice roll when using this power.
- **Level Headed:** Act on best of two cards.
- **Size +8:** Cathay dragons are massive creatures, over 90' long from nose to tail, and weighs well over 50,000 pounds.
- **Suppress Magic:** -2 to opponents' use of magic.
- **Tail Lash:** The Cathay dragon can sweep all opponents in its rear facing in a 3" long by 6" wide square. This is a standard Fighting attack, and damage is equal to the Cathay dragon's Strength -2.
- **Water Breathing:** A Cathay dragon can breathe and act normally under water, even use its fiery breath.



COMMON DRAGON

One of the quickest ways to die in Barsaive is to call a common dragon by that name. Like most dragonkind, common dragons take fierce pride in their heritage and accomplishments. Boastful, deceitful, sly, often gifted with a malicious sense of humor, these dragons fortunately take little interest in Barsaive's affairs.

The name "common dragon" is a misnomer. Though the people of Barsaive use this term because nearly all the dragons they know of have the size, shape, and general appearance described below, these beasts are not common. In fact, few people in Barsaive have ever seen a dragon.

The common dragon's body is 65 feet long, with a tail that adds another 55 feet to the dragon's total length. The dragon's massive wings span 100 feet. Horns protrude from its forehead, and it has teeth sharper than newly whetted steel. Common dragons are usually one color with a lighter shade of the same coloration on their bellies; their scales have a dull gleam, like a cloudy lacquer. Though common dragons of almost every conceivable shade exist in stories, most common dragons in Barsaive are green, blue, and dun yellow.

Too covetous to let anyone close to their hoards, common dragons rarely meet with characters in their lairs. If common dragons deign to interact with what they call the two-legs, they usually do so at a place at least two hours' flight from their lair.

COMMON DRAGON

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12+6, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Healing d12, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d6, Knowledge (other) d6, Notice d10, Persuasion d10, Shooting d10, Survival d12, Swimming d12, Taunt d10, Throwing d8, Tracking d12

Pace: 8; Parry: 8; Toughness: 20 (4)



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Special Abilities

- **Armor +4:** Scaly hide.
- **Armored Scales:** One point.
- **Change Shape:** The common dragon can assume the form of other creatures and animals at will at the cost of 1 Karma Point.
- **Claw/Bite:** Str+d6.
- **Disrupt Fate:** The common dragon may use this dragon power once per round.
- **Fiery Breath:** The common dragon may breathe fire in a cone 9" long and 3" wide at its widest point. Every target within this cone may make an Agility roll at -1 to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d8 damage and must check to see if they catch fire. A dragon may not attack with its claws or bite in the round it breathes fire.
- **Flight:** Common dragons have a Flying Pace of 24" and Climb 0.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Huge:** Attackers add +4 to their Fighting or Shooting rolls when attacking a dragon due to its massive size.
- **Improved Frenzy:** If a common dragon does not use its Fiery Breath ability, it may make two Fighting attacks with no penalty.
- **Karma Points:** The common dragon has 25 Karma Points.
- **Lair Sense:** The common dragon gains a +1 bonus to its Notice roll when using this power.
- **Level Headed:** Act on best of two cards.
- **Size +8:** Common dragons are massive creatures, over 100' long from nose to tail, and weighs well over 60,000 pounds.
- **Suppress Magic:** -1 to opponents' use of magic.
- **Tail Lash:** The common dragon can sweep all opponents in its rear facing in a 3" long by 6" wide square. This is a standard Fighting attack, and damage is equal to the common dragon's Strength -4.

★ GREAT DRAGON

Legend says that great dragons, the mightiest of their kind, are immortal. These shrewd, highly intelligent creatures spend their endless lives hatching and nurturing their plans for the world. Great dragons often interact with the world around them, but usually work through a web of contacts and agents rather than acting directly. Believing that the world holds powerful enemies, these great creatures apparently prefer to use discretion in their dealings.

Not a true subspecies of dragon, great dragons are larger, more powerful specimens of the other types of dragons known to inhabit Barsaive. Even more physically imposing than their common brethren, great dragons move with a grace and speed that defies their immense physical size and shape. Though lacking proof, scholars have theorized that dragons use magical means to enhance their physical might.

Great dragons rarely become directly involved in the activities and behaviors of the other Namegiver races. The ancient great dragons known to exist in and around Barsaive hold themselves aloof from the concerns of mankind, and seem content to play their power games with each other.

GREAT DRAGON

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d12+9, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Healing d12, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Knowledge (other) d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d12, Shooting d10, Survival d12, Swimming d12, Taunt d12, Throwing d8, Tracking d12

Pace: 8; Parry: 8; Toughness: 21 (4)

Special Abilities

- **Armor +4:** Scaly hide.
- **Armored Scales:** Four points.
- **Change Shape:** The great dragon can assume the form of other creatures and animals at will for 1 Karma Point.
- **Claw/Bite:** Str+d10.
- **Disrupt Fate:** The great dragon may use this dragon power once per round.
- **Fiery Breath:** The great dragon may breathe fire in a cone 9" long and 3" wide at its widest point. Every target within this cone may make an Agility roll at -1 to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d12 damage and must check to see if they catch fire. A dragon may not attack with its claws or bite in the round it breathes fire.
- **Flight:** Great dragons have a Flying Pace of 24" and Climb 0.
- **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Huge:** Attackers add +4 to their Fighting or Shooting rolls when attacking a dragon due to its massive size.
- **Improved Frenzy:** If a great dragon does not use its Fiery Breath ability, it may make two Fighting attacks with no penalty.
- **Karma Points:** The great dragon has 50 Karma Points.

♦ **Lair Sense:** The great dragon gains a +4 bonus to its Notice roll when using this power.

♦ **Level Headed:** Act on best of two cards.

♦ **Size +9:** Great dragons are massive creatures, over 110' long from nose to tail, and weighs well over 60,000 pounds.

♦ **Suppress Magic:** -4 to opponents' use of magic.

♦ **Tail Lash:** The great dragon can sweep all opponents in its rear facing in a 3" long by 6" wide square. This is a standard Fighting attack, and damage is equal to the great dragon's Strength.

Most dragons' actual abilities vary to a degree, some greatly, some very little. A few of the more prominent great dragons living in Barsaive are listed below.

☉ Alamaise

Alamaise lives in the far north, somewhere within the forests north of Iopos and west of the Blood Wood. Those rare adventurers who have traveled

to Alamaise's lair shared nothing of their experience, and few others know anything of him. Legend speaks of a northern great dragon destined to "confront the corrupted elves, to bring them divine retribution," and some in Barsaive believe that Alamaise is the northern dragon of the tale.

☉ Mountainshadow

Mountainshadow's lair lies hidden in the Dragon Mountains, high above a wide plateau. On rare occasions Mountainshadow has contacted adventurers through a human agent named Darktooth. No one knows where Mountainshadow's human agent comes from. One story tells of a thief from one of the villages near the Dragon Mountains who tried to trail Darktooth so that he might see Mountainshadow. Though the villagers warned the thief against antagonizing Mountainshadow, he foolishly ignored them. A day later, the villagers found the thief's remains scattered across the village green. The dragon had sent a reminder that only invited guests may approach Mountainshadow's lair without risk.

☉ Icewing

Of all the great dragons, only Icewing commonly meets directly with other races. Icewing's lair lies a few day's march from Bartertown, nestled above the snowline on Mount Vapor. A meeting with Icewing requires a gift worth at least 1,000 silver pieces. Those who bring no gift must return with one within a month or risk giving Icewing offense, a mistake no sane person cares to commit.





☉ DRAKE

Legends tell us of the existence of drakes, and legends form the basis of facts in the province of Barsaive. No one has reported encountering drakes in post-Scourge Barsaive, but we assume that since the dragons survived, the drakes did too. Nonetheless, all the information presented here is based on legends.

Drakes are small, five- to seven-foot long dragons, the smallest of dragonkind. Their tails make up half the length of their bodies. Legends mostly speak of these creatures in their shape-changed form as one of the Namegiver races. All the Namegiver races have stories of one of their own turning into a drake, though t'skrang legends about drakes claim the dragons desperately want to become t'skrang. All legends place the drakes near or in the Dragon Mountains.

In their Namegiver form, drakes talk and act just like the race they represent and sometimes possess

various skills and magical abilities. Many, like the Weaponsmith Adept Luc Nagol, have even been masters of a Discipline. Luc Nagol, who was a drake, taught the villagers of Ulog near the Dragon Mountains to defend themselves against the invading ork scorcher, then amazed them by turning into his dragon form and flying away.

DRAKE

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d12+9, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Healing d12, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Knowledge (other) d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d12, Shooting d10, Survival d12, Swimming d12, Taunt d12, Throwing d8, Tracking d12

Pace: 8; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 13 (4)

Special Abilities

♦ **Armor +4:** Scaly hide.

♦ **Armored Scales:** Four points.

♦ **Change Shape:** The drakes can assume the form of other creatures and animals at will at the cost of 1 Karma Point.

♦ **Claw/Bite:** Str+d6

♦ **Fiery Breath:** A drake may breathe fire in a cone 9" long and 3" wide at its widest point. Every target within this cone may make an Agility roll at -1 to avoid the attack. Those who fail suffer 2d6 damage and must check to see if they catch fire. A drake may not attack with its claws or bite in the round it breathes fire.

♦ **Flight:** Drakes have a Flying Pace of 24" and Climb 0.

♦ **Hardy:** The creature does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.

♦ **Improved Frenzy:** If a drake does not use its Fiery Breath ability, it may make two Fighting attacks with no penalty.

♦ **Karma Points:** A drake has 20 Karma Points.

♦ **Size +1:** Drakes are large creatures, up to seven feet long and weigh up to 900 lbs.

HORRORS

I have seen the horror of the Scourge. To know that it was caused by other entities—the Horrors—makes it doubly terrifying to me. It should be doubly so again for you.

—Caelarion, Nethermancer Adept

No one knows how many Horrors exist. Horrors do not have species, in the sense that dwarfs and humans are different species of the same genus. Though some Horrors resemble other Horrors, they are not

related to each other in any way comprehensible by humanoid minds. Though Horrors may spawn or create constructs, there is no evidence of family, society, or hierarchy among them.



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The Horrors presented on the following pages are known to exist in Barsaive. Other, unknown Horrors doubtless lie in the corrupt places, or wander through Barsaive's Tainted and Open areas. No one knows how many Horrors remain, or can tell whether new ones occasionally enter Barsaive from the polluted wastes of astral space.

HORROR POWERS

All of the Horrors demonstrate powerful magical abilities. No one knows if the Horrors have these powers through their use of the magical energies of the world, such as spells or abilities, or if the Horrors are actual manifestations of astral energy.

As in the case of dragons, not every Horror has every Horror power. The powers listed below are those most extensively documented; as far as anyone knows, the Horrors may have any number of additional, fearsome abilities.

Animate Dead: In order to animate a corpse, the Horror must touch a portion of the deceased body. To use this power, the Horror must spend a Karma Point. This raises the dead man for three days, turning him into a cadaver man (see cadaver man, in this chapter) under the Horror's control. The Horror may use Blood Magic to extend the animation beyond the three-day limit. By taking a -1 penalty to all Vigor rolls, the cadaver man will exist for a year and a day, at which time it collapses into dust unless the Horror continues the Blood Magic. If it does not continue it, then it no longer suffers the penalty to its Vigor rolls.

The Horror controls the cadaver man at a range of 100" to 300", as stated in the power's entry. Though the Horror must concentrate to control the dead, it need not make any rolls to give it orders. Because the cadaver men are telepathically linked to the Horror, its orders do not depend on speech or line of sight.

Corrupt Karma: This power allows the Horror to alter another being's use of Karma. A targeted character must succeed at an opposed Spirit roll (with a penalty as listed in the power's entry) in order to be able to use any Karma against the Horror during the duration of this power. Though normally this power works only through line of sight, the power can work against a Horror Marked character who is several hundred miles away.

Cursed Luck: Many of the Horrors can bring bad luck to opponents. Whenever the Horror wishes to use this power, it rolls 1 Karma die. It can do this as a free action even when it is not its turn. The Horror grants a penalty to a single die roll of the target (attack, damage, and so on). The exact penalty is listed in the ability's entry.

Horror Mark: This terrible ability allows Horrors to mark victims, thereby linking the Horror and the target character. To use Horror mark, the target character must be in the Horror's line of sight. The intended target must succeed at an opposed Spirit roll (with the penalty noted in the ability's entry) or become Horror marked. The Horror mark links the Horror to the target over vast distances, and allows the Horror to use any of its abilities against the target character when the character is within 10 miles of the Horror. For a range up to 100 miles, the Horror Mark power allows the Horror to take actions against the character that do not directly cause damage, and communication between the Horror and the target extends for 5,000 miles. Horror marks last for a year and a day. The Horror may renew the Horror mark whenever the target character is within 100 miles of the Horror.

Karma Points: All major Horrors have Karma Points. Every Horror may use Karma Points on any roll, though they may spend only 1 Karma Point per roll. The Horror adds the Karma die to the roll. Horrors regain Karma Points at a rate of d6 points per day, until they reach the maximum listed for each Horror. Spending a Karma point adds +2 to the Horror's roll. Only 1 Karma Point may be spent on any one roll unless stated otherwise in the Horror's entry.

Skin Shift: This gruesome ability allows the Horror to mutilate a target's body. The Horror must make a ranged attack using the range given in the power's entry. If the attack is successful, the Horror then rolls the damage dice to determine damage. The power causes the victim's skin tears loose from muscles and ligaments, twisting, and rotating about his body. Victims suffer a -2 penalty to recover from being shaken if caused to be so from this power. This power lasts for d4 rounds, dealing damage each round.

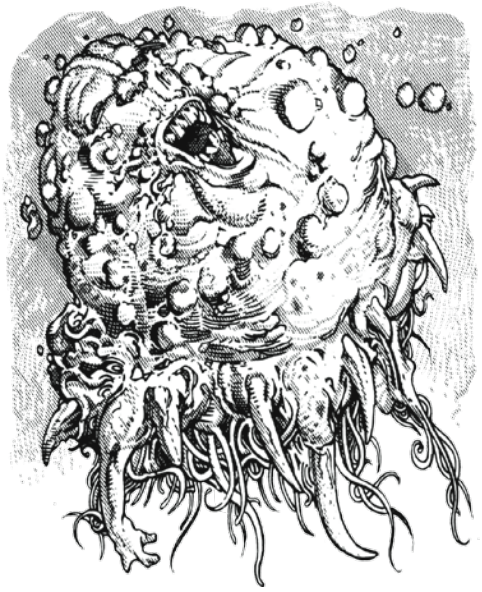
Terror: Terror allows Horrors to instill intense fear into their targets. Each use of terror costs

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the Horror 1 Karma point. The Horror can use its terror ability against all creatures within 15". Any character within range must succeed at an opposed Spirit roll with a penalty listed in the power's entry or be unable to take any action for d4 rounds. His speech becomes a piteous wail, and any movements become random twitches. Terror can only be used against any one target once in a 24-hour period.

Thought Worm: This power allows a Horror to create a telepathic link between itself and a target. The target character must be within the Horror's line of sight for the Horror to place a thought worm within the character's mind. The target must succeed at an opposed Spirit roll at a penalty described in the power's entry. If it fails, the Horror places the thought worm within the mind of the victim. A thought worm lasts for a year and a day, and the Horror may renew it at the price of 1 permanent -1 penalty to its Vigor rolls for each year of renewal. If the target dies, the Horror regains these penalty points. A Thought Worm allows the Horror to make telepathic suggestions to a target within 1,000 miles of the Horror. If the target resists the suggestion, the character suffers the thought worm damage, as listed in the power's entry. This damage is extremely painful, immobilizing the character for 1 round.

Unnatural Life: This ability allows a Horror to give a corpse the "gift" of unnatural life. This ability only works on corpses dead for less than a year and a day. To use this power, the Horror touches the dead body and spends 1 Karma point, reviving the corpse. Though not as dreadful to behold as a zombie or a ghoul, the corpse remains visibly decayed, and retains the distinctive odor of rotting flesh. Aside from a horrific appearance and smell, the animated character can function as he did in life; unnatural life revives him with all of his attributes and abilities intact. Characters animated by unnatural life are hard to destroy, gaining a +2 bonus to all Vigor rolls. The Horror suffers a permanent -1 penalty to its Vigor rolls when it uses this power, and it regains this penalty when the unnatural life ends. The Horror may stop the effects of unnatural life any time the unnaturally alive character is within 50" of the Horror.



☉ BLOATFORM

A catch-all name for a diverse class of Horrors, bloatforms often look like slugs or jellyfish. Other bloatforms appear as impossibly bloated, bubbling corpses. Bloatforms rarely kill their victims directly, preferring to encourage suicide or murder. They especially enjoy insinuating themselves into small settlements and manipulating a community into self-destruction. Bloatforms enjoy chatting with victims they have marked. They cajole, threaten, taunt, and negotiate with the victim, all with the aim of getting the victim to destroy himself.

Some bloatforms lie dormant until a delicious whiff of pain crosses their path and rouses them. Horribly patient, bloatforms can wait years for the destruction of a particularly succulent victim.

BLOATFORM

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d6

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 12 (4)

Special Abilities

Armor +4: Thick skin.

Claws: Str+d6.

Corrupt Karma: Victim suffers -1 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

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Horror Mark: Victim suffers –1 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Karma Points: A bloatform has 20 Karma Points.

Size +2: Bloatforms are up to seven feet long and weigh close to 500 lbs.

Terror: Victim suffers –1 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Thought Worm: Victim suffers –1 penalty to opposed Spirit roll; 2d6 damage.



☉ CHANTREL'S HORROR

Chantrel the Troubadour Adept first dreamed of the Horror that now bears her name. In her dream, she saw a demonic humanoid suspended from a razor-sharp frame. Blades protruding from the frame moved constantly, sculpting the Horror's appearance. At first it looked trollish, then got whittled down to a mangled ork, then had pieces added and rearranged to make it look like an obsidian built from bloody bits. For having such a dream, Chantrel's kaer threw her outside. She is the only citizen to survive the Horror's appearance, and from her stories, tales of the Horror spread across Barsaive.

No one knows what this Horror wants, or how it operates. Chantrel remains the only living person who has seen it, and she had only a brief glimpse in a nightmare. No one else has seen it and survived.

CHANTREL'S HORROR

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d10

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 14 (6)

Special Abilities

Armor +6: Metal frame.

Claws: Str+d10.

Cursed Luck: Victim suffers –2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Eviscerate: Any creature successfully grappled by Chantrel's Horror suffers 2d10 damage.

Horror Mark: Victim suffers –2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Karma Points: Chantrel's Horror has 40 Karma Points.

Terror: Victim suffers –2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Thought Worm: Victim suffers –2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll; 2d8 damage.

☉ CRYSTAL ENTITY

Crystal entities drop into the world from the astral plane. They must inhabit an object or structure at least the size of a coffin, and commonly infest huts, garden sheds, or similarly sized structures. The infested structure looks built of glass, quartz, or ice. When an entity is wounded, its rock-hard skin ruptures and oozes an oily liquid. When killed, its skin shatters and its blood coagulates into d6 elemental earth coins, worth 100 silver pieces each. A crystal entity has no Pace, Parry, Strength, or Agility scores.

The crystal entity has a devastating ability called *death spikes* which cause the joint and bones of a victim to form crystalline spikes that pierce the skin from the inside out. These spikes last for 24 hours. The Horror must spend 1 Karma Point to use this ability.

There is a rumor of a powerful, Horror-marked troll Warrior Adept roaming the lands of Barsaive, subjugating ork scorcher tribes in an effort to build an army. His enormous suit of crystal plate armor, it is said, is actually a crystal entity—his dark master and eternal tormentor. If the rumors are true, this terrible warlord is no doubt planning to bring a wave of destruction and despair upon the land, and quite possibly to create a gateway that will allow more crystal entities to infect the realm.

CRYSTAL ENTITY

Attributes: Agility –, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength –, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12

Pace: 0; **Parry:** 0; **Toughness:** 13 (5)

Special Abilities

- **Armor +5:** Crystalline body.
- **Dazzling Beam:** 10/20/40, 2d10
- **Death Spikes:** 10/20/40, 2d12
- **Horror Mark:** Victim suffers a -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.
- **Karma Points:** A crystal entity has 20 Karma Points.
- **Size +4:** Crystal entities are large Horrors.

DESPAIRTHOUGHT

The despairthought resembles a giant, white larva, ranging from the size of a sheep to the size of several horses. It has white, sightless eyes and a huge maw tipped with large fangs. Along its body are child-sized arms, on which it scrambles around.

Although a formidable foe in physical combat, the Horror prefers psychic attack. The despairthought usually hides in a cavern or within ruins, far from civilization, and travels through the astral plane seeking victims. It can roam a limitless range in astral space, keeping its attention on both the physical and astral planes simultaneously.

The creature must have aid from one of its victim's loved ones to use its powers, and for this reason it

often attacks children. It frequently seeks out cruel, selfish, or especially fearful parents who might sacrifice their own children to save themselves. The despairthought can project itself as an apparition up to 3,000 miles from its physical location in order to find such a person. It can also project itself from astral space. Taking the form of a white shadow that drifts in and out of amorphous shapes, the creature tells the victim's loved one that it will kill him unless he helps the creature take the victim. It promises not to kill the victim, but swears to kill the loved one unless he assists the Horror.

In reality, the despairthought can do no harm without the help of the loved one, but few people realize that the death threat is pure bluff. If the loved one cooperates, the creature describes a pattern to its newfound accomplice. The loved one must trace this pattern, a special Horror mark, upon the flesh of the victim. Though invisible, the mark lets the despairthought follow the victim until he dies or the Horror is killed. The Horror cannot leave its chosen victim; both remain trapped with one another until one of them dies. The Horror has a telepathic link with its Horror marked victim with a limitless range.

Once the Horror's accomplice has made a mark that allows it to Horror mark its target, the creature enters the victim's thoughts. When the victim tries to speak, the creature takes control of the victim's voice, making horrible sounds and grunts issue forth instead of words. The victim spasms and loses control of his body for d3 rounds, and his noises torment those who hear them. Anyone within hearing range of the victim's voice must make a successful Vigor roll or automatically be knocked prone. He clutches at his head as his consciousness drowns in agony for all the painful actions, large or small, that he has ever committed against anyone. The horrible sounds amplify these memories to such a degree that the listener is rendered incapable of taking any action. Some listeners cry, howl, or roll back and forth on the floor in agonizing pain. The effects of the Horror's terrible voice last until the listener makes a successful Vigor roll or until the d3 rounds have passed.

The despairthought also renders its victim suicidal. Inside the victim's mind, the Horror constantly feeds him bleak ideas, cynical notions, and hopeless views of the world. To reflect this process,



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once a day the victim must make a successful Smarts roll. If he fails, the victim can take no action of any kind. He cannot fall to the floor, take shelter, or do anything potentially useful. Most despairthoughts affect their victims this way to get the victim killed, though some despairthoughts simply enjoy causing the victim inconvenience, embarrassment, or trouble. The creature's influence lasts d6 rounds. Also, once a year the Horror can attempt to force the victim to commit suicide. In this case, if the victim fails his Smarts roll, he commits suicide within 24 hours. The Horror usually does not invoke this power for at least a full year after invading the victim, preferring to wallow in the pain it can cause the victim during that time.

DESPAIRTHOUGHT

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d10, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Knowledge (history) d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d12

Pace: 4; Parry: 6; Toughness: 13 (4)

Special Abilities

Armor +4: Thick skin.

Claws: Str+d8.

Corrupt Karma: Victim suffers -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Horror Mark: Victim suffers -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Karma Points: Despairthoughts have 30 Karma Points.

Size +2: Despairthoughts can weigh up to 1,000 lbs.

☉ HATE

Hate destroyed at least two kaers during the Scourge. He also penetrated two others, Coppertail and Menkin Town, but left those intact. To this day, most Barsaive citizens harbor deep suspicions of residents from Coppertail and Menkin Town, assuming that the Horror left the kaers alone because the residents promised him something better. No one can guess what they might have promised, and few care to try.

Hate appears as a glowing, well-proportioned male human. From the top of his back sprout twelve multi-jointed limbs. As Hate speaks the limbs move, each limb producing grating speech in a different tone. The limbs can extend in front of Hate, and the Horror uses them to strike opponents. When Hate attacks traveling parties, he horribly mutilates

some members of the party and leaves others virtually unscathed. Most residents of Barsaive treat survivors of such attacks with even more suspicion than people from Coppertail and Menkin Town.

HATE

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Notice d10, Shooting d8, Swimming d8, Throwing d8

Pace: 5; Parry: 8; Toughness: 12 (4)

Special Abilities

Armor +4: Tough skin.

Cursed Luck: Victim suffers -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Dazzling Speed: By spending 1 Karma point, Hate can gain an additional Slam attack. Hate can only do this once per round.

Horror Mark: Victim suffers -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Karma Points: Hate has 30 Karma Points.

Slam: Str+d6.

Superior Strike: Hate can channel his energy into a ferocious strike. By spending 1 Karma point, he can increase his Slam damage to Str+3d6.

Terror: Victim suffers -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

KREESCRA

Most kreeescra stand 3 feet tall, a few as tall as 4 feet. Their bodies are misshapen travesties, all twisted limbs and jaws and faces that seem about to slide off their heads. Despite their crippled appearance, kreeescra are surprisingly nimble and difficult to catch or strike.

Kreeescra usually attack by approaching individuals deep in slumber. Finding such a victim, the Horror places its hands on the victim's head. The victim must then make a successful Spirit roll at a -4 penalty or nightmares of horrible events from the victim's past overwhelm the dreamer and disrupt his sleep. The victim does not wake from these terrors; he stays asleep, sweating and tossing and turning. The kreeescra can use this power at a range of up to 60", keeping the victim under its influence for at least one hour each night. During the day, the kreeescra hides near the victim's sleeping place. When the victim travels, the kreeescra trails him, keeping out of sight and only using its powers while the victim slumbers.

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During the horrible nightmares, the victim makes a Spirit roll at a -4 penalty. If the roll is unsuccessful, the victim recovers no damage the next day and no magical spell or ability allows him to recover damage or wounds. In addition, every night the character fails his Spirit roll, he suffers a cumulative -1 penalty to all Vigor rolls. If possible, the kreescra stays with the same victim until the victim dies, slowly killing him with nightmares and the effects of unhealed wounds.

KREESCRA

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Stealth d12

Pace: 5; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6

Special Abilities

- ♦ **Claws:** Str + d4.
- ♦ **Cursed Luck:** Victim suffers -1 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.
- ♦ **Fast:** Kreescra gain an additions 2d6" when they run.
- ♦ **Horror Mark:** Victim suffers -1 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.
- ♦ **Karma Points:** A kreescra has 20 Karma Points.

MINDSLUG

Mindslugs feed off the pain caused by their attacks on a victim's skull and brain. These mindless creatures usually travel in groups of three, seeking

out victims as a poisonous spider might. Six inches long and black in color, mindslugs have no sensory organs, such as eyes or a nose. Instead, each possesses several tentacles that it uses to crawl along the ground, walls, and ceilings. The tentacles are lined with small, silvery hooks that give the slug sensory information.

If the mindslug succeeds at a bite attack, on its next action, it begins to burrow into the victim's skull. The Horror makes its way toward the host's brain, which takes 1d4+1 rounds. At the end of that period, it reaches the brain, dealing 1 wound per round. Removing the creature is no easy task. The mindslug's body is slippery, and it uses the small hooks along its tentacles to grip the inside of its victim's skull. Both of these characteristics make these creatures difficult to dislodge, assuming that a character can catch one. To catch a mindslug, a character must succeed at an Agility

Kreescra Nightmares

The nightmares created by kreescra are so real that the dreamer can never trust when he is actually dreaming and when he is actually awake. Game Masters should tamper with the player's sense of reality while he is a victim of a kreescra. Enlisting the unwilling and ignorant cooperation of the other players in the group is also an effective method.

For example, begin the day as usual, with the players heading out to whatever destination they seek. Begin to introduce subtle scenarios of suspense, eventually heightening in a crescendo of terror. Feel free to create dreamscapes of surreal reality, until finally, just before his destruction, the player awakens, bathed in sweat, finding himself back in camp the night before.

Though the other players also thought that the dream scenario was real, in fact, their characters were no part of it. Politely inform them that they have no idea what the other player is babbling about, and that they experienced no such dream. This form of narrative can lend itself to powerful dramatic effect as the heroes desperately seek the answer to the mystery of their comrade's distress and failing health.

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roll with a -4 penalty. Once plucked out of the victim's skull, the creature attempts to wriggle away and escape.

The mindslug hides in dark places where a potential victim might rest, and attacks as the victim sleeps. Piercing the victim's skull, the mindslug worms its way into the victim's brain and begins to feed.

MINDSLUG

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Climb d12, Fighting d4, Notice d8

Pace: 2; Parry: 4; Toughness: 2

Special Abilities

• **Bite:** Str.

• **Corrupt Karma:** Victim suffers -1 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

• **Karma Points:** A mindslug has 10 Karma Points.

• **Size -2:** Mindslugs are only a few inches long.

• **Small:** Attackers subtract 2 from their attacks to hit.

VERJIGORM

To see Verjigorm is to behold the true nature of the Horrors. Verjigorm stands 15 feet at the shoulder. The face of this hideous creature features six eyes, three-inch fangs, and spiked horns. Its horrifying head is connected to its torso by a flexible, ten-foot-long neck. Its skin gleams with a metallic sheen, and razor-sharp spikes protrude from its body. Each of the creature's four legs end in three sharp talons, and though it most often stands on all four legs, Verjigorm can stand on its rear legs to fight.

The scholars of Throal heard of Verjigorm only through tales told by the great dragons it hunted during the last Scourge. No one knows whether this hideous creature came into the world during this Scourge; but if it did, it hunted no dragons this time around. Verjigorm's goals and whereabouts remain a mystery.

VERJIGORM

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d12+9, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d12, Fighting d12, Knowledge (Arcana) d12, Knowledge (history) d12, Knowledge (Other) d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d12

Pace: 7; Parry: 8; Toughness: 13 (5)

Special Abilities

Absorb Blow: Whenever Verjigorm is hit by an attack, it may immediately spend 1 Karma Point to increase its Toughness by d6 before any damage rolls are made.

Armor +5: Impenetrable skin.

Capture Initiative: Verjigorm can spend 1 Karma Point to force a trade for its drawn Initiative card for any player's (including swapping out for a Joker card).

Claws: Str+d12.

Corrupt Karma: Victim suffers a -4 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Cursed Luck: Victim suffers a -4 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

Horror Mark: Victim suffers a -4 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

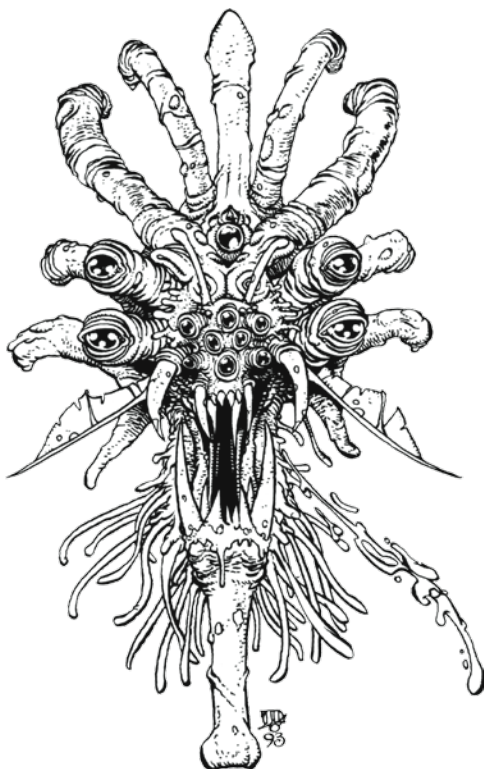
Karma Points: Verjigorm has 40 Karma Points.

Overwhelming Karma: When Verjigorm spends a Karma Point, it gains a +d4 bonus to rolls, rather than the usual +2.

Savage: Verjigorm has 2 claw attacks per turn. Its claw damage raises to Str+2d8 against dragons.

Skin Shift: 3d6.

Terror: Victim suffers -4 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.





Thought Worm: Victim suffers -4 penalty to opposed Spirit roll; 2d12 damage.

Tough: Verjigorm gains a +4 bonus to Soak rolls. It may also spend 1 Karma Point to gain an additional +4 bonus on any one Soak roll.

✱ WORMSKULL

Wormskulls are a class of Horrors that vary in appearance but have one feature in common: their skulls look like masses of writhing worms. Often, their hands and feet also end in worm-like appendages. Wormskulls range in height from 7 to 8 feet tall. Their bodies are partly made of armor. Because wormskulls prefer dry environments, their presence tends to remove moisture from an area 3,000 feet in circumference around them. Occasionally, wormskulls serve other Horrors.

WORMSKULL

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Knowledge (Arcana) d10, Knowledge (history) d10, Notice d10, Persuasion d10

Pace: 5; Parry: 8; Toughness: 12 (4)

Special Abilities

♦ **Animate Dead:** Wormskulls can control the undead at a range of up to 300'.

♦ **Armor +4:** Breastplate armor.

♦ **Claws:** Str+d8.



♦ **Corrupt Karma:** Victim suffers a -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

♦ **Cursed Luck:** Victim suffers a -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

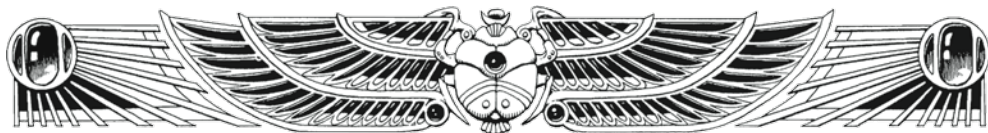
♦ **Horror Mark:** Victim suffers a -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.

♦ **Karma Points:** A wormskull has 20 Karma Points.

♦ **Skin Shift:** 2d8.

♦ **Teleport:** For the cost of 1 Karma Point, a wormskull can teleport up to 20" instead of moving that round.

♦ **Terror:** Victim suffers -2 penalty to opposed Spirit roll.



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More information? Again, I refer you to the Index...

☉—Merrox, Master of the Hall of Records

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A LAND OF WONDROUS BEAUTY AND UNSPEAKABLE EVIL...

...When the Wizards proclaimed that the Scourge had ended, Jaro, I, and three others broke open the seals on the doors and walked outside. We hoped to find a new world brimming with life. Instead, a barren landscape stretched before us. As quick as thought, the sky grew dark with creatures, their attack nearly overwhelming us. We fought our way back to the kaer, thinking ourselves safe. We soon learned that a Horror had entered the mind of Jaro...

Explore the province of Barsaive, a land that encompasses the high mountain realms of savage troll raiders, lush green jungles that conceal long-forgotten cities, vast plains filled with strange and deadly beasts, and the life-giving waters of the mighty Serpent River. An untamed land still recovering from the depredations of the Scourge, Barsaive now teems with orks and elves, t'skrang lizard-men and human settlers, all drawn by the promise of her breathtaking wonders.

The *Earthdawn Game Master's Guide* contains a detailed tour of this troubled province; stats for dozens of new monsters that stalk her lands, including several loathsome Horrors; descriptions of over 30 common and Legendary threaded magical items; rules for the vile practice of Blood Magic; and the esoteric mysteries of ancient legends and nefarious secret societies to populate your campaign!

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